

UNIT 3

SAC 3 Professional Practice in Visual Communication

It has come to my attention that many of us have had some difficulty interpreting the intent and criteria for this revised SAC.

I repeat from the advice given to VCAA presenters.

Client and Brief

'The current (2003) study did not refer to the 'client' or the 'design process. This was considered to be an oversight in that inevitably professional designers referred to them both. The role of the client and brief or briefs should be considered at different stages of the production of visual communications. The stages are not defined in the study but need to be considered at least at the 'design' and 'production' stages. It is anticipated that the role of the client and the design brief will normally change in different ways throughout the production process.

Professional Designers and other specialists

The current study (2003) was more generic in its reference to personnel involved in the production of visual communications with terms such as 'professional communicators' and 'specialist personnel.' The revised study refers explicitly to 'professional designers' and where appropriate their working relationship with other specialist/s.

ICT

The reference to ICT is a discrete Key Knowledge and Key Skills dot point which is not identified in the current (2003) study design. One approach to this dot point is rather than it being taught as an isolated KK/KS it is integrated with the study of the other KK/KS dot points so that it becomes part of the study of the design and production of specific visual communications.

Whilst many of us heard these words and acknowledged their relevance to our study it was not until the actual planning and implantation of the Sac that its difference became obvious. There were many differences and some that I realize that I could do better next time.

Main issues:

The Brief became central to this report. Its development, significance, ongoing relationship to the development of a process and its importance in the evaluation of product cannot be overstated and as such the work Brief was used in most reports ad nauseam. Included in this was, of course, the relationship between the client and the designer. The use of elements and principles was reduced in importance to a point where I almost forgot to include them as other decisions taken in the Design Process had to be included. Skills and ICT were again placed differently in that they were to be absorbed into the process and not seen as discrete. Such a cyclical and fluid response is, indeed, more reflective of the actual process undertaken by designers and as such more relevant in this study. It was, however, new for us all and I am sure carried through with varying degrees of success. I would appreciate knowing of your thoughts/reactions to this so that we may all be better prepared next time around. Should you wish to raise issues for discussion you could perhaps e-mail them to me so that I could collate and, refer them to VCAA and respond to them.

The success of this Sac does inevitably relate to and rely on the quality of the presenter. I include for your contemplation the instructions I gave to students at the time of writing and one of their responses.

Unit 3

Area of Study 3

Professional Practice in Visual Communication

SAC 3

To complete successfully this requirement you are required to discuss the roles and relationships involved in the design and production of visual communications in the context of professional practice.

Area of Investigation – The branding of Allen & O'Brien

Designer – Jeremy Heffernan – Conception Design

You are required to write a report of the interview with Jeremy Heffernan focusing on the following areas:

- The significance of the Design Brief throughout the production of the branding.
- The ways that Heffernan responded to and evaluated the Design Brief at different stages throughout the design process.
- What reasons were given for decisions made by Heffernan and his team to satisfy the requirements, as stated in the Design Brief, at various stages throughout the design and the production of the requirements as stated in that brief? These may include reasons such as; ethical, financial and/or philosophical and decisions about the use of design elements and design principles, materials and media.
- The relationship between the client and the designers and other specialists employed to complete the task.
- What skills were employed by the design team throughout the design process, including the use of information and communications technology?

You must make reference to visual examples throughout your response and correctly acknowledge these examples as an appendix.

You have 120 minutes to complete this task.

Your response can be developed in essay form or as a response under each dot point.

Visual Communication and Design

Unit 3

Sac 3



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Professional Practice in Visual Communication

In January 2003, the design process of creating a new corporate (brand) identity for Allen, and O'Brien Electrical Contractors began.

Allen and O'Brien is a large, reliable electrics company that was established in 1976. Situated in the Western Suburbs, the company has a reputation for quality and excellence in their work. Brendan O'Brien and his father, Denis, hired Jeremy Heffernan of Conception Design to produce a new brand identity for the business. Brendan was the main contact in forming the brief due to his background in contemporary marketing principles. The Design Brief is a significant part of the design process. It acts as a form of communication between the client and the designer, establishing all requirements of the client and it is a point of reference for those involved in the design process. In forming the Brief, Allen and O'Brien stated that a more contemporary brand identity was needed. It would be need for 3 sub-brands; Electrical Contractors (the core business), Boiler Maintenance and Data Communication. The existing visual

communication was 10 years old and had been poorly reproduced in an inconsistent manner to a range of items. The existing business card was dull and used a washed out colour scheme and gave no clear hierarchy to the brand identity. It was also necessary for Heffernan to retain the Allen name but include it in such a way that that it would be easy to remove in a few years when the company moved to the name of O'Brien. The purpose of the new brand identity was to unify the company and update the corporate identity. The context of the new visual communication would be vast, ranging from business cards to letterheads and folders, vehicles, staff uniforms and electrical boxes, to name a few. The audience is predominantly male and the financial limitations were xxxxx¹ as this was the amount paid by Allen and O'Brien for the identity package.

The Return Brief, formulated by Heffernan, in relation to Allen and O'Brien, specifies the outline of the contract including the expectations and limitations.

Heffernan began the design process by researching as this is an important skill required in that process. He took and looked at photographs, the internet and had many on-site visits and interviews to develop an understanding of what would suit the needs of the client. The Brief was always used as a reference point during this stage so that the research was relevant.

Once a substantial amount of research was concluded the generating of ideas stage began. Approximately 100 concepts were generated. In this stage, an important skill is the use of freehand drawing as it allows for the quick and immediate 'jotting down' of ideas. A range of shapes for the brand identity were also experimented with in generating design concepts. The Design Brief was always referred to during the generating of ideas phase. Colour was not used as 'if a design doesn't work in black and white, it will not work in colour.' Photography and brushwork were also used to explore design alternatives. These concepts were then recreated on the computer using information technology skills. Corel Draw was the primary software used in this task. The concepts were then evaluated against the Brief. If they exhibited stereotypical imagery (ie. A lightning bolt or a light globe) or if the title 'Allen and O'Brien' was obscured, the concept was inappropriate and so not further refined.

Fig 2

Heffernan hired 3 other designers during this process. Teamwork was vital to the success of the project. Heffernan annotated and evaluated the work against the Brief to filter out unsuitable concepts. Several concepts were selected for further development.



The final design, as can be seen on the business card (fig 2) uses a range of design elements and design principles to suit the clients' needs. The 3 dominant design elements that were used were line, colour and letterform, The 3 major design principles employed were cropping, contrast and hierarchy. Line is more important to the back of the business card as it is this that draws the eye down towards the O'Brien. O'Brien holds 1st hierarchy which is appropriate as it is the company's identity. In addition, the line gives the message of electricity, further enhancing the visual message displayed. A royal blue was selected for the core brand. Whilst blue is a colour that suggests reliability the choice of a brighter hue ensured that the visual communication still had the required 'edge'. A red colour was chosen for 'Boiler Maintenance' and a sandy colour for 'Data Communications' as these colours related directly to the brief and to the suggestions of the client. Heffernan also believed that a primary based colour scheme would date less quickly than pastels or other 'in vogue' schemes.



The decision about which letterform style to use was important because the identity of the company is displayed through this element. Heffernan made a conscious decision not to use Arial Black as it has become a very common and known font and, as a designer, he has access to far more interesting and eye-catching styles. Contrast also helped to give the

brand name 1st hierarchy with the white figure being placed on a blue ground. The decision to make the Allen name thinner and smaller came as a direct response to the brief which acknowledged that this name would be phased out over a period of time. The final design decision made was to use cropping on the back of the card. Again, this was developed in response to the need for a contemporary and 'cutting-edge' result. The card has a simple layout and is not cluttered with information. This decision was made by Heffernan as the Brief states that the client disliked clutter. The philosophical reason behind the final design was that it, again, had 'edge' which was what the Brief states and the client requested.



The relationships that were vital in this design process, for it to run smoothly, were those between the client and the designer and between the designer and other specialists. Denis and Brendan O'Brien needed to be educated by Heffernan on the importance of visual communication so the communication between designer and client played an important part in their relationship. Trust needed to be developed as did a sense of familiarity between the O'Brien's and Heffernan to ensure a successful process. Heffernan contracted a team of 3 other designers to help during the design process. A team approach was taken and it was important to Heffernan that there was minimal hierarchy in the relationship so that they worked together as equals. Heffernan also formed close relationships with the fabric producers and the printers. These relationships were important as they helped to ensure that the design process was as hassle free as possible.



Once the client gave Heffernan his approval of the final design, decisions about the applications of the brand identity could be made. Allen and O'Brien specified that the clothing range for their employees was important. Heffernan's research showed the choice for the manufacture of that clothing came down to financial considerations over ethical ones. The shirts could be produced in Australia for \$75 a garment and in China for a mere \$6. The ethical dilemma was that the shirts may be produced in workshops that did not respect the rights of workers but, to fulfill the needs of the Brief, Heffernan had to take into consideration the budget for production. Another financial consideration was the brand application to the company vehicles. In the visual examples presented, a photo of one of the possible solutions for the application is shown. Through research Heffernan discovered that cot was based on the number of panels that needed to be removed and painted rather than how much paint was used. This, in conjunction with the financial limitations, helped Heffernan and Allen and O'Brien when making the final decision on the vehicle design.

Apart from the skills previously mentioned, such as the ability to communicate with those involved in the design process and the ability to thoroughly research for the project, Heffernan also needed to be able to produce freehand and computer generated ideas and refinements during the design stages. He also needed to possess a certain amount of social skills that enabled him to interact with all who played a part in the process. Regarding the use of information and communication technology, Heffernan had to be skilled in recording the brief (a Word document), transferring and transporting concepts electronically; in particular through his preferred software, Corel Draw, and in producing finished art (Final business card layout) to be used as templates by the printers. So far, the Allen and O'Brien project has been an extremely successful one. Heffernan continues to work with the company in extending the new brand identity into all areas, creating the unity and the 'edge' that was requested in the initial Brief.

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(Footnotes)

¹ Removed to protect designers' privacy.