

GATHER — & — GATHER

FROM CANTEEN TO CUISINE

Industry sector

Travel & leisure

Client

Gather & Gather

Design consultancy

Pearlfisher

Date

June 2015

FOR PUBLICATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a highly congested and polarised market, and with a parent company heritage known for the cleaning and security industry, Mitie Catering Services' love of food, unique approach, and industry-challenging aspirations were getting lost behind Mitie's corporate brand.

Cue to Pearlfisher, to help the company devise a standalone brand through new positioning, name, and identity. This wasn't simply about rebranding a contract caterer, it was about developing a consumer-focussed concept that works in equal measure for staff, clients and its clients' customers.

Gather & Gather, the newly named business, has gone from strength to strength since the relaunch. It has challenged the mindset of the sector and changed the perception of the office canteen forever - something the brand positioning and design has enabled unequivocally, especially since little else was done in the way of marketing.

The new brand positioning sits at the heart of everything Gather & Gather says and does, from communications to HR, and everything in-between. No other competitor has adopted this approach and this gives the business a unique point of difference that attracts new clients, translates into strong results, and that has a hugely significant return on design investment.

Word count: 196

PROJECT OVERVIEW

1. Outline of project brief

Mitie Catering Services (MCS) provides workplace food service management. It's part of strategic outsourcing company Mitie Group PLC. But Mitie isn't a name synonymous with food, and the group's heritage links to the cleaning and security industry were proving unhelpful when selling food services. Moreover, the team's love of food, unique approach and industry-challenging aspirations were lost behind Mitie's corporate brand. This made it difficult for the team to compete in a highly congested market.

MCS asked Pearlfisher to help it devise a standalone brand through new positioning, name, and identity – to rebrand the business as the visionary and successful food service company it had become. This wasn't simply about rebranding a contract caterer, it was about developing a consumer-focussed concept for the newly-named Gather & Gather (G&G) that works in equal measure for staff, clients and its clients' customers in order to:

- **Increase standalone catering opportunities (as opposed to integrated facilities management contracts)**
- **Grow revenue through standalone catering opportunities to sustain growth curve**
- **Increase profitability**
- **Start tendering in bids against niche independent niche 'foodie' competitors**
- **Increase employee retention**



PROJECT OVERVIEW CONTINUED.

2. Description

Mitie Group is a FTSE 250 company that delivers facilities management (FM), property, and asset management services to clients from the private and public sector, with annual revenues exceeding £2bn in 2012 and ambitious plans to grow to £4bn by 2015.

In 1998, the group established MCS, a catering business that provides workplace food service management. Today that business employs 2,200+ staff and offers catering and hospitality services at over 270 staff dining locations in the UK, Ireland, Germany, and Norway – ranging from retail shops and cafés to restaurants.

Following the arrival of a new management team in 2011, Mitie's catering business moved to an entrepreneurial business model. Over the next 24 months, the catering business trebled in size. MCS was the fastest-growing caterer in the UK and Ireland, with growth driven by a portfolio of industry-leading clients including Rolls-Royce, Sky, Standard Life & The National Audit Office.

Prior to the rebrand, MCS contributed approximately £86m in annual turnover to the group – largely via integrated FM contracts. By late 2012, the management team believed it could build the catering business further by acquiring more standalone catering contracts. A brand that increased the appeal of its workplace food outlets to prospective clients and staff was needed to do so. The business aspired to be recognised and respected for its commitment to sourcing and serving food in season when it tastes at its best, and presenting that food in ways that inspire and connect all who consume it – changing the perception of the office canteen forever.



PROJECT OVERVIEW CONTINUED.

3. Overview of market

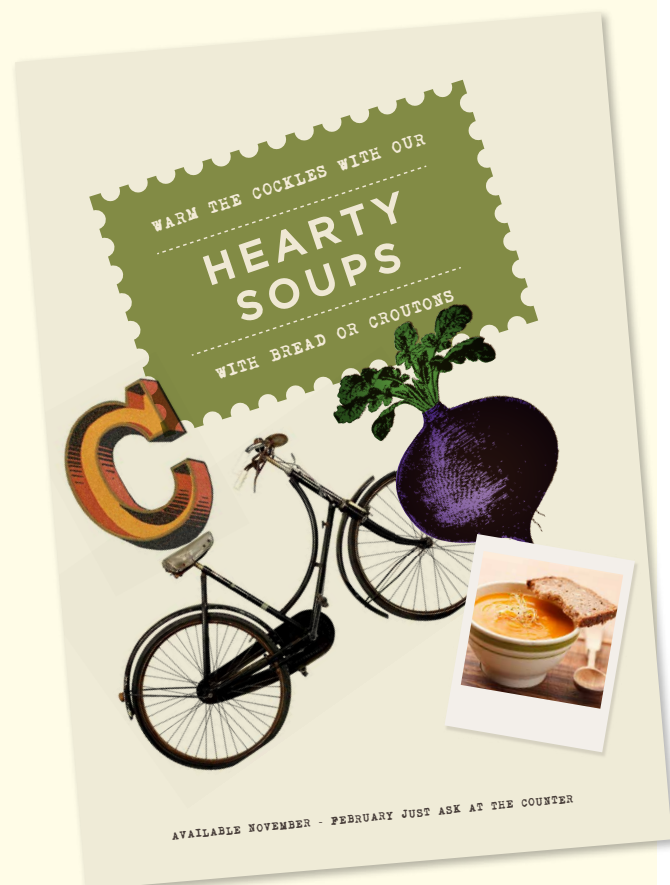
Market overview

The catering market is highly congested, particularly with independent owner-proprietor firms who perpetuate a 'foodie' reputation, thereby offering a distinct point of difference from the large corporate players. Leading independents included BaxterStorey, Lexington and CH&Co. By offering themselves as approachable alternatives to the likes of Compass, Sodexo, and Aramark, these niche firms have polarised the market, particularly in London.

However, growth for these niche firms is now challenging. Access to capital and cash are a barrier, as clients increasingly seek capital contributions and the risk profile of contracts continues to grow. Furthermore, the tendency to 'bundle' FM services under one single contractual model is set to continue, so firms who can't deliver a broader range of services beyond food services risk exclusion from many tendering opportunities.

This represented an opportunity for MCS. Although larger catering firms such as Sodexo and Compass have successfully grown their revenues and reputation in non-food services, no FM player has had the same impact on the catering sector. As a result, irrespective of the size of the FM company's catering arm, none have 'done' catering properly or made a discernible mark on this specialist industry.

A standalone brand would enable MCS to better compete against 'outside the workplace' alternatives, take on the niche 'foodie' players, and clearly differentiate its business from FM competitors (none of whom, at the time, had a clearly differentiated brand, personality, or character).



PROJECT OVERVIEW CONTINUED.

Challenges

MCS needed to take the best of the owner-proprietor small business approach and fuse it with a dose of realism and commerciality. With group backing, MCS benefits from a strong balance sheet, investment capability, and the ability to take commercial risk.

Even in MCS' most successful catering sites, the food was great but they were still seen as 'just the canteen'. The new brand needed to turn the workplace canteen into a place workers actively chose to hang out in, whatever the time of day, to attract standalone contracts.

The brand identity needed to be very flexible. While the branding, including the name, could be used in full in some client premises, MCS knew it wouldn't be able to use its company name in others. Therefore, the brand needed to be readily identifiable with or without the brand name.



Word count: 839

OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION

Insight

Research, site visits, and interviews revealed that MCS could redefine the workplace canteen through its special difference:

- **Passion for the breadth of potential to be found in food, especially in the workplace**
- **Commitment to constant innovation and fresh ideas**
- **Joy in little touches that make things special (and people smile)**
- **Desire to create rich experiences, not just great food**

From this evolved the brand's positioning, name and brand identity.

Brand positioning and name

The positioning encapsulates the company's special difference, and centres around the idea of 'urban hunter gatherers'. Urban hunter gatherers explore the modern world of food, collect the latest exciting ideas and approaches, and then bring them back, making them both unique and accessible. It's done with the energy, dynamism, and connection of an urban food lover, committed to enriching people's working lives through food, everyday.

This concept unites a number of powerful brand values: considered, honest, purposeful, creative, empowering, and connected. And it now sits at the heart of everything Gather & Gather does, from communications to HR, and everything in between.

The strategy also led directly to the brand's name: Gather & Gather.



OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION CONTINUED.

Brand identity

The G&G brand is designed to work as both trading name and customer-facing identity for the business. First and foremost, G&G loves food. The brand identity tells a verbal and visual urban hunter gatherer story that brings together the best ideas, ingredients, recipes, and people – in a way that’s fresh, frank, unexpected and human.

The logo is simple and bold. The bespoke ampersand is a unique brand asset, representing collaboration. Word stacking evokes a sense of G&G’s distinctive spaces which are dynamic, fluid, connected and – above all – fun.



Curated photography and illustration provide an eclectic and ownable aesthetic for the brand in a market where food photography is often monotonous or clichéd. For example, imagery guidelines stipulate the need for photos to be natural in style, and collections of assorted food items are gathered together.

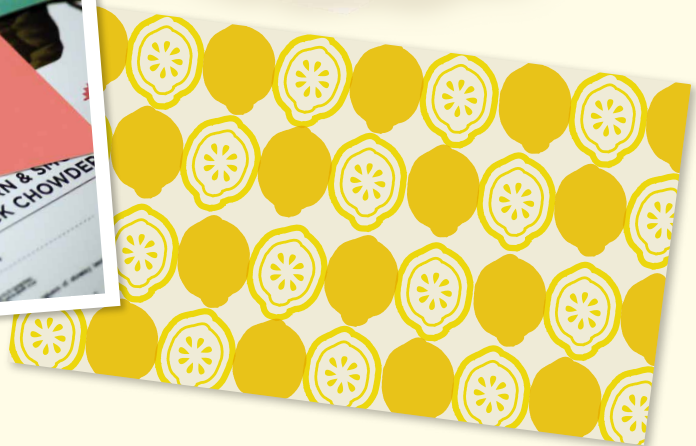
A mix of engaging language, natural colours, textures and characterful shapes is also used to constantly inspire the G&G team, its clients and their customers. Guidelines cover the whole range of collateral the business might need – from on-site menus and recipe cards through to in-canteen signage.



OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION CONTINUED.

Importantly, this is an identity system that ensures the brand is distinct and recognisable, whether it's used with the G&G name or not. When the brand's name cannot be used prominently at a site, the ampersand asset allows signage or labelling to echo the brand's look and feel – for example, using phrases like Gather & Enjoy, Sweet & Delicious, or Coffee & Cake.

The branding also stretches for seasonal flexibility, so G&G can demonstrate its commitment to sourcing and serving food at the time of the year when it tastes best.



Word count: 460

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

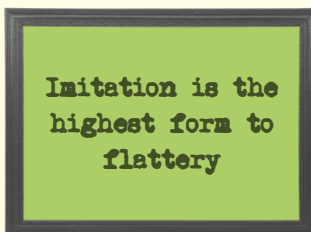
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NB - Main results removed for reasons of confidentiality



Design fees represent a tiny 0.18% of revenue achieved since the rebrand. And even if we factor in the implementation costs, it's still an incredibly small 0.73%. This signifies a huge return on design investment for G&G - especially so if you consider that the average marketing budget as a percentage of revenue for B2B businesses is 4%, according to Forrester.



Within a year of G&G's launch, at least one of its catering rivals redesigned its website, adopting a brand design style reminiscent of that of G&G.

“The brand design readdresses the balance between client, customer and caterer and putting the customer at the heart of what we do, offering something truly different to the marketplace.”

Allister Richards, Managing Director, Gather & Gather

Word count: 237

OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

G&G launched in spring 2013 at an event for prospective clients, alongside the launch of a new website (in the brand's new look). Otherwise it was brought to market without any additional advertising or marketing.

Recent brand-led initiatives by G&G include:

- **Gathered: A G&G recipe book**
- **Chef of the Year Awards launched in 2014**

These initiatives are strong illustrations of how the brand's positioning and values are now embodied and embedded in the company's culture. They are purposeful, creative, empowering and have real integrity behind them. What better evidence that G&G brings food and people together, ensuring the customer really is at the heart of everything it does?



Research resources

Mitie/Gather & Gather: Internal data 2012-2015

Forrester report: Focus B2B Marketing Budget Gains on Business Outcomes to Succeed in 2014

Word count: 130