



Brand First. Marketing Second. How this approach is leading to concert sell-outs at Sage Gateshead.

By Mike Owen, MD onebestway, Violet Bick and angelfysh

Sage Gateshead's current advertising campaign is everywhere in the North of England at the moment. It may roll out internationally, soon. It's shouting loudest as a huge poster on Newcastle's biggest permanent poster site at St. James' Park.

But the strangest thing of all is that, when we explore the thinking behind the work, the campaign is not born from traditional marketing reasoning at all.

As we all know, Sage Gateshead carves an iconic and truly beautiful shape along the river's bank and Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead's city's skyline.

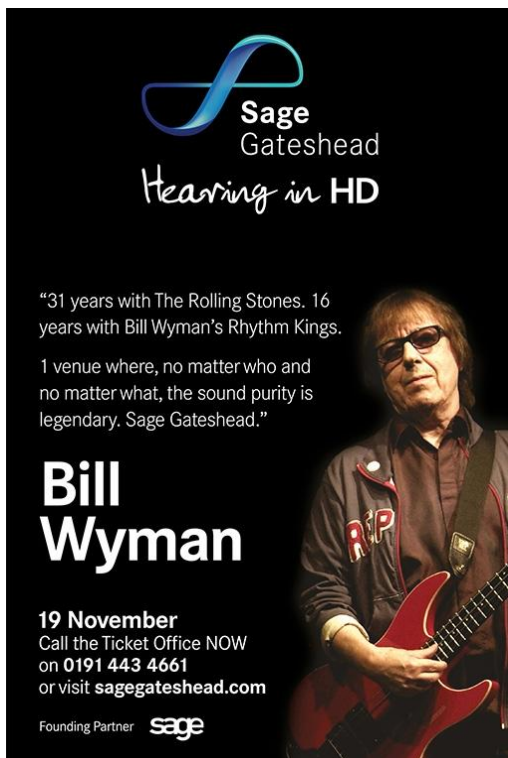
Additionally, you may also know that each year it houses many great musical names and lots of really valuable learning and participating activities.

But it is a lesser known fact that makes Sage Gateshead truly exceptional. Those that have heard concerts there will probably know what it is that makes Sage Gateshead a force on a global scale. Others may be oblivious.

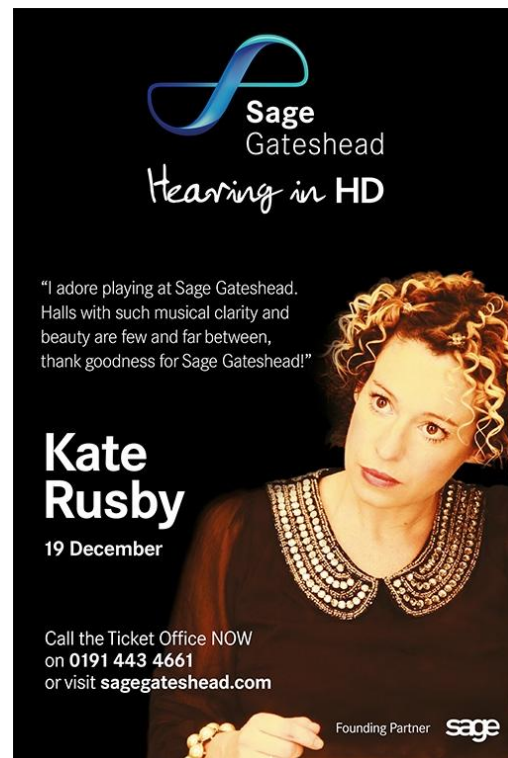
Since Sage Gateshead opened nine years ago in 2004 it has always been - and still is - one of the world's most superb venues acoustically. Sage Gateshead offers acoustic supremacy. If we now glance at Jamie Cullum or Billy Bragg's actual quotations that have been harvested for the latest Sage Gateshead advertising and which form the basis of the communications idea - we do start to get the message.

And there is a lesson here for all businesses.

Sage Gateshead truly is about hearing music in a unique way. At Sage Gateshead, and this is where the marketing starts to creep in I guess, it is 'Hearing in HD'.



The poster features the Sage Gateshead logo at the top, followed by the text 'Hearing in HD'. Below this is a quote from Bill Wyman: "31 years with The Rolling Stones. 16 years with Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings. 1 venue where, no matter who and no matter what, the sound purity is legendary. Sage Gateshead." The name 'Bill Wyman' is prominently displayed in large white letters. To the right is a photograph of Bill Wyman playing a red electric guitar. At the bottom, it says '19 November', 'Call the Ticket Office NOW on 0191 443 4661 or visit sagegateshead.com', and 'Founding Partner sage'.



The poster features the Sage Gateshead logo at the top, followed by the text 'Hearing in HD'. Below this is a quote from Kate Rusby: "I adore playing at Sage Gateshead. Halls with such musical clarity and beauty are few and far between, thank goodness for Sage Gateshead!" The name 'Kate Rusby' is prominently displayed in large white letters, with '19 December' below it. To the right is a photograph of Kate Rusby. At the bottom, it says 'Call the Ticket Office NOW on 0191 443 4661 or visit sagegateshead.com', and 'Founding Partner sage'.

Sage Gateshead's communication is a real example of how the fusion of brand building (homing in on what a brand really stands for) and marketing (then making every single aspect of the messaging revolve around that brand) is really is the best way to communicate any business or organisation. Certainly any business or organisation that wants to maximise.

Brand first. Marketing second.

The principle is a common sense one.

The reason that the Sage Gateshead advertising is proving so successful in 2013 (and it really is; early signs are that ticket sales are up on 2012) is because before the powers-that-be at Sage Gateshead spent a penny on marketing messaging, they asked themselves a really important question.

That question was, 'What is it that makes Sage Gateshead so motivating, compelling and distinct?' they asked themselves, 'If there is one thing - just one thing that we want the market to be saying about Sage Gateshead - what is it?'

And once they had established that - once Sage Gateshead had identified the brand position - then and only then did the marketers get a look in.

Sage Gateshead has something to say. Acoustic Supremacy. So all the marketers then had to do was come up with a clever and compelling way to deliver that message.

How it all started.

The work started with a thought experiment.

Sage Gateshead were encouraged to imagine that along the bank of the Tyne were positioned three other world-leading music venues. The Sydney Opera House, The South Bank Centre in London and Madison Square Gardens maybe. Then they were encouraged to ask themselves a question - why would anyone choose Sage Gateshead? The answer was, of course, the acoustic supremacy and it is on this brand position or 'brand promise' that all of the organisations communications are now built.

Sage Gateshead will become increasingly famous for this one thing, the brand will strengthen, and they'll spiral continually upwards.

The principle is simple really. But it is of course amazing how any businesses and organisations don't actually ask such questions of themselves. Why would anyone choose me over my competitors?

Think brand.

So, before you 'market'; think 'brand'.

When a business thinks like this, it stands out.

Just listen to Sage Gateshead and what they are saying...

If you want to see Jamie Cullum you can see him in lots of different places. But if you want to hear him, really hear him, you must go to Sage Gateshead.

Perfect!

Sage Gateshead's latest advertising has been developed by Violet Bick, onebestway and The Sage Gateshead communications team.

Find out about either Violet Bick Brand Consultants or onebestway design and marketing by calling Mike Owen on 0191 27 666 27 or 07960 117077. Or visit www.violetbick.com or www.onebestway.com.