

DRIVE OBSESSED

**EMPOWERING HUNGRY INNOVATORS
ONE REVOLUTION AT A TIME**

Client: Control Techniques

DBA Design Effectiveness Awards Entry
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For publication

**CONTROL
TECHNIQUES**

GW+CO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Control Techniques is a global B2B specialist in drives – electrical components that control the movement of motors. You can find drives in everything from vehicles to washing machines, power plants and production lines. The drives market is dominated by large industrial conglomerates, like Siemens or ABB, who sell drives as part of their overall automation solutions. Control Techniques serves a smaller subset of the market as a drive specialist biased towards machinery OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturers).

Launched in 1973 as a maverick start-up, Control Techniques took pride in its range of highly innovative products. Initial success led to the business being bought by Emerson in 1994, after which Control Techniques spent two decades subsumed as a small cog in a huge wheel. Acquisition by Japanese corporation Nidec in 2017 delivered the first glimpse of change. Control Techniques had more freedom to rediscover and play to their strengths in order to grow and gain market share. With this came the opportunity for the business to realign with its core purpose in a way that facilitated a bold transformation. This is where our work began.

When we became Control Techniques' partner for change in late 2018, we understood that enabling a recommitment to their original entrepreneurial swagger required a commitment to change from the entire leadership to the factory floor. Research and strategy workshops engaged teams in creating a platform for a true challenger brand through alignment of business strategy, culture and communication. This new brand platform was launched internally in 2019 and publicly in early 2020.

When Covid-19 struck, the market plunged by 14% while new-found momentum meant Control Techniques only dropped by only 4% over the year, gaining market share. When the market recovered, Control Techniques continued to outperform, all with a largely unchanged product portfolio. From 2020 to 2023, the market grew at a rate of 6% CAGR. Over the same period, Control Techniques' CAGR was 12.5% – significantly increasing its market share. Despite serving only a subset of the overall market, it is now a top 10 player globally for the first time in its history. Control Techniques' success story has impressed its parent company to such extent, we're now working with a large division of Nidec with a view to achieving the same.

“Control Techniques rebranding has allowed us to find our voice in the market again. It’s helped us to develop a greater emotional and visual connection with the customer – and the customer is coming to truly understand our values, purpose and culture as a company.”

Steve Turner

Global Product Management Director

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Overall:

To engage and reinspire employees in the creation and delivery of a new brand platform that re-establishes Control Techniques as a bold and innovative challenger brand and positions it for growth.

Specific:

- To equip the global marketing function of 20 people with a tool-kit that allows them to create assets easily in-house and grow followership organically on social channels – engaging and growing customer base by building on innovator-engineer relationships.
- To grow market share by 10% CAGR
- To grow sales by >10% per annum
- Make Control Techniques attractive as an employer and increase job applications

THE BACKGROUND

Control Techniques has journeyed from humble beginnings, operating out of a small manufacturing unit in Wales, to compete with the likes of ABB and other huge global players. At its inception, Control Techniques secured early success by offering specialist market appeal for inventors and innovators looking for customised electrical drive solutions. Once acquired by Emerson, the business was subject to rigid marketing constraints and a component provider that meant the challenger brand positioning could no longer be maintained and the business was no longer profitable.

Control Techniques had lost its voice. With innovation stifled, no clear direction on messaging, and their own people having lost sight of priorities to aim for, the business suffered. Effective marketing had become near impossible and their customers confused – sales stagnated in 2017/18 and 2018/19, and dropped by 10% in 2019/20 [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]. When Nidec bought the ailing business, it recognised Control Technique's inherent value. It set stiff growth targets and empowered leadership to identify ways to grow. The desire to reconnect with its challenger roots was the starting point for our project and the new branding was launched in 2020 [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA].



DRIVE OBSESSED



THE MARKET

As a global drives specialist, Control Techniques manufactures innovative electrical drives that power all kinds of motors from high performance drives used in F1 performance testing to general purpose drives found in common garden sprinklers. Control Techniques operates in 70 countries through its own drive centres as well as through parent group distribution channels. The [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA] global drives market is dominated by large manufacturers for whom drives are just parts of automation solutions for big machines sold in all-in-one packages – whereas Control Techniques' focusses on its specialist area of the drives only. With a limited product palette and focused offering that enables engineers to program application specific functionality to customise their drives, reducing system cost and increasing performance, Control Techniques serves a market subset dominated by engineers in small to medium sized businesses with a high propensity to innovation – who are susceptible to challenger brand positioning since it aligns with their perception of themselves.



“When a customer buys from Control Techniques, it’s all about the experience we offer. Our brand is voicing that experience. With our products positioned as unsung heroes, we stand out in the market – I can’t think of another company that has such a unique perspective. Unsung heroes is exactly what makes us different.”

Huw Mills

European Operations Director

COMMIT AND DELIVER

“Our competitors still use traditional marketing methods – adopting the copy and repeat method, whereas our approach is fresh with a high level of creativity. Our brand is loud, fresh, colourful and unique.”

Member of the marketing team

THE CHALLENGES

While Control Techniques' CEO and CMO wanted to elevate their brand and take back market share, positioning Control Techniques as a challenger required the business to remember where it came from and to agree what it wanted to stand for. Our work therefore set out to enable a rediscovery of – and commitment to – a core purpose and values.

The company had suffered change fatigue which meant we met with initial resistance. It became clear that 'brand' and 'branding' were not words commonly used or understood. This presented a steep learning curve as we brought people together in the exploration and alignment of culture, strategy and brand. Pivotal to this was an inclusive approach that fostered self-belief across the business – a belief that stemmed from realigning with a sense of purpose.

A second aspect of this work was alignment with parent company Nidec. While Nidec encourages their businesses to invest in growth, they have strict reporting requirements. To ensure we achieved true alignment, we worked with the Finance and Operations Directors to integrate brand strategy and reporting requirements. This proved pivotal in getting buy-in across the business.

Thirdly, we knew the branding and marketing would have to do the heavy lifting as there would no major new product development within the project timeframe. The team needed a toolkit they could embrace and build upon, not just police, allowing them to inspire colleagues who sell Control Techniques' products. This required readily available brand assets and a user-friendly brand management system.

BE COUR AGEOUS

“From sales to IT to operations and R&D, everybody now understands the part they have to play in bringing this to life.”

Pam Chahal

Global Marketing Director 2018-21

STRATEGIC APPROACH

Our strategy enabled the meeting of minds necessary to cohesive change. We worked together with teams at all levels across the business – from HR to marketing, finance and engineering – to highlight areas of concern alongside opportunities, enabling granular integration. Further to this, engaging and growing the customer base required that we interview customers across the world, many of whom stated a preference for working with specialists rather than big manufacturers offering one-stop solutions. Customers told us they need the freedom to make changes to machinery in a way that big conglomerates often do not allow – but Control Techniques do. We unearthed an insider relationship between the innovators and engineers, which resulted in a brand theme #driveobsessed that was enthusiastically embraced internally and externally on launch. With a return to relevance emerging, we observed a shift in mindset that allowed us to collectively set an ambitious vision – for Control Techniques to be the first brand customers think of when looking for drives.

DO IT WITH INTEGRITY

DESIGN SOLUTION

We need to establish a new brand that not only differentiates Control Techniques but also resonates with Control Techniques' people and reconnects them with their maverick roots. We engaged teams in the creation of actionable values – be courageous, commit and deliver, do it with integrity. With these in place, Control Techniques' purpose became clear in “empowering hungry innovators one revolution at a time”. Key to this was homing in on the customer connection – a unique relationship between bold innovators and engineers that belong in the limelight. This inspired us to present Control Techniques' products as unsung super heroes. Visually, the brand was a bold challenge to the status quo. Vibrant graphic elements summoned the world of comic book heroes while deliberate use of green (its original colour) made a statement in a marketplace dominated by products in bland grey. With **#driveobsessed** at its core, the identity needed the right tone of voice to capture the interest of target audiences. We worked with management and marketing teams to identify this as ‘smart and spirited, with reassuring swagger’.

The real success of this work came as teams across the business took ownership of the brand. The marketing team created three brand books that were shared widely internally and with clients. In our survey, the vast majority of Control Techniques' respondents across the globe answered nine or ten (out of ten) when asked how proud they are of the brand. The new identity has empowered the marketing team with a toolkit that allows them to easily create assets in-house and grow their following on social media. What's more, guidelines give them plenty of room to be creative while ensuring cohesion. With brand assets available online to everyone creating marketing or communications, we've counted well over 80,000 downloads since launch. The brand's overall success contributed to exceeding all business targets, from sales to market share and recruitment. It has resulted in the creation of three new marketing roles, plus huge organic growth in followers across social channels. Importantly, the product offering has stayed largely the same since the launch of the new brand.

“Our materials now bring the WOW factor. We're more visible on social media, our marketing content is bold, challenging, and eye-catching. We've received lots of feedback from our customers – they love what we do now. Our new brand has elevated Control Techniques from a place of not quite knowing who we were or what direction we were going in, to a brand with a clear intention to be at the top of our game, while bringing clarity and confidence to our customer base.”

Sue Clark
Global Marketing Manager

SUMMARY OF RESULTS (2019/20 – 2022/23)

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To engage and re-inspire employees in the creation and delivery of a new brand platform that re-establishes Control Techniques as a bold and innovative challenger brand and positions it for growth.

RESULTS

“Control Techniques might not be the biggest player in the UK market but perception amongst the industry suggests they are. This is partly down to their social media campaigns, the visual identity and the marketing that’s carried out in the UK.”

Damien Oxlee

Sales Director, Drives & Controls Magazine



9.1/10

Internal survey response to the question: “On a scale of 1-10, how proud are you of our brand?”

**OVERALL,
CONTROL TECHNIQUES
NOW OCCUPIES A TOP 10
POSITION IN THE GLOBAL
DRIVES MARKET
(2019: 13)**



SUMMARY OF RESULTS (2019/20 – 2022/23)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Objective 1:

To equip the global marketing function of 20 people with a toolkit that allows them to create assets easily in-house and grow followership organically on social channels – engaging and growing Control Techniques' customer base by building on innovator-engineer relationships.

RESULTS

100%

Of global marketing team respondents say the new brand enables them to create better marketing

95%

Of global marketing team respondents say the new brand guidelines make their work easier

90%

Of global marketing team respondents say they use the brand toolkit 'more' or 'much more' than the previous one. Nobody uses it less

236%

Organic growth [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA] achieved across YouTube subscribers

40%

Increase in website downloads [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

730%

Organic growth [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA] achieved across LinkedIn following

81,000+

Downloads from the brand site. The brand site plays an important role as there are many parent company colleagues creating marketing material on Control Techniques' behalf.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS (2019/20 – 2022/23)

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Objective 2:

To grow market share by 10% CAGR.

RESULTS

12.5%

CAGR against market growth of 6% CAGR

2.61%

Market share from a starting point of 1.88%

39%

Total market share growth over three years

Overall, Control Techniques now occupies a top 10 position in the global drives market (2019: 13)

Objective 3:

To grow sales by >10% per annum.

82%

Increase in units sold over the period [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

43%

Increase in average sales per month [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

[REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]*

Total sales 2022/23 [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

*Sales by year: [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

Objective 4:

To make Control Techniques attractive as an employer and increase job applications.

76%

Increase in job applications per advertised role

89%

Increase in number of UK employees from 521 to 989

GLOBAL PANDEMIC

The brand launched in 2020 during a year of global pandemic and lockdown – a circumstance that assumes deeper resonance when we consider that Control Techniques does not sell products online. Nonetheless, on the day of launch, the marketing team gathered 332 leads that could be passed onto sales. While many businesses across all industries felt the impact of Covid-19, Control Techniques emerged stronger than ever on account of their new brand, maintaining market share during Covid and significantly outperforming the market during the recovery.

PRODUCT RANGE

Crucially, throughout this process, the Control Techniques product range has stayed largely the same. Since brand launch, the product range has increased from seven to 10, but this reflects the evolution of existing products in the marketplace rather than the introduction of new products. Growth in market share has therefore been largely achieved through the strength and impact of the new brand – namely its enthusiastic adoption by teams across Control Techniques.

MARCOMMS ACTIVITY

In line with the project objectives, marketing activity has increased substantially since the brand launch – to the extent that three new marketing roles have been created. In this submission, we have only presented statistics for organic growth and have disregarded specific campaign results that are related to advertising spend.

Sources:

Nidec Control Techniques Internal Survey of marketing function (20 people)

Financial data supplied by Nidec Control Techniques

Market data from industry specific market reports by Interact Analysis

Feedback Interviews with Control Techniques' leadership

External brand perception study (2018)