



More than a logo - Ogier's chief operating officer on the award-winning rebrand

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Jamie Bore, Ogier's chief operating officer, learned a lot about the process of rebranding - which was also an education in some key principles of people management...

Our rebrand process began in 2014, when the management board looked at the existing branding materials and came to the conclusion there was something missing. For a start, it looked strikingly similar to the branding of a lot of our competitors - rather conservative, with 'old-school' blues and whites. But more fundamentally, it didn't say anything about what Ogier 'is', about what we think is important, and about what differentiates us from other firms.

That didn't make sense to us, as actually there are a lot of things that differentiate Ogier from other offshore law firms.

For example, we were the first trans-Atlantic offshore law firm, the first to operate out of mainland China, the first to open an office in Luxembourg and the first to make a 'non-lawyer' a group partner. When surveyed, 97% of our clients also said not only that they would reinstruct us, but also that they would recommend us to others. We like to do things differently - to pinpoint what really matters and to make life easier for our clients.

It stands to reason that our branding should reflect that, and should make Ogier stand out too. All we knew was that at that time, it did not. In addition, it didn't reflect the way that we saw the offshore legal market changing, in terms of the demand for efficient and effective advice,

delivered by approachable and accessible people who understand their needs, underpinned by the innovative use of technology.

The sale of our fiduciary business in 2014 also gave us the opportunity to focus solely on the law. It brought in a new generation of partners with fresh ideas about how the future of offshore legal services looked, and therefore about how we should present ourselves to the world.

That's when we really knew we had to rebrand. However, you can rebrand anything you like; but unless it truly means something and accords with the wider business culture, it will just be an expensive way of changing your headed paper.

We decided that the right thing to do would be to have a brand steering group (BSG), which could contribute to (and ultimately make) all of the decisions, and that it would have to represent the views of the different strata, service lines and jurisdictions to give a representative voice.

In a firm of 350 people over eight jurisdictions, we selected 15 representatives from the different legal service lines, but also from business services, not only across all locations, but at different levels of the business. By selecting people based on their role, position and jurisdiction we believed a new brand had the opportunity to become a reflection and representation of the true culture of the firm.

One of the BSG's first activities was a survey of all employees. We asked everyone: 'What's your view on the current brand?' And the majority said that it wasn't dynamic enough, that it wasn't modern. The second question was: 'What's your view of our culture?' Here, we happily heard the opposite - it's modern, it's dynamic, it's innovative, it's forward-thinking. We then took exactly the same approach with clients, asking for their views. That was incredibly important, as internal views might not always reflect the full perception of the brand. The clients backed the views of the staff, saying that the branding did not reflect the culture and service that they had experienced, and saying that while the service that we provide stands out from the pack, our brand didn't.

It was at this point that it became crystal clear the exercise was about our philosophy, strategy and culture (not colours, logos and straplines). It was about people having a view on what we stand for.

I'm an accountant by trade - marketing isn't where my expertise or experience lies. While the project was tremendously intellectually stimulating, our new head of marketing and I agreed that we'd also need to go outside for some help to guide us through the process. The clear choice for us was a London creative branding and communications agency, who impressed us not just with their portfolio but critically, with the way they prioritised guiding us through the process and placing the strategy at the heart of the process, not the design.

The agency's first - and ongoing - job was to educate us through the process, in terms of the

internal communications and managing our stakeholders. The BSG was largely comprised of lawyers and accountants like me - not people who do these things day to day. I must say that the working relationship was brilliant. I felt like the agency's strategy director was coaching us through it.

We eventually completed the full rebrand, including new website, within five months. With that kind of timeframe, the process requires significant project discipline. You can easily veer off course - get completely side-tracked by what seems very important at the time, but really isn't. You need strong leadership to ensure you follow the process and get a great output.

Once we'd collated the results of client and staff surveys, the BSG and the agency organised a presentation to Partners. By this point we'd arrived at a brand strategy built around 'getting straight to the point', managing complexity and delivering 'what really matters to clients'. Feedback was already that this was a good reflection of the firm's culture, and also a strong differentiator with our competitors. However, we knew that we had to get the Partners on side at this stage, before we'd even started to think about things like colours and logos. If we'd jumped straight to the end - 'it's a red O on a black background' without saying why and how we'd arrived at that conclusion - we'd have struggled to get it sold. Fundamentally, it's not a design process. It's a strategy process, the output of which is turned into a design and a logo. It sounds naïve saying it now - but I think that a lot of people walked into that room thinking 'we're going to be deciding the colour'. It emerged that the colour was, in fact, the smallest element.

The story so far might sound simple - but the process wasn't without its challenges. For example, different jurisdictions had different views because of the service lines that they cover, because of their own work culture, and even nuances in language. This threw up a related problem - the COO balances three important roles: to complete the project on time, to complete it on budget, and to get a great result. It's clear that personal preference will be part of any branding exercise, but it's important to ensure that the project lead doesn't indirectly become the default decision maker. This is a real challenge when dealing with what is a highly subjective area.

It's also important to get everyone to understand the brand strategy without the distraction of those brand visuals. For that reason absolutely everyone in the organisation also attended a workshop in small groups, where we only spoke about the strategy, to find if it resonated with people, and whether it was truly unique. In these workshops, we also identified areas where we could all collectively take action as a firm to deliver on the new brand strategy (and ultimately the enhanced service clients told us they valued). This resulted in some tangible actions being developed and implemented by the business - we don't send lengthy legal documents out without a short summary, we're concise in our communications and we cut out the 'noise'. That's all about that core value of getting straight to the point.

Only when the strategic process was concluded did we embark on the creative development with the agency. Here, at the start, the agency put up the logos and straplines of our competitors. What

quickly became apparent was that law firms are a homogenous group. Few firms were that far away from the traditional blue, which I thought was really interesting. Again, this felt like an opportunity to stand out from the pack.

And then when we launched our colours what became apparent was that both clients and staff understood how we got to the design elements including the 'O' representing not just Ogier, but also simplicity and getting straight to the point. They understood why we had done that, how it related to the brand strategy and how it was not just an arbitrary decision about 'red on black'.

We launched the new branding in all eight jurisdictions simultaneously, and we did that by throwing a brand party, and launching a new website, with collateral, staff and client gifts, and even a [brand video](#). We really went to town on the promotion. There was lots of opportunity to get involved - which worked really well at getting people to buy into the point of the wider exercise.

Just over a year after the project, we won the award for best rebranding campaign at the Citywealth Brand Management and Reputation awards in 2016. Clearly, the process also taught us a few things - including that websites take a long time (far longer than you expect). You also wouldn't believe the number of places your brand can need physically switching - from the sides of buildings, to USB sticks and company cars!

Most importantly, you have to have a great marketing team who are prepared to work long hours, and you have to hire the right agency. Don't skimp on the agency, because it's a guide on the journey to getting the right outcome.

Finally, if you don't all agree on the brand strategy first, you can't justify your design choices. If you don't get that right, everything comes down to unchecked personal preference - then you're in a world of trouble.

About Ogier

Ogier is a professional services firm with the knowledge and expertise to handle the most demanding and complex transactions and provide expert, efficient and cost-effective services to all our clients. We regularly win awards for the quality of our client service, our work and our people.

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