

## Keynotes

### Robert Jones, Head of New Thinking, Wolff Olins

#### *Where next for branding and museums?*

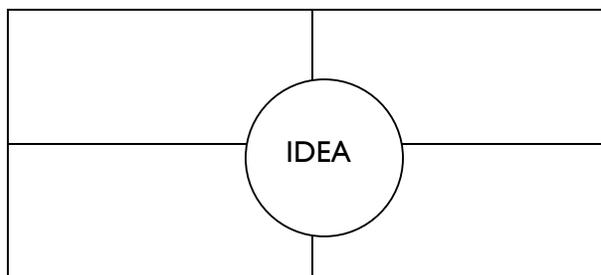
Robert explained that this presentation was an update of a keynote he delivered in Venice, where museums and galleries are more connected and cross cultural: 'less like cathedrals and more like bazaars'. In the original presentation he also included the results of a survey he did among attendees.

For Wolff Olins, branding is not about the name, the logo, etc. but what is at the core of the company or organisation.

Examples of previous clients include:

- FIRST DIRECT – BANKING TO SUIT THE CUSTOMER (they revolutionised banking by aiming to please the customer)
- ORANGE – A WIRE-FREE FUTURE (they actually drove the market a long way and made Wi-fi ordinary and more affordable today)
- GE (General Electric): IMAGINATION AT WORK (they moved from a traditional engineering business by providing solutions for customers and are now 'greening up')

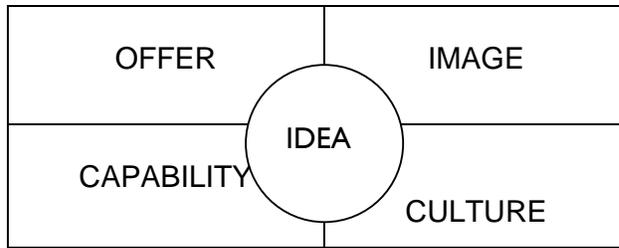
Wolff Olins's view is that when branding is understood in this way, at its very best, what an organisation stands for influences *everything* else. The idea has to be at the core, as shown below.



Robert was keen to point out that this represents the *ideal* as far as Wolff Olins is concerned, but research also suggests it is commercially worthwhile being brand-led: 82% of brand-led businesses outperform their industry.<sup>1</sup>

The right hand side of the matrix, as Wolff Olins would represent it, shows the 'soft' aspects of the business. The image is external and is about the logo and slogan, how the organisation presents its face to the world and its customers, whereas the culture is internal or soft, as this influences how staff behave towards and regard customers and users. Both the offer and capability are about how an organisation uses the brand to build skills and make a competitive offer.

<sup>1</sup> Booz Allen Hamilton, 2004



### **So what does all this mean for museums and galleries?**

Above is the traditional sign for a museum or gallery, but does it really reflect what kind of places they are today? Specifically, Robert asked, what does branding mean for museums?

MUSEUM = INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY  
 BRAND = COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION

His observation would be that it often feels like a conflict, a matter of what museums stand for, versus brands. Robert and Wolff Olins believe that this is not necessary if branding is properly understood. To inform his understanding, Robert undertook a survey among 102 arts professionals worldwide prior to the Venice presentation, asking them about their perceptions and views of branding.

23% believed that 'brand' is a dirty word, with as much suspicion about it in the USA as Europe (where it's traditionally treated with suspicion). And yet, museums and galleries are intensely aware of branding... So, what's going on?

Robert took delegates through three examples of organisations that had worked with Wolff Olins on their branding: Tate, Historic Royal Palaces and British Museum in the UK.

#### **TATE: LOOK AGAIN, THINK AGAIN**

Stood for the democratisation of art, right through the architecture of the building at Tate Modern. The flat ramp down into the gallery completely changed the feel of entering, moving right away from the traditional, temple-like approach up the steps.

#### **HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES: EXPLORE THE STORY**

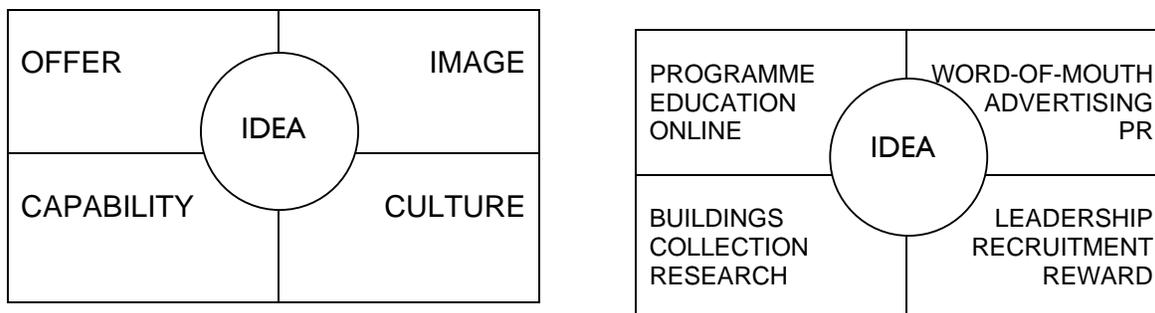
They decided that they were about sharing the stories in those buildings (the Tower and Palaces).

#### **BRITISH MUSEUM: OF THE WORLD, FOR THE WORLD**

Wolff Olins didn't work on this project, but they admire the brand – the BM has a clear role and identity.

### Applying the theory to museums and galleries

Robert believes that Wolff Olins's ideal matrix can be adapted and applied to museums and galleries that want to re-visit their branding. If you apply the original matrix to museums and galleries, you might get:



Robert would argue that using this matrix, the brand can answer the *why* questions for museums and galleries. These are the questions asked by 'outsiders' (external to the organisation), like people, governments, and corporations:

- Why should I visit you?
- Why should I join you?
- Why should I give to you?

Other questions might include:

- Why should I care?
- Why should you exist?

People, governments and corporations all have limited resources, so why would they choose you? Robert's survey of arts professionals suggested that 47% of respondents believed the outside *whys* for their organisation had *not* been answered. This represents a huge and largely unknown potential.

The inside 'whys' are perhaps more complex and might represent issues like management style and performance improvement:

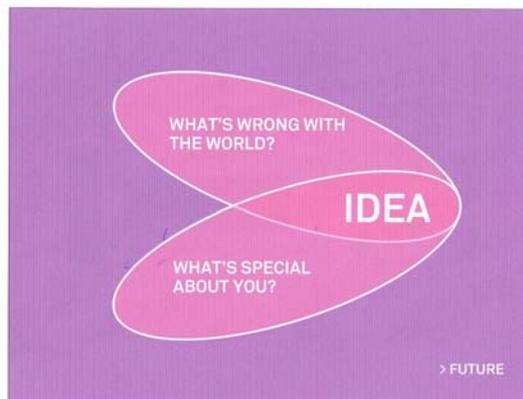
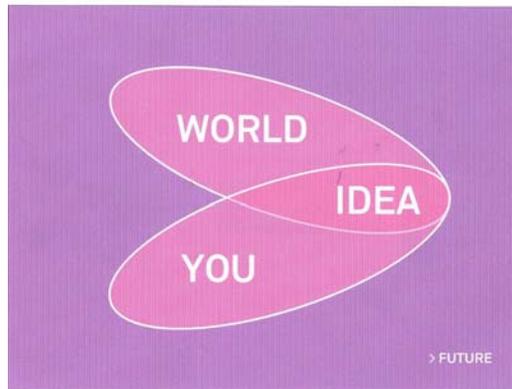
- Top-down, command-and-control style not working
- Pressure to do everything, but organisations can't
- Answering the question of 'why do we get out of bed?' every morning

Wolff Olins believes that whereas Department for Culture Media and Sport and local authority SLAs are not inspirational, an organisation's brand can be, e.g. Historic Royal Palaces called their brand *The Cause*. They created a climate in which the brand guided people in decision making.

Branding has an untapped role at present. Robert's Venice survey suggested that only 17% respondents felt that the brand guided the way they work, so although the brand dictates publicity, etc, it doesn't inform other decision making.

Branding needs to be more important than this, an internal guiding force for the people inside the buildings: "not a 'remit', but your magnetic north."

## Theory into practice



Robert described a very simple, three-stage approach:

- Imagine it
- Make it (happen)
- Stick with it

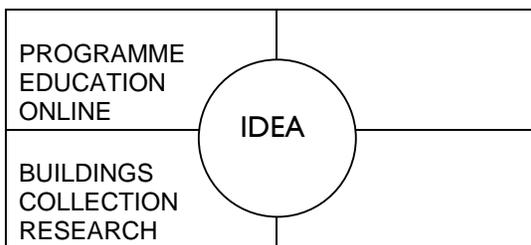
### *Imagining it*

The Venice survey suggested that 38% respondents felt their organisation's brand wasn't well defined, so there really is a need to *imagine* what the brand means as a first stage. The intersection represents the truths about the outside world and your organisation. Time is an extra dimension, making it a dynamic system.

However, this needs to be developed for the questioning to be useful. Asking what's special about you is easy to ask, but difficult to answer. It's essential to be honest, and go back to the origins of the organisation (its DNA). Organisations need to ask themselves what elements of the special-ness will matter in the future.

Using Historic Royal Palaces as an example, their matrix decided that:

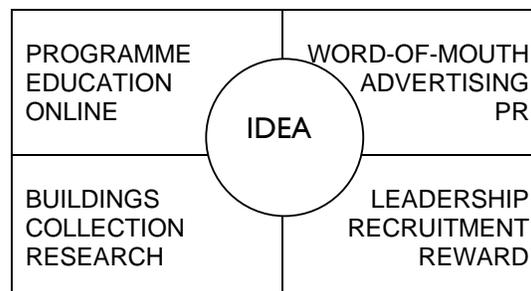
- People outside (the world) were searching for their roots and had a sense of 'losing their moorings'
- What they had to offer was the 'showmanship' of the whole of history. Therefore their idea (for their future) would be to...
- ... **explore the story**

**Make it**

This is the stage where organisations make the idea *reality*. In order to do that, you need to go back to the hard/soft matrix and allow programmers and educators to build the idea into the planning and decision-making process. Even with problematic buildings, the brand idea can help the team think their way around it, into reality.

When the programme and the buildings have used the brand idea to inform the structure, then the organisation needs to move onto recruiting champions and ambassadors, and embedding new ways of thinking and working.

The final stage is to move these internal changes and lessons into the way that the organisation communicates.



For example, Historic Royal Palaces held a 'lab' experiment with 40-50 middle managers who worked across the four areas. They were sent away to develop ideas and made their own Dragon's Den-style presentations. The result was six initiatives that have led to changes in the visitor experience, and setting up a school of story-telling. Wolff Olins has seen a permanent change to both the language and levels of cohesiveness within the organisation. (PR, word of mouth and advertising).

**Stick with it**

It takes time to realise the goals and organisations will need to think long term. Robert used examples from the National Trust and Tate to illustrate how this final step can be translated into organisational objectives. This also ensures organisations keep moving forward through their brand idea:

- The National Trust: 3.5 million members but how to keep them engaged?
- Ten years of success for Tate, but what about the next ten years?

**Some predictions**

Certain trends are starting to be visible, but not dominant yet:

- The post-consumer activist, the ethical purchaser or co-creator (through Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia, et al).
- Brands are becoming platforms which people use to do things. This makes for a different emotional relationship because we love what we can do *with* it. The danger for owners of brands is that users move quickly elsewhere.
- Brand as multiplier: airlines providing services by collaborating; Red charity lending itself to organisations to generate income, etc.
- The post-corporate constellation means that more organisations are working together, eg Divine chocolate and FairTrade.
- The post-western plurality means that there is no longer one correct brand or answer. Google individualises its brand for the territory and the date.

- The brand as theme means that there are variations, like the Mandarin Oriental chain – their logo is a fan, but the design for each one reflects the location. Even Starbucks has announced that local branches can reflect their unique locality and no longer all have to look the same.

This is happening in museums and galleries, too, as they become:

- Less authoritarian, and more engaging. 55% respondents for the Venice survey stated that they wanted to be more 'useful'.
- Less self-reliant and more collaborating. This approach also works for smaller museums and galleries, especially if the organisation is bound into their communities. The Venice survey suggested a majority of organisations want more collaboration (64%).
- Less mono-, more cross-cultural. 42% of organisations in the survey wanted more multi-cultural opportunities, events, and partnerships. That figure was higher for US and UK respondents.
- Not institutions, but platforms, as seen by the History Matters campaign.

### **A new age for the museum and gallery**

Robert believes that there is a unique opportunity for museums and galleries to create a new age by:

- Giving people a platform
- Multiplying organisations together
- Provoking different perspectives

The successful museums and galleries will achieve this because they are guided by their brand as a magnetic north. They know how to adapt MUSEUM = BRAND = PLATFORM to their needs, turning their institutions from cathedrals to bazaars.

