



Designing Demand | Case Study | CreteAngle

Re-branding produces concrete results for mixer manufacturer

Background

CreteAngle has been manufacturing small-scale concrete and composite pan-type mixers since 1956 – indeed, the company name has become the generic term for this type of mixer. The pioneering company has continually expanded its range to suit new products that require specialist mixing techniques.

The challenge

Competition, especially from China, was posing an increasing threat. Although CreteAngle is progressive and able to offer bespoke solutions to meet customer requirements, its communications and marketing materials were dated and confusing. Furthermore, it had no strategic marketing and growth plan.

The response

The process of creating a new, contemporary brand identity – incorporated in stationery, literature and exhibition stands – had the added benefit of helping to focus the company's thinking about its overall strategy.

The outcome

Apart from a clear positioning for the brand, ably demonstrated in the interest generated at a trade fair in Germany, business development has been energised. Sales activity has been given a new impetus and there is increased confidence and motivation among both management and employees. The company is on track to increase sales by 10% per year.

“Taking part in Designing Demand has energised our business development and the confidence and motivation among our staff has been noticeably boosted.”

Significant impact at trade fair for 'Land Rovers of the mixing world'

Well-established, successful British businesses are increasingly at risk from overseas competition, especially cut-price, mass-produced merchandise from the Far East. Yet the best of British can see off this threat with service levels that simply can't be matched by these competitors.

Sussex-based CreteAngle, whose products sell across the world, has been manufacturing small-scale concrete and composite pan-type mixers since 1956. So successful has it been that 'CreteAngle' has become the generic term for this type of mixer which is unique in using a forced action motion for mixing the substrate in a pan. Simple 'bell' type mixers rely on gravity which does not achieve a fine blend of mixed materials.

However, with Chinese competitors chipping away at sales by marketing their copycat products under the name CreteAngle, managing director Gavin Smith was encouraged by his Business Link advisor to attend a free Designing Demand workshop in the summer of 2007.

Developed by the Design Council, funded by SEEDA and delivered by Business Link, Designing Demand helps companies to make strategic design decisions and set up and run design projects.

"Whilst there was no doubt about the excellence of our products or our customer service, we recognised that the poor quality of our corporate image and communications materials meant we were just not connecting with our customers," admitted managing director Gavin Smith.

After signing up to the Designing Demand Generate programme, which also provides help with formulating and implementing a business growth strategy, Gavin and his team met Ian Ferris, the design associate assigned to oversee the project.

Ian introduced them to four design agencies from which they chose Surrey-based brand consultants Verve.

Verve creative director Paul Hitchens rose to the challenge, creating and implementing the new branding across stationery, the company brochure, product sheets, the exhibition stand and even the mixers – and all in time for CreteAngle's participation in an autumn trade show in Germany.

"This is a fantastic British brand that had gone to sleep and allowed the competition to creep up," he said. "They needed to remind people who they are and what makes them special.

CreteAngle products are the Land Rovers of the mixing world – highly durable, functional pieces of equipment."

The new branding brought the company's image right up to date and Gavin Smith saw immediate results.

"In the past, visitors looking at our stand have been confused about what we do," he said. "This time it was clear that we are manufacturers rather than contractors or rubber crumb suppliers. We had enquiries from over 60 countries and came away with 200 strong leads to follow up.

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Ian Ferris is equally delighted.

"This client now understands how design can reach out to the market environment via a strong brand identity," he said. "In the process, it has focused CreteAngle's thinking about who they are, what they stand for and how they want to compete.

"The success of the programme, which will be completed when the website has been re-designed, has encouraged them to repeat the process with the other companies in their group."

Jackie Walker, regional programme manager for Designing Demand at Business Link in the South East, said: "This example of a pioneering British company falling prey to foreign competition proves that it's not enough to simply have a good product. In this case, external input helped provide focus, not only on corporate branding but also on strategic thinking necessary to take the company forward, increase sales and see off the competition."



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