

DBA 2009 Design Effectiveness Awards

Project Title	Graduate Recruitment	Client Company	Graduates Yorkshire
Category	1 Corporate/Brand Identity	Design consultancy	Honey Creative
Sub Category	1.2 Design and implementation costs under £100,000	Current date	March 2009



“The design and branding across all channels has surpassed everyone’s expectations with sales growing from zero to a projected £1,036,000 in total for two years! It was also a breath of fresh air to work with the Honey team as they really understand and focus on ROI for the outset. Honey truly are commercial and creative business partners.”

Martin Edmondson - CEO, Graduates Yorkshire

“It was so rewarding to see how design and branding can be used as a catalyst for change. Honey really did make it easy for all stakeholders to come on the exciting yet challenging journey. It is testament to their simple focused approach that has led to the success of Graduates Yorkshire. They are lovely people too.”

Michael Noble - CEO, Yorkshire Universities

2. Executive Summary

Brief

Graduates Yorkshire (GY) is a recruitment brand aimed at graduate employers in the Yorkshire region. The brief to Honey was to:

- Create a brand that is capable of smoothly **transitioning the service from a free one to paid-for**
- Provide strategic and commercial consultancy to facilitate the brand's migration from a university 'internal service' to a commercial model
- Formulate a communications strategy that is capable of engaging with a wide range of stakeholders
- Name creation
- Apply new branding across all touch points including: website, marketing communications, advertising, exhibitions and recruitment tools

Commercial impact

- Despite transition to paid-for service, sales up from zero to an astonishing total of **£1,036,000** in two years
- Forecasted sales for year three is up **44%**
- The exceptional success of GY's relationship with Honey has created several brand extensions:
 - Consultancy
 - Franchising –
 - Special projects –
 - Database of graduates up by **370%**
 - Website hits up to **400,000** per month
- Blue chip business wins include HBOS, Asda and NHS Yorkshire & Humber
- Tender to lead innovative, high profile Internship Programme for Yorkshire Forward won on 5 June 2009
- On a lighter note, 'Made in Yorkshire' t-shirts delivered revenue of £480!

Human effects

As the business goes from strength-to-strength, employees are becoming increasingly aware of the power of their brand and love working with it.

“ Graduates Yorkshire is a fantastic, reliable and efficient way for local employers to meet their recruitment needs in the most effective manner. I would have no hesitation recommending this site to other employers.”

Faresh Misuri - Graduate Employer, Blueberry, Leeds



3. Project overview

3.1 Outline of project brief:

Graduates Yorkshire (GY) is the leading recruitment brand primarily aimed at graduate employers in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

The brief incorporated five strands:

- Create a brand that is capable of smoothly **transitioning the service from a free one to a service that levies a fee** on what it does. In other words, the resulting brand had to reflect a professionalism and gravitas that would set it apart from the competition and that establishes the business as the authority on graduate recruitment in the region
- Provide strategic and commercial consultancy to help facilitate the brand's migration from a university 'internal service' to a stand-alone social enterprise model
- Formulate a communications strategy that is flexible enough to enable GY to engage with a wide range of stakeholders: for example, business leaders to graduates; universities to local enterprises
- Validate or generate a new name (formerly known as 'Graduate Link')
- Apply new branding across all touch points including: website, marketing communications (including new digital platform), advertising, exhibitions and recruitment tools

3.2 Description

GY's parent company is Yorkshire Universities, a membership organisation owned by all ten Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in the Yorkshire region. Working in partnership with the university careers services, GY operate an on-line recruitment service matching primarily but not exclusively graduates from Yorkshire universities with Yorkshire employers. Previously known as Graduate Link, it's a web-driven service managed out of Sheffield, Leeds and York.

3.3 Overview of market

Each year in Yorkshire, around 40,000 new undergraduates leave the region's HEIs rising to around 55,000 if you include postgraduate qualifications. Many of these graduates leave the area to return home or to work but, three years after graduation, research shows around half of all graduates from Yorkshire Universities are settled in the region. The area also sees an influx of graduates from other regions each year as many return home after studying away.

In Yorkshire, the majority of graduate employers are SME's and Public Sector Organisations. Nationally, prior to the recession, the graduate recruitment market has seen a steady year-on-year growth; however, various agencies are reporting between a 5% and a 12% decline in the availability of graduate jobs since the beginning of 2009.

In terms of competitors, GY is unique as there are no major commercial graduate-specific services operating solely to serve the Yorkshire region. The national competitors to GY – such as Prospects – offer very few vacancies within the region. For local recruiters, the nearest competitors include agencies who cannot match GY on price and the 'MyJobs' group which is a generic job site with regional variations that tends to host a lot of agency vacancies.

3. Project overview - cont.

3.4 Project launch date

Soft launch: September 2007

Full launch: April 2008

3.6 Outline of design solutions

All of GY stakeholders had a strong affinity for the existing Graduate Link brand, so any change had to be done well and managed effectively. Therefore Honey used the re-branding process to enable GY to engage key stakeholders in the design process to build ownership and buy-in.

Working closely with the client, Honey helped develop the business and marketing strategy, starting with a robust process for change. With these in place, we were able to create a unique and flexible brand identity that reflects the business and which enables GY to communicate clearly with a broad range of very different audiences from graduates to employers and local development agencies and Government.

Clearly with a name like 'Graduates Yorkshire', the resulting brand identity had to have a regional 'edge' that was achieved by basing the logo on the shape of Yorkshire itself, with dots representing graduates and businesses being drawn together on their respective journeys. For the graduate that journey begins as a student, moving through graduation through to prospective employee. The service has been designed to follow this journey and offer benefit at each touch point. The role of design was to communicate the brand's offering across this life cycle.

3. Project overview - cont.

However, at the outset it was clear that the business model could eventually be taken into new regions, both in the UK and overseas, so it was important that the identity was sufficiently flexible to allow for expansion into new areas without compromising on its integrity.

Honey developed the brands' multi-channel marketing campaign that could last for several years with a 'Put Yourself in the Picture' theme, this enables graduates to picture themselves in their dream job and employers to picture the ideal candidate for their graduate position.

The identity has now been rolled out across all marketing communications, including corporate literature, website, exhibition materials, direct mail and advertising.

In respect of the website, as this is central to all GY activities, it was particularly important to get this right both visually and technically. In this respect, Honey developed the site to engage with the different users from the start, the home page directs employers and graduates to different areas of the site with tailored information for each. All this whilst maintaining the consistent brand message.

This exercise culminated in a launch event that saw every member of careers staff gathered at an event in Leeds. This event was a watershed moment, and culminated in the 'reveal' of the new brand on a large exhibition stand. Delegates were given bags full of GY branded gifts that continue to be prominent in offices around the region today. Honey also ran a workshop at this event explaining design rationale, and further helping to root the new brand in the consciousness of this key group of stakeholders.



4-7. Summary of results - cont.

Increase in sales:

The period immediately following the re-brand, April to September 2008, saw impressive trading results, in terms of client wins, incoming revenue and growth in the customer base:

- From a standing start, GY enjoyed an astonishing total growth in sales from zero to **£1,036,000** in the two years since its launch:
 - Revenue in year one
 - Revenue in year two
 - Representing a **210%** growth in sales from year one to year two
- Forecasted sales for year three (2009/10) is up **44%**
- A revenue was achieved against the soft launch in October 2007 when the new brand identity was applied to the existing web technology and original copy
- In April 2008, an **88%** uplift in sales was achieved in the six months following the full re-branding of the website, working with a new technology and enhanced web 'look and feel' design by Honey
- A revenue has been delivered through the creation and delivery of internship programmes designed for third parties such as local governmental bodies and businesses – the reason the GY was awarded the contract was because they, clients such as local governments, were so impressed with the quality of the overall branding and the design of marketing and web materials
- A further income has been generated this year through the provision of consultancy services in the year 2008/09. The reason behind the decision to diversify in this way was the prediction that the recruitment market would be adversely affected by the downturn – so additional revenue streams would need to be found – and secondly, the realisation that GY's intelligence on the youth market could be translated into a valuable resource for local employers. Building on the now trusted GY brand, Honey created a set of sales tools that clearly articulated GY's insights into the youth market. Their first target was the Government Office for Yorkshire & The Humber (GOYH) who immediately commissioned GY to undertake a research programme to establish what perceptions graduates and the younger employment market had in respect of working for local governmental offices. Local students were recruited to undertake the research, the results of which were tremendously illuminating in respect of GOYH's need to undertake a recruitment campaign to replace its ageing workforce with fresh young recruits with a contemporary outlook and specialist training
- Following the research GOYH commissioned GY to write a strategy paper on the recruitment campaign itself, and Honey is now working with them on the development of a business plan that will lead to the creation of a new brand, e-channel and marketing communications.
- What is particularly rewarding about this initiative is that the very first client that GY targeted with the consultancy offering, has already returned a significant ROI
- Meanwhile, plans to franchise the business to other regions in the UK are already being received positively with a contract about to be signed. This particular opportunity was recognised in the early planning stages of the business which means that the branding and web technology that GY and Honey developed together has been designed to enable expansion into new regions without compromising the brand 'look and feel' and integrity

4-7. Summary of results - cont.

- As a result of the exceptional success of the relationship between Honey and GY, they are now seen to be the experts in their field which has led to a number of interesting brand extensions:
 - Further franchising opportunities both in the UK and overseas
 - Delivery of under/post-graduation programmes such as 'Careers Guidance', 'Graduate Enterprise' (providing advice on setting up a business) and, most recently, an internship proposition that will support graduates and businesses. This latest initiative is expected to drive a revenue over the next three years

“ This was all achieved thanks to the smart and powerful design and multi channel branding created by Honey.”

Martin Edmondson - CEO, Graduates Yorkshire

In summary, GY has gone from a standing start with an original database of 5,000 graduates that took eight years to build, to a database of **23,500** demonstrating a **370%** increase. The website is now getting **400,000** hits per month and GY has converted four new clients.

On a lighter note, **£480** has been made from sales of GY branded 'Made in Yorkshire' t-shirts that have become a bit of a legend in the region! (40 x £12 t-shirts sold and a new order of 100 t-shirts has been placed.)

Client wins

This period saw a number of unprecedented client wins for GY. Historically the client base had been SMEs and some public sector, with minimal blue chip business. In this period GY won large contracts with HBOS, Asda and signed a deal with NHS Yorkshire and Humber to advertise all their graduate level roles (up to 2,000 jobs). This was down to the improved brand kudos and credibility. These relationships have continued to develop and GY is now seeing repeat business from them.



4-7. Summary of results - cont.

Improvements in staff morale and changes in staff behavior productivity:

As the business goes from strength-to-strength, employees are becoming increasingly aware of the power of their brand and are looking for every opportunity to bring it to the forefront of everyone's mind:

“The new brand gives me the confidence to approach HR Directors from some of the regions biggest companies such as PWC, the UK's largest graduate employer, and succeed. We are no longer just another place to advertise roles but the place graduate employers in Yorkshire need to be seen.”

John Cusworth - Business Development Manager

“I have always been really proud of the work we do. Now I'm really proud of the brand we've created too, and love to show it off whenever possible!”

Natalie Emmanuel - Client Services and Operations Manager

“Graduates Yorkshire is a brand with a real personality. I spend a lot of my time on the road taking our 6ft long stand (or the “beast”, as it's affectionately known) to Universities and events across Yorkshire. I get to see first hand how people react to us, how we've gone from being a well kept secret to a company identifiable by our trade mark green, and how our new branding seems to warm people to us and encourage them to approach us more easily.”

Imogen Hesp - Marketing Officer



4-7. Summary of results - cont.

Changes in perception:

When GY moved from a free service to a business that levied a fee on what it did, it managed to retain most of its original clients. This was because although GY was now being perceived as a commercial entity, it was still regarded as part of the 'university family'. It is fair to say that Honey's design played a large part in this by delivering a brand identity that was immediately engaging and approachable.

“ Graduates Yorkshire is a fantastic, reliable and efficient way for local employers to meet their recruitment needs in the most effective manner. I would have no hesitation recommending this site to other employers, keep up the good work.”

Faresh Misuri - Graduate Employer, Blueberry, Leeds

GY is now perceived as the market leader – and leading voice – in regional graduate recruitment by other regions and other Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and there has been recent interest from two other UK regions for the provision of a similar services – which will probably be delivered in a franchise from managed by GY.

Post re-brand, GY's standing with Yorkshire Forward – the local RDA – is such that GY has tendered and won (on Friday 5 June 2009) an innovative, high profile Internship Programme.

Finally, the re-brand has given GY and its stakeholders the confidence to launch a focused NPD programme, with a view to launching GY Consulting and a Graduate Placement scheme in 2009/10 all designed by Honey.

8. Research resources

The project team has looked at and used:

- Published data
- Quantitative and qualitative research
- Focus groups

Other influencing factors:

The service existed in exactly the same format as it is now before the re-branding programme – the only real change being that the services provided are no longer free.

Immediately following the re-branding, the spend on advertising was reduced by 35% so the successes GY have enjoyed have almost entirely as a result of the re-branding and the optimisation of the web technology developed in conjunction with Honey

10. Entry form

Submitted by **Graduates Yorkshire**

Signature



Name **Martin Edmondson**

Position **CEO**

Submitted by **Honey**

Signature



Name **Doug James**

Position **Managing Director**

