

# HARD WORKING PRODUCTS FOR HARD WORKING PEOPLE



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Submission title: GRAFT brand

Industry sector: Manufacturing  
(Construction & Materials)

Client company: Polyseam

Design consultancy: The Engine Room

Submission date: 1 July 2016

For publication

The Engine Room.

"The design insight and research carried out at the outset of this project led to a shift in strategy for Polyseam. We moved from being just a manufacturer, to a brand house, and have transformed the business."

Kjetil Bogstad, CEO.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Engine Room was commissioned by adhesive, sealant and filler manufacturer, Polyseam Ltd, to carry out a strategic review and brand development project for their innovative new product 'IPT' – an all-in-one adhesive and sealant.

The subsequent approach and design thinking outputs led to business transformation for the company. The brief was reframed and the business has experienced significant change and growth further to their launch of a new product brand – GRAFT.

# 744%

UPLIFT IN ANNUAL  
SALES REVENUE  
SINCE REBRAND

# 22:1

REVENUE RETURN ON  
DESIGN INVESTMENT



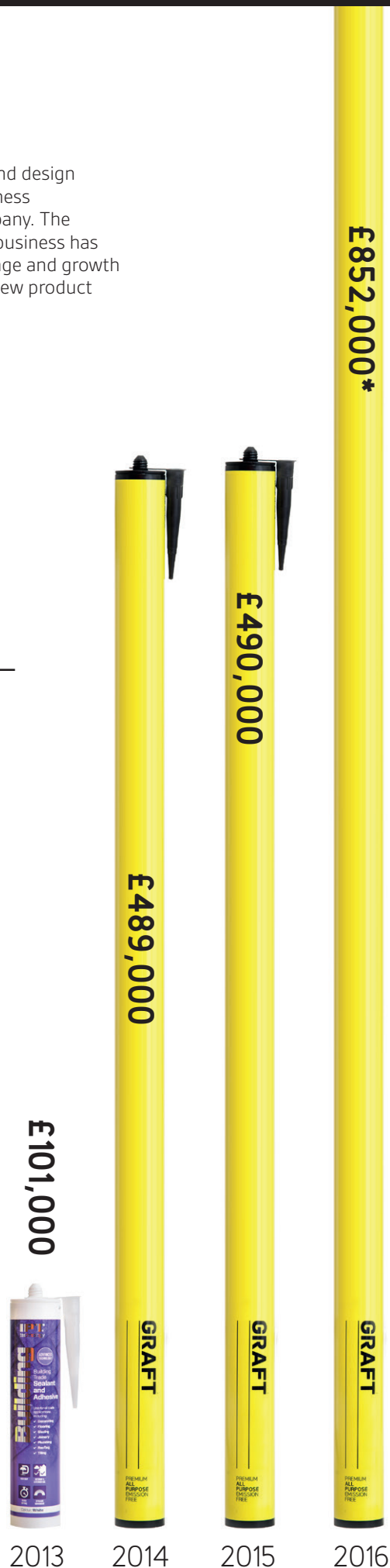
# 17:1

EXPORT RETURN ON  
DESIGN INVESTMENT



# £1m

INCREASE IN EXPORT  
SALES SINCE REBRAND





# PROJECT OVERVIEW

## OUTLINE OF PROJECT BRIEF

In a challenging manufacturing market, Polyseam were looking to innovate in order to drive growth. A different way forward was needed.

UK manufacturing in this sector was under threat. An increasing number of brands were taking manufacturing in-house or buying from overseas. Market potential was therefore reducing and the remaining market was increasingly price driven, marginalising profits for the firm.

In response, through their own research, development and in-house chemical expertise, Polyseam developed a new product based on new chemical technology. This product was an all-in-one adhesive and sealant, an environmentally-friendly product that did all the jobs of an adhesive and all the jobs of a sealant, highly effectively, potentially facilitating the launch of a new category.

The technology was award-winning, and Polyseam packaged it as a new product that they named IPT (inert polymer technology). As a manufacturer of own-branded products to date, they were new to the field of driving their own brand and were struggling to gain traction in the market. They approached The Engine Room specifically to:

- Clarify their market positioning
- Review the name and brand of the project
- Recommend the design and communications tools they would need in order to succeed.

Specific as this challenge appeared at first sight, The Engine Room wanted to further understand the objectives in terms of strategy, growth and manufacturing potential, in order to develop an appropriate product brand design strategy. We wanted to explore the real potential for design for Polyseam and IPT. We proposed an initial research and insights stage that would enable us to make our design strategy recommendations.

We needed to be sure that the ultimate design strategy would maximise market opportunity for Polyseam and build on the capacity and capability within the company. We needed to delve deep. Our resulting insight and research led to a complete reframing of the brief.



Insights included:

- Team workshops
- Product demonstrations
- Shadowing tradesmen
- Interviews with Polyseam staff across levels
- Product testing
- User observation - trade and DIY
- In-store point-of-sale research - UK and Norway
- Research calls to 75 users of sealants/adhesives including plumbers, kitchen fitters, tilers
- Competitive product surveys
- Online research.

## DESCRIPTION

Established in 1993, Polyseam has built its reputation as an 'own brand' manufacturer of adhesives, sealants, fillers and related products, manufacturing for market leading UK brands such as Wickes, Evo-stick, B&Q and Homebase.

In 2007, four Polyseam-manufactured products featured in the top 10 of a 'Which?' survey on adhesives and the business had established a firm foothold in this manufacturing market.

They were also a manufacturing supplier to Protecta, Norway's leading distributor of passive fire protection products. Protecta was in the process of buying Polyseam when we were introduced to the firm. During our work with them, the purchase went through. Polyseam was retained as the corporate brand, now housing Protecta and GRAFT as product brands.

"UK manufacturing in this sector was under threat. An increasing number of brands were taking manufacturing in-house or buying from overseas."

# PROJECT OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

## OVERVIEW OF MARKET

The global market value of adhesives and sealants was estimated to be \$45.36 billion in 2014 and was projected to reach \$59.75 billion by 2020. Technological advancements were fuelling demand for sealants in the mature North American and European markets. Less cure time and increased performance benefits (such as high-performing seals, better adhesion to a variety of substrates, resistance to chemicals and gas), were reviving the market. (Source: "Adhesives & Sealants Market by Technology (Water, Solvent, Hot-Melt, Reactive & Others), by Chemistry (PAE, PVA, VAE, EVA, SBS, Synthetic Rubber, Polyamide, Polyurethane, Epoxy, Cyanoacrylate, & Others), & by Application - Global Forecast to 2020").

An increased demand for water-based and environmentally friendly products was also clear. Part of IPT's innovation is that it is the only product that is VOC-free (volatile organic compounds). It is also solvent-free, has a 4-hour fire rating and has a 25-year mould-free guarantee.

This highlighted the positive market opportunities in the sector, yet UK manufacturing only of adhesives and sealants was in decline. Polyseam needed to do something very different if they were to survive and capitalise on positive growth trends in the wider market.

That said, the market is crowded, with suppliers driven down by the cost-conscious end user and the buying power of the sheds that stock their products.

Typically, the competitive landscape was confusing, with shelf space cluttered with a mass of competing, yet undifferentiated products that are hard to decipher from one another. This led to stress purchases from the DIYer and quality versus price purchases from the trade.

If Polyseam were going to complete, it felt like they needed to step into the brand space, rather than stick to their manufacturing roots. But the opportunity was to do something different and stand out on the shelf, being clear on its proposition and confident in its application.

"If Polyseam were going to compete, it felt like they needed to step into the brand space, rather than stick to their manufacturing roots."

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**Commencement of project:**  
August 2013

**Project launch date:**  
March 2014

**Size of design budget:**  
£60,000

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# OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION

## FINDINGS AND STRATEGY

We observed a level of caution from the trade when considering the value of an adhesive and sealant in one. They trusted products that were fit for a clear purpose. This was a concern. The DIY market was more open-minded, but trade was going to be key to product success.

Polyseam's high-risk strategy of diversification, i.e.: new products into new markets (as they had previously targeted companies rather than retailers or distributors), was also a concern.

Insights informed us that IPT alone would not achieve the required growth ambition.

Yet, the market was in growth, and there was a clear opportunity. There were also some key themes and truths associated with Polyseam:

- Technical experts
- Market-leading
- Global
- Genuine

Their manufacturing credentials were first-class and their innovation with IPT responded well to an international demand for solvent-free products.

Combining these findings and building on the positives led to a recommendation of a shift in strategy from diversification to market development.

A key conclusion from insight was that the brand project should extend to a *range* of products, not just IPT. This would open up a bigger market opportunity, whilst capitalising on Polyseam's wider manufacturing expertise.



# OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION (CONTINUED)

## DESIGN

In-store findings were conclusive:

- No well-executed distinction in the adhesive and sealant space.
- A need in the DIY market for an easy-to-use, all-purpose product, but it also needed to 'jump off the shelf.'
- Confronted with a sea of complex, overcrowded labels, there was clear agitation amongst DIYers and confusion at the point of product selection.

## REFRAMING THE BRIEF

We began to reframe the brief and to de-risk the strategy by creating a product brand that would be truly transformative in the industry. There was still a place for the IPT product, but also a focus on a wider opportunity for a product range that would appeal to both trade and to domestic DIYers.

## BRAND

We knew that trying to compete by simply making bolder claims and including more information on the label was not going to stand out. A confident approach was required where more would be less. We

developed a name for the product range: GRAFT

We developed a headline proposition:

HARD WORKING PRODUCTS FOR  
HARD WORKING PEOPLE

A PRODUCT THAT WORKS AS  
HARD AS YOU DO

We created bold and simple typography on a background of stand-out colours for the individual lines, that would differentiate on the shelf. This fitted with the no-nonsense culture of the trade, whilst appealing to the need for simplicity to the DIYer. Visual design cues were paramount to ensure it responded to the buyers' needs in terms of product selection, benefits and usability. We brought the emission-free message to the fore, which was particularly attractive to international audiences.

We recognised the value of IPT as a technology brand rather than a product brand. We gave this its own identity, protecting the intellectual property and enabling the potential for future licensing.



Word count: 491



## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

### Annual Product Sales



**744%** UPLIFT IN ANNUAL SALES  
POST REBRAND OVER 3 YEARS

### Annual Company Sales

AGAINST A BACKDROP OF DECLINING TURNOVER...

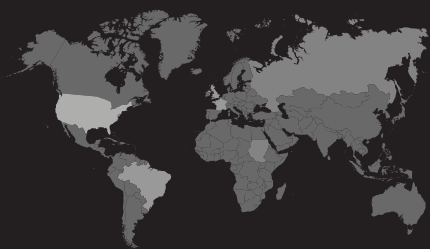
**▲31%** UPLIFT IN  
TURNOVER  
£5.5m to £7.2m IN 3 YEARS

IN ADDITION, PROFITABILITY  
IN UK MANUFACTURE HAS  
INCREASED BY

**12%**

### Export Sales Turnover

**£1m**  
INCREASE IN SALES  
SINCE REBRAND



**8** NEW EXPORT  
COUNTRIES

**22:1**   
REVENUE RETURN ON  
DESIGN INVESTMENT

**17:1**   
EXPORT RETURN ON  
DESIGN INVESTMENT



## ADDITIONAL IMPACT

### 5 NEW JOBS

Created at Polyseam in the UK as a direct result of GRAFT's success.



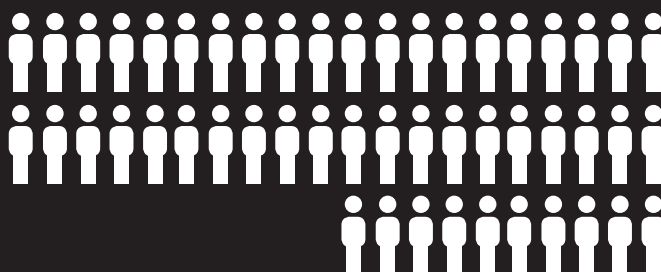
CURRENTLY BUILDING A

50,000<sub>sqm</sub>  
PURPOSE-BUILT  
FACTORY



It is anticipated that the move will create

50 NEW JOBS BY 2020



### Awards for GRAFT IPT



TOTALLY DIY  
SILVER AWARD  
WINNER

DECORATIVE PRODUCT  
OF THE YEAR



TOTALLY DIY  
SILVER AWARD  
WINNER

DECORATIVE PRODUCT  
OF THE YEAR

GRAFT now has secure listings in Edmundsons, Stax and multiple independent distributors nationally and internationally. Polyseam is currently in late stage negotiation with a leading UK DIY shed.

## OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

Protecta, a key client of Polyseam and Norway's leading distributor of passive fire protection products, acquired Polyseam close to the outset of the project. They were in the process of buying Polyseam when we were introduced to the firm. Led by an entrepreneurial CEO, Protecta had recognised the difficulties that their key manufacturer were facing. During our work with them, the purchase went through, providing a more robust platform for chemical and product innovation investment. That said, the figures shown in this submission are Polyseam UK figures

only, therefore comparing like for like and highlighting the value of design thinking at both strategy and execution stages for UK manufacturing.

## RESEARCH RESOURCES

Statistics: Polyseam Ltd

Research report:

"Adhesives & Sealants Market by Technology (Water, Solvent, Hot-Melt, Reactive & Others), by Chemistry (PAE, PVA, VAE, EVA, SBS, Synthetic Rubber, Polyamide, Polyurethane, Epoxy, Cyanoacrylate, & Others), & by Application - Global Forecast to 2020"



# GRAFT™