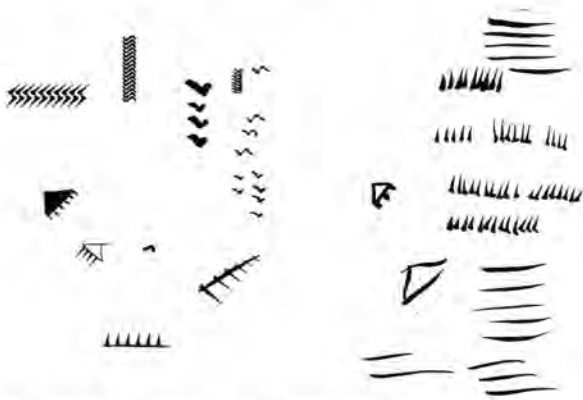


## WESTGATE BOBCATE HIRE

In December 2001, the design process for constructing the brand identity for Westgate Bobcat Hire began.

Westgate Bobcat Hire is the largest of its kind in Victoria, and its owner, Jason Turnbull hired designer Jeremy Heffernan from Conception Design to create a new identity for his growing business.

Jason Turnbull was 32 years of age at the time and he was the owner of the most successful bobcat service in the state. Described by Heffernan as visually illiterate, Turnbull was at first sceptical about the role that graphic design could play in developing his companies market position further and in their first meeting a workable brief was hard to come by. Since the brief is such an



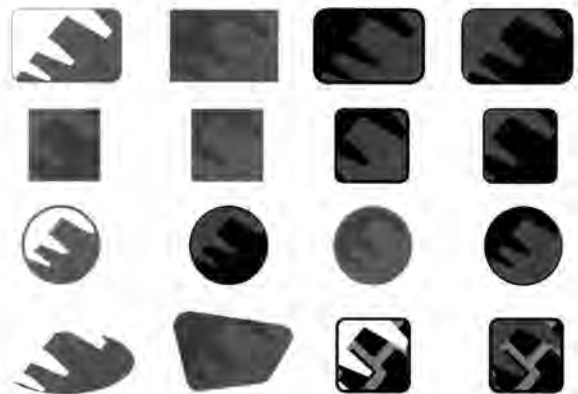
integral part of the design process, Heffernan asked his client a series of questions to determine the characteristics, influences and distinguishable features that separated WBH from its competition and importantly set it apart as well.

Turnbull stated that he wanted to create a corporate identity with the logo, which could then be applied to a range of media. The client desired a logo that would lift the image of his business and unify the various parts (such as equipment, stationery & staff clothing etc). He wanted the logo to reflect high standards, attract and inform people about his company, communicate a contemporary image, reliability and efficiency. In time Turnbull realised the benefits a consistently applied identity could

reap and wanted to display uniformity because it implied professionalism, and thus stand out from his competitors.

The logo had to be able to work in small scale and large scale, as it would be applied to clothing, vehicles and stationary. It also had to consider the work environment in which each of the applications would be used. The design of the business card took into consideration the nature of there industry, a dirty one and applied appropriate varnishes to extend the life of the card, the clothing would have to be washed often, and signage would have to be durable given exposure to the task and to the environment. Heffernan determined that although the audience was reasonably diverse, it was probably a male, blue collar worker bias, educated in a specific field - construction and development.

Stage one of actually beginning to design the logo began with Heffernan researching. He went out to a WBH active work site, to gain an understanding of what type of business it was. He digitally photographed on site, hubcaps, bobcats, tyre track etc, to learn more about the job and to pull out key



characteristics of the business that were easily identifiable by the general public.

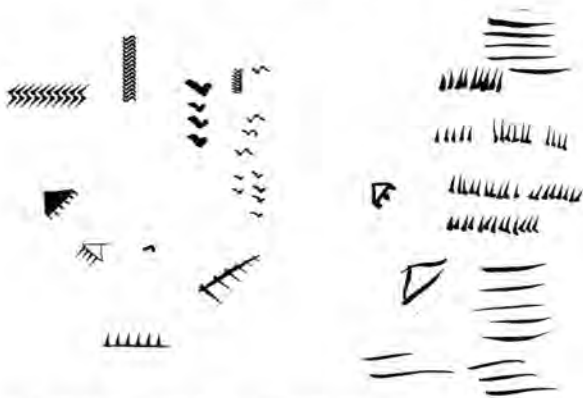
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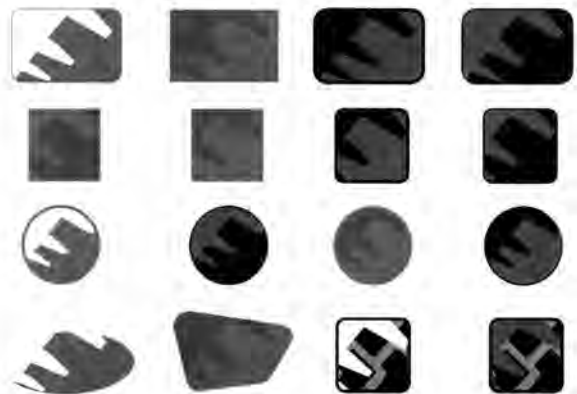
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Although, in our interview with Heffernan, he did not discuss examining other Bobcat Hire companies (as existing competitors were a fine example of what not to do and had no redeemable qualities, just boring

stereotypes), he was very knowledgeable about the industry and competitors thus conveying he had looked at similar businesses to recognise what worked, and what didn't in this industry. Heffernan also had to research materials that would be used for various applications. Although this part of the process came later, it is important to note that he had to research various printers, printers, embroidery styles (and clothing manufacturers) to find the best quality and value for money, and he also had to research types of cloth, paper and other materials.

The generation of ideas commenced with Heffernan creating pages of pencil roughs. As well as developing 4 pages of freehand pencil sketches, he drew into dirt — because that is what the company works with. He had looked at dirt and examined tyre marks, so he decided that it was important to generate ideas using such a significant element in the work WBH did. At the sites, Heffernan had examined tyre tread, the shapes and form of the bobcat, profiles of bobcats, the side of tyres, the yellow and black warning stripes, even bobcat buckets; and used such images when generating ideas. Heffernan also used ink to make tyre marks on paper and through using various brush sizes he was able to experiment with pattern and the thickness etc of the tyre marks. He scanned a selection of these generations, some which were largely symbolic, bold and/or abstract; he wanted a variety of looks so that the client would be able to choose from a breadth of options. With 4 other designers, Heffernan reworked the selected ideas using software on the computer to create 150 variations. From these 150 variations, 7 were selected to present to the client. The designs were presented in black and white mounted onto A4 card.

Heffernan stressed that a logo needs to communicate clearly in black and white as this may be one of the more common applications of it, but primarily colour often assisted in making a dysfunctional logo look good. Although Heffernan did not favour some of the ideas presented, he felt it important to give the client a variety to choose from.

Stage 2 commenced with the refinement of the characteristics chosen by the client from the initial presentation. Again with the support of his design team Heffernan returned to the studio to refine the ideas further. He looked at experimenting with line, shape, letterform and point and scale, balance, cropping, figure and ground reversal, pattern and composition; a landscape format was chosen over a portrait one. 9 designs, in colour, were presented at the second round presentation. The client rejected all 9 designs, so Heffernan had to reassess what Turnbull desired. Were the designs too symbolic? Too literal? Were the colours wrong?

Heffernan returned to the 7 original black and white designs and from these the client chose one that had a limited visual component, a design that relied on line, shape and letterform. Heffernan recognised that Turnbull wanted a design with few visual cues. Through experimenting with basic elements



elements and principles again, Heffernan developed 80 variations that were simplified, very basic, with barely any visuals. The designs were typographically dominant. From these generations some concepts were selected and refined further. In this stage the designer focused on hierarchy and

colour. He refined the composition through trialling symmetry and asymmetrical arrangements before choosing the symmetrical option. There were several more consultations with the client and finally a logo design was chosen. Having gained approval to test the various applications, the business card was first item chosen. Upon the style of the card being approved. 6 or 7 stationary items were produced, all featuring the identically applied, letterform and typeface. It was uniform and, as Heffernan said; consistency in application is the law in corporate logo design. The orange border was repeated in the business card, letterhead and pad. All stationary items were clear and simple, although to contrast such qualities, the back of the card is an explosion of photographic colour, very busy visually but still contemporary and sophisticated but moreover creatively communicating what they do.

In terms of clothing, the logo was applied to vests, jackets, jumpers, t-shirts and caps. The vehicles of WBH have the logo emblazoned on their sides. Currently Heffernan is in the process of creating a new website for Turnbull's company.

In developing the WBH logo, Heffernan had to employ various materials and media to achieve the final products. He used reams of paper to generate ideas and print out alternative designs. Up until the first presentation, in black and white, high quality ink jet paper was used, printed at low resolution. A matt cellosheen (varnish) finish was used to coat the business cards, with due consideration with which the card would be handled — one of dirt and debris. Laid paper, with a watermark, was chosen for the letterhead. This was a more expensive paper, thus conveying class, high quality and respectability; the qualities the company wanted to communicate to its audience, and also in acknowledgment that this media was at the fore front of speaking to new potential clients. Various textiles were used for clothing and embroidery and vinyl lettering was used to label the vehicles.

In terms of media, ink was employed to make marks in generating ideas. Pencil was also used significantly in generation because it allows maximum flexibility, in such ways as it can be erased, add tone easily, differ line

thickness easily — to name a few. Ink was used to print computer responses and digital photographs, as well as to print the final responses. Dye was used too, as was cotton thread in the labelling of the clothing. A vast number of production systems were used in the development of the WBH logo. Freehand drawing was used during the generation stage; a digital camera was used for research and for the photo which appears on the back of the business card. The computer became an essential component in refining the logo; Corel Draw and Photoshop were used on an IBM style computer which is a system preferred by Heffernan. A printer was utilised to print out various design presented to the client, and the final edition. A scanner was also utilised. For the production of the clothing, weaving and embroidery systems were used along with screen printing. The stationery utilised standard production techniques with the exception of the business cards as embossing and die cutting (the edges) were



also used.

Obviously in refining the WBH logo to reach the final design, Heffernan had to explore various elements and principles. Letterform is the overriding element evident in the logo.

The letterform is bold and simple, to convey masculinity — as the industry and its users are male dominated. It is strong and solid to convey efficiency, stability and reliability. A sans serif font was used to reflect the modern identity Turnbull was keen to communicate. The letterform was also rounded, in reference to the bobcat shape, and appears in a different scale, different weight and different case.

A complimentary colour scheme of orange and blue was used in the logo design. It attracts quickly; they are loud, strong and unsubtle colours, with the blue toning the image back and giving it a corporate feel. An organic line encloses the dominant blue shapes and also acts as the border of the business card. Line was also used to represent the tyre tracks. The elliptical blue shapes are a visual reference to the profile of the bobcat.

In terms of composition, the final design was a closed composition; obviously enclosed by the orange line. Clear priorities with regard to communicating were obvious. The logo is figure dominant; the Westgate is prominent, not the ground. It is a symmetrical composition, with a pattern in the tyre tread. In regard to the hierarchy of the design, Westgate is first, followed by Bobcat Hire and third in the hierarchy was the line and shape on which the letterform stood.

Obviously in the development of the WBH logo, Heffernan interacted with various other specialists and professionals. The client was

an integral part of the design process. He determined, with the guidance of Heffernan, what the logo needed to fulfil, who it had to attract and what it needed to communicate. The design had to be approved by Turnbull in order to continue each stage of the visual communication production process.

Essentially, Heffernan had to satisfy the desires of the client, so constant interaction was needed. Heffernan worked with assistant designers in developing the design. A team of designers expanded the creative base; different designers would result in an increased range of options, approaches and different perspectives. Heffernan worked with 4 other designers until the mock-up stage.

Quoting on production for all work took many hours of concentrated work and whilst no design skills were specifically used, an acute business sense and feel for quality,

reliability and finish was also necessary as the cheapest price was not always the key to a supplier being contracted to do the work. He worked with printers to create the stationary; and worked closely to perfect the product: when 3000 business cards were printed, 1500 were rejected because the quality not acceptable. The cards had to be returned to the printers to be redone. Heffernan had to work just as extensively with the embroiderers and manufacturers of the clothing applications. Heffernan had to consult with the embroiderers to ensure that detail, colour and purposes of the garments were met. For example, it was discovered embroidery on one of the samples was faulty. In the industry in which the wearers worked, the clothes had to be durable, so Heffernan had to consult further with these specialists to ensure quality in the clothing.



Heffernan also had to deal with paper and textile suppliers.



Evaluation of the design occurred from early stages of the process. With each client presentation, the client, and at sometimes, others had to evaluate the design and choose what to reject, and what to continue with. After the client approved the final design, the logo was able to be tested on the various applications, and then tested in the environment to assess its success. There were problems; a garment dramatically failed a wash test, and was the entire order was sent back to the manufacturer and a new supplier was

awarded the contract. But eventually the various applications were completed to the standard required. The client was wrapt with the end result and was well sheltered from all of the various production hitches and errors — as can often also be the designers role.



He continues to receive compliments from those within and outside the business regarding the uniformity and sophistication that the logo has resulted in. Heffernan s ongoing employment on future work with WBH, such as the website and building signage is ultimate indication that the client is pleased with the result and looking forward to extending there new identity into other spheres.



Word Count 2,100

Katya Wachtel Lauriston Girls School

