

Project title

The Yorkshire Post rebrand

Category:

Media

Client company:

Johnston Press

Design consultancy:

WPA Pinfold

Date:

26.06.2015



For publication

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Executive summary

Over the last decade the printed press has had a tough time with declining sales due to changing consumer habits and the growth of online. The overall daily newsprint newspaper market has been falling at a rate of more than 8% a year and a massive 42.84% decline in the last 14 years (ABC 2014).

Times have been very challenging for The Yorkshire Post (YP), with declining sales and reduced advertising revenue. This has forced The YP to reassess its business model and carry out consolidation within its operations. Streamlining the business has required a more focused approach to its brand identity (to accommodate new premises and a restructure) and there was a clear need to revitalise the brand in order to increase engagement with readers, targeting a wider readership profile, and boost morale across the business.

The Yorkshire Post lineage goes as far back as 1754, when it was launched as the Leeds Intelligencer, one of the UK's first daily papers. In 1866 it was renamed The Yorkshire Post – just over a century later the 'THE' was dropped and the brand name was later updated with a badly condensed font.

We put the 'THE' back into the brand name (The Yorkshire Post) to instil pride and emphasise that it was Yorkshire's newspaper; we redrew the brand font, inspired by Caslon, which was owned from 1819 by a foundry in Sheffield.

The rebrand was critical to the paper's future survival and there was a lot of deliberation prior to launch, as Yorkshire Post readers are notorious for being diehard traditionalists – a large proportion being over 60 years old. Previously readers had resisted changes to the newspaper format design.

Readers, staff and advertisers alike wholeheartedly embraced the rebrand. There was uplift in newspaper sales (over 6,000/week), online visits went up (+44%) and staff morale was significantly improved. In addition, there was a price increase shortly after the brand re-launch and sales remained robust despite this.



Above:
— Historic masthead
circa 1940

+3.0%

Increase in readers since launch

+314,000

First annual increase in newspapers sold

+2.0%

Increase in subscriptions

+764%

Return on investment

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Outline of project brief

To rebrand and reposition the Yorkshire Post brand and widen the market appeal of the newspaper, from its core readership of over 60 year olds.

Key business objectives:

- To be all about Yorkshire, to 'own' Yorkshire
- To refresh and enhance the impact of the brand – especially the newspaper, online and at point of purchase
- Add value, there was a price increase within four months of launch
- Reduce circulation decline of minus 10% YOY
- Grow total audience online
- Increase advertising revenue
- Grow social media interaction rate (re-tweets, click throughs)
- Extend market reach (readers of the newspaper) to under 60 year olds
- Improve staff morale and feel good factor

Key design objectives:

- Premiumise the brand.
- Emphasise Yorkshire.
- Create a fresher more engaging look and feel.
- Improve impact and standout amongst competitor set.
- Create a straight talking brand tone of voice.

Key target market is anyone who lives, works and performs business in the Yorkshire region.

Below:

— *The new Yorkshire Post logotype*

THE YORKSHIRE POST

Right:

— *Rebranded Yorkshire Post newspaper and point of sale*



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Project scope

Creation of a new brand identity to help revitalise The Yorkshire Post and create an integrated brand across all media channels:

- Master brand and brand architecture (e.g. editorial section headers)
- Daily newspaper refresh
- Website/social media
- Marketing literature
- Merchandise
- Communications
- Sponsorship and activation

Strategic thinking

The Yorkshire Post, like the rest of the printed press, has seen a steady decline in sales over the past two decades; various factors have influenced this including changes in lifestyle and, more recently, the recession. However, the most significant impact has been the rise in online interaction. YP has also been 'squeezed' in its market share by both the regional and national press. The readership profile for the paper was 60 plus – readers were literally dying off.

There was a very loyal following for the paper and the management team were concerned about alienating the current market in their quest for more sales. Readers were very protective of the brand and were quite vociferous in their letters to the editor and even on social media. Changes to the brand in the past had been met with resistance.

In addition, financial pressures had resulted in a relocation to new leased offices and a downsizing of the operation. Staff had undergone massive change. It was equally important to raise morale within The Yorkshire Post and give staff a sense of optimism and a reason to believe.

Reversing the decline in newspaper sales and increasing advertising revenue were critical to The YP's future survival.

The rebrand needed to clearly define The YP's proposition (all about Yorkshire) and its positioning as Yorkshire's paper with a national perspective. The key challenge was to raise the profile of YP beyond its core readership profile, emphasise its Yorkshire-ness and create a more contemporary image.

We worked closely with the editorial team to ensure that the brand activation was adopted across the organisations editorial style and even created templates for the brand application across the newspaper itself.

The rebranding of the Yorkshire Post was a brave move as the core market was older, and at the higher end of the socio-economic scale – notoriously traditional and reactionary. Resources were limited, yet it had to reverse the trend of declining sales.

In addition, a price rise was introduced in April 2014 and the rebranding needed to create a perception of relevance and added value to ensure that sales were not adversely affected.

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Description

The Yorkshire Post was founded in 1754, as the Leeds Intelligencer, making it one of Britain's first daily newspapers. The first issue of The Yorkshire Post was on 2 July 1866 (after the change of title from the Intelligencer).

'At its peak in the 1950s it sold 120,000 copies a day. By the 1960s it was ranked among Britain's most influential dailies and was considered in the same class with such papers as The Guardian of Manchester and The Scotsman of Edinburgh.'

In 2012, its parent company Johnston Press sought to cut costs and the new business was relocated to smaller offices in 2013. By this time sales had dropped to less than 40,000.

Overview of market

The Yorkshire Post is squeezed on all sides from a growth in digital (especially Social Media), added competition from the national and regional press, and especially Free Sheets (such as the Metro). The future looked bleak for The YP and sales were declining faster than the national average.

The overall daily newsprint newspaper market is falling at a rate of more than 8% a year, according to the latest set of officially audited circulation figures produced by ABC May 2014.

Circulation of the UK's ten major national newspapers has declined by 42.84% over the last 14 years (ABC May 2014).

UK regional daily newspapers lost sales at their fastest rate yet in the second half of 2013 – falling by an average of 14% year on year. The biggest fallers lost nearly a third of their sales as they felt the effects of price increases. (Source: Press Gazette 26.02.14).

Project launch date

The launch commenced in February 2014.

Size of budget and production costs

Fee £30,000

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Below:

— *Section and feature
naming protocol*

SPORT

PROPERTY

MOTORS

COUNTRY WEEK

BUSINESS

MAGAZINE

Right:

— *Reception signage*

Outline of design solution

WPA Pinfold carried out a strategic review of The Yorkshire Post brand and identified key areas of improvement:

- The logo was a poor quality condensed font – created in the 1980s when condensed fonts could first be created on a computer.
- Overall typography was poor, uninspiring and there were no quality cues.
- Brand colours needed to be revitalised and harmonised.
- The look and feel was negative (photography was often bland) and images lacked vitality.
- There was a need to focus on Yorkshire and give a pride to the organisation by improving the quality of its branding and design – to help it compete against the national papers.

Through research, we discovered that The YP had originally been called ‘THE’ Yorkshire Post and, as part of the rebrand, we put the ‘THE’ back into the brand name. However, this had to be executed in a way that contemporised the brand and presented a compelling story for existing and new readers. The Yorkshire Post brand logo was redrawn, taking inspiration from a cut of the original Caslon, from a type foundry in Sheffield that had acquired the font from the Caslon family in 1819. The brand colour yellow was also introduced to the logo – to increase visibility on the newsstands and make a statement about the new look.

A brand architecture was created to harmonise the sub branding – this included supplements and features section.

Typography was critical to a brand that earns its income through copy. In creating the new brand identity, we worked closely with The YP editorial team on typography and layout (and image selection) to create a fresher and more contemporary look and feel for the brand. This involved setting templates and a hierarchy of typography for different editorial styles.

The designs were tested through the client’s internal research team, especially when applied in context to the newspaper and online. The rebrand had to function well both offline and online. The results wholeheartedly endorsed the new brand style and previous rejecters of the newspaper showed a willingness to revisit it. The addition of the ‘THE’ to the name made a great story of introduction to the new brand.



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Below:

— Promotional tote bags used to launch the refreshed product, getting the 'brand to hand'



Summary of results

Increase in sales and footfall

The Yorkshire Post (YP) experienced a reverse in its long term decline in sales and an increase in both sales of its newspaper and online visitors, as demonstrated in the figures below. This was achieved as a result of the Yorkshire Post focusing on its brand refresh (with a refocus on Yorkshire roots) which helped give it a more positive and confident approach for its people and its communications channels, including the paper itself.

Improvements in staff morale

Staff had experienced over three years of continuous cuts (including head count) – the printing of the daily paper was moved away from its Leeds HQ in 2012 and in 2013 the flagship HQ, itself, was closed and all staff moved to leased offices. The new identity gave staff a real boost and a renewed confidence in their future, the sales force had a more positive mind set and the editorial team were re-energised. It gave the organisation a reason to believe and the positive spirit was communicated to the organisations target audience. The redrawing of the logo for The Yorkshire Post went through many iterations as we discussed and debated the finest piece of detail, down to the spacing between the lettering.

Once we presented this work to the newsroom, the staff were delighted we were working to such a high standard of quality. It meant that we were able to easily galvanise the staff not just behind a redesign, but a re-engineering of the content.

Jeremy Clifford, Editorial Director, The Yorkshire Post.

Adding value

The Yorkshire Post Newspaper went through a 10p price increase in April 2014 (during the period when the below data was taken) which would normally result in a 6% –10% decline in sales. On this occasion there was no decline in sales.

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Summary of results cont.

“Working with WPA Pinfold was both challenging and hugely rewarding. They were not satisfied with anything less than the high standards they were working to, so that we constantly had to revisit the work we were doing internally to match the detail that was being put into the brand.”

The redrawing of the logo for The Yorkshire Post went through many iterations as we discussed and debated the finest piece of detail, down to the spacing between the lettering.

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This work has been reflected in the feedback we have had from staff, and from our relevant communities, as you will see reflected in these quotes. In follow-up conversation groups with staff, they have all referenced the redesign of The Yorkshire Post as the most positive thing that has taken place this year.

Jeremy Clifford
Editorial Director Johnston Press Yorkshire

Below:

— Promotional mugs with a play on the ‘THE’



“I just thought I would drop you a quick note to say how much we all like the new look of The YP – we did a straw poll in the office and there was universal approval (from a fairly critical bunch of designers too!)”

Isabel Hunt, Director of Communications, University of Leeds

“The new look Yorkshire Post should bring you lots of bouquets - fresher, more modern and definitely a great ‘new look’.”

Judy Thompson, Yorkshire Agricultural Society

“...new @yorkshirepost looking good. Finally enjoyed a sit down and considered read.”

Gary Verity, chief executive of Welcome to Yorkshire:

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Summary of results cont.

“Congrats to everyone at The @YorkshirePost on three letters that set the standard as the national newspaper for #Yorkshire! #TheYP.”

The Earl of Halifax @EarlHalifax

“We love the look of the revamped @Yorkshirepost <http://ow.ly/upLdM>”

Brass @BrassAgency

“Love the Look of the YP.”

Harry Gratton, BBC TV presenter @harrylooknorth

“Like the new look of the @yorkshirepost The “the” was dropped when I was four weeks old, so glad to see it back.”

Tom Riordan, chief executive of Leeds City Council

Right:

— *Local distribution vehicle livery*



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Other influencing factors

The figures for the launch were taken for the first three months, prior to any significant promotional activity in the Summer (Tour de Yorkshire, etc). The spend on marketing and promotion was similar to previous years and all marketing activities involved the new brand activation. Two years previously there had been a significant campaign spend that had had no impact on sales or revenue. There were no other influencing factors.

Right:

— *The new Yorkshire Post masthead online and supported by a product launch feature.*



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“We chose to work with Pinfolds because of their credentials in working with Heritage brands. They came to the table with a refreshing naive curiosity about regional newspaper brands and were able to ask some very uncomfortable questions about the DNA of the Yorkshire Post and its audience. The result was a more radical approach than we had originally planned, including a change to the name!”

The WPA Pinfold team has become part of our team and we have come to greatly value their opinions and ideas. More importantly we’ve been very impressed with the results we’ve achieved, which have exceeded our most optimistic expectations. WPA Pinfold’s relentless drive for perfection has helped secure a very positive future for The Yorkshire Post.”

Helen Oldham, Managing Director Johnston Press, Yorkshire

Section 7 – Sources

Johnson Press
Audit Bureau of Circulation
Press Gazette

Right:

—The previous Yorkshire Post newspaper design

Far right:

—The new Yorkshire Post brand and newspaper design

