



Nanyang Technological University
Wee Kim Wee School of
Communication and Information
Academic Year 07/08

Report on
Professional Internship with

DESIGN BRIDGE ASIA PTE LTD

Prepared by: **Ng Siew Hoon**
Matriculation No.: 050976J10
WKWSCI Yr 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
CHAPTER 1: Introduction	
1.1 Purpose and Scope	4
1.2 Background on Design Bridge	5
CHAPTER 2: Brand Management in the real world	
2.1 Role of the Client Servicing Team	6 - 9
2.2 BrandWorld strategy	10
2.3 Obstacles observed	11 - 13
CHAPTER 3: Interaction and Teamwork	
3.1 Social and communication skills	14
3.2 Teamwork	15
CHAPTER 4: Personal Learning Reflections	
4.1 Time management	16
4.2 Positive work attitude and Initiative	17 - 18
CHAPTER 5: Summary and Conclusion	
5.1 Summary and Conclusion	19 - 20
REFERENCES	21
APPENDICES	22 - 23

ABSTRACT

This report will provide an in-depth insight into my internship experience at Design Bridge Asia and it will begin with a brief introduction of the company and its business and my job scope as a Client Service intern to enhance understanding of the subsequent content.

Following that, there will be a short summary of all the key learnings and experiences I have picked up within these 5 months before I delve into two main aspects that motivates me to stride ahead in this field upon graduation.

The first aspect that would be explored in detail would what I learnt about successful brand management in the real world, and subsequently my experience of workplace dynamics and etiquette and building and enhancing social skills and relationships at work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Having such an enjoyable and satisfying experience at Design Bridge Asia over these few months, I would like to express my gratitude and thanks towards the following people, because if they hadn't made the decision to select me for the internship, I would not have had this opportunity at all.

Ms. Cheah Su Fei – Senior Client Manager, also my supervisor

Ms. Leni Ingking – PA to Managing Director

Ms. Ong Ee Sze – Client Director

It is also under their patient guidance and constant encouragement that helped me to pick up the necessary skills in such a short time, while making the whole experience fulfilling and satisfying.

I would also like to acknowledge Asst Prof Yeoh Kok Cheow's involvement and supervision of my internship, and giving invaluable advice during his visit to Design Bridge in March.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the report is to give an in-depth insight of my experience as a client service intern at Design Bridge Asia, a brand agency, over this short but enriching 5 months.

The report would focus on two main areas of the stint; firstly, my observations and learnings of brand management after experiencing the ongoings and work done by Design Bridge for our clients. Next, and more importantly, I would write about my first-time encounter of the real working world – the workplace dynamics, interaction within the office and my personal learning reflections.

1.2 Background on Design Bridge

Before launching any further into the report, a brief background on the company at which I am serving my internship, is crucial to justify the following content.

Design Bridge is more than just a design agency; it has expanded its scope of work and services to its clients beyond designing and creation of packaging, one of the most visible touchpoints of any brand. It is now an international branding consultancy, and has its own set of creative strategies and directions to offer to its clients as brand solutions.

Brand definition, brand repositioning, brand realignment and creating brand identities and packaging that helps to strengthen and reinforce the brand, are some of the solutions that Design Bridge offers.

Design Bridge has offices in London, Amsterdam and Singapore, and has 21 years experience in branding. Its clientele span across different sectors from wine and spirit, fast moving consumer goods (FCMG) to pharmaceuticals and transport and logistics. Some of its long-time clients include well-established local firms such as Asia Pacific Breweries (Tiger) and Fraser & Neave, as well as regional ones like Moet Hennessy and Unilever.

CHAPTER 2

BRAND MANAGEMENT IN THE REAL WORLD

2.1 Role of the Client Servicing Team

From my observation, the job scope of a client servicing manager includes basic client-service administration, project specific administration, project management (i.e. briefing, scheduling and studio resourcing), creative management (i.e. reviewing creative work, adhering to creative objectives) and implementation (i.e. print consultancy, production engineering).

A client service manager is also responsible for ensuring that the client's requests and feedbacks are clearly translated into inspiring briefs for the creative team to explore and challenge. Besides attending brainstorming and creative discussions with the designers to explore the briefs, effective and tactful communication skills are also required to liaise between the clients and the creative team, especially when the clients are difficult to appease or handle.

The client servicing team must also seek to understand each of their clients and realize that different clients have different expectations/behavior, and we can not apply a 'One fits all' communication approach. Understanding how each client thinks and reacts, and how receptive they are to brand solutions proposed by Design Bridge, are very crucial to a good working relationship with them and also reduces the need for the designers to go back and forth in refining the work. Furthermore, negotiation of budgets with the client

is also part and parcel of client servicing. To ensure a harmonious relationship with clients, yet make them willing to part with the fees and costs for the brand solutions they seek, is certainly not an easy task.

In addition, immersion (in the client and consumers' world), is one of the most basic yet crucial step that can inform the brand strategy subsequently. Conducting primary research for client projects and speaking first hand to consumers of the client's brand and its competitors would generate useful and interesting, sometimes surprising results and outputs. Following that, analysis of the results and uncovering of certain consumption patterns are beneficial to the team working on the project and also helps position the client servicing team better when they meet and share the insights with the client.

I had the opportunity to do an immersion project with another intern for an Indonesian brand of fruit juice, in which we did research on the fruit juice market in Singapore as well as the different innovations in fruit juice in other parts of the world. We also surveyed and talked to people on the street and people around us to gather insights into their fruit juice preferences and lifestyle and habits. The process was actually rather similar to what we did in school for our projects and we used methods like in-depth interviews and random sampling for the survey. (Refer to Appendix A) Subsequently, we analyzed the results and drew very useful conclusions that would help the client better understand and discover the fruit juice market in our country.

All these would contribute to enhanced understanding of the client's brand(s) and sub-brands and allow the client service manager to recommend relevant or beneficial solutions to help the client handle the challenges and opportunities that the brand is facing. This would be the first step in creating and developing successful and effective brands, even before designers come into the picture.

As part of the client servicing team, some of the skills I had to learn and follow as per Design Bridge's practice were key paperwork that helped facilitate the relationship and communication between us and our clients. Drawing up budget sheets, quotes and writing proposals and creative briefs for new projects based on the client's brief were some of the essential tasks I had to nail down.

Over time, I was tasked to monitor two related projects under Fraser & Neave account and given much independence and responsibility for them. I had to learn to prepare presentations on my own, briefed the designers, and ensured that the creative team is working within the given time frame and producing designs or refinements accurately and according to the client's brief or feedback from the last phase of work. Searching for imagery that would help the creative team in understanding the brief, going to stores to purchase relevant samples and taking snap shots of in-store shelf placements, are other ways to inspire and facilitate the creative team in their work.

This stint has also allowed me to experience much of the technical side of design and observe what it takes to implement designs on paper onto real packs, bottles and other

brand touchpoints (i.e. engaging of photographer, retouching of imagery, releasing of artwork design files only after getting the client's approval, etc). I have experienced much of the implementation side of branding decisions that I could never had the chance to learn about in school or from other part time holiday jobs. I also did some liaising with third party suppliers for print samples of the approved designs, and gained some practical knowledge about printing specifications and the usual practice of getting a design from paper implemented onto real products on the shelf

2.2 BrandWorld strategy

BrandWorld is a unique approach to brand development that Design Bridge has developed that enables the brand essence to be expressed in a truly inspirational and creative way, across numerous touchpoints. It aids in the understanding of the uniqueness and depth of the brand and its sensory codes, which allows the creation of challenging and inspirational touchpoints.

The steps of BrandWorld includes brand mapping, brand definition (consideration of the brand's attributes and values as compared to its competitors) and then developing the brand's own matrix after discussions with the client on the messages that they want to the brand to communicate. The BrandWorld exercise thus allows Design Bridge to take core brand values and translate them to design elements on a multitude of levels.

The reason why I choose to highlight on this strategy is because I find it very inspiring and interesting, and I see it as a very useful tool to help clients develop a stronger brand that would help to distinguish themselves from their competitors. Although I have done something similar in school projects, this BrandWorld is much more refined in its approach and system. Although I managed to experience and observe the BrandWorld strategy at work for one of the projects, it was a pity that I only got involved at the stage whereby the brand values were translated into the creation of sensory codes and brand touchpoints. It would have been an even more insightful experience if I could have had witnessed the BrandWorld strategy taking place from scratch.

2.3 Obstacles observed

I have observed that there are several obstacles to a smooth running and implementation of a project, especially when it comes to revamping existing brands and packaging that are familiar and instantly recognizable to consumers.

Typically, clients would come running to us saying that their brand needs to be rejuvenated and they want their packaging to be updated and given a new look, yet maintaining the heritage/history of the brand, keeping to certain mandatories and not losing the cues that consumers are familiar with.

However, it is difficult to implement changes if the client is too conservative or unreceptive to designs that are out-of-category norms (yet they want designs that can help differentiate them from their competitors!).

For example, one of our clients is a local beer brand who wants to achieve a shift in perceptions in the market, such that they can capture the younger target market and rejuvenate the brand for it has long been perceived as an “uncle” beer drunk at only coffee shops, and criticized for being not ‘hip’ and ‘cool’. However, they struggle to accept designs that move away slightly from their core brand equities and icons. Instead, they tend to stick to conservative designs that emphasize the brand identity and phase out the more revolutionary designs quickly and easily, without realizing that the brand

might need greater innovations to be effective in changing the consumers' perception of their brand.

Just as how certain information are left out after passing through the journalist and subsequently, the editor, there are also gatekeepers in the clients' companies who obstruct an easy or smooth change internally in terms of redefining their brands or implementing re-designed packaging. This is another unavoidable challenge that I have observed. The gatekeepers in this case, are the different markets in which the brand would be launching the new packaging. As different countries have different legal requirements regarding packaging, sometimes designs that are already viewed and approved by one market have to be relooked at because they are unacceptable in another market due to certain regulations.

Other times, there may be conflicting feedback or concerns from the different markets. As such, it can be frustrating for both the client servicing team and the creative team as they are unable to proceed with the rest of the project as originally scheduled. This also causes problems for studio resourcing as other projects may have to be rescheduled or there may be a shortfall of designers to review the work.

It is thus apparent that as a client service manager, much patience and flair are needed to handle such challenges and yet still be able to ensure that clients' expectations and demands are met.

CHAPTER 3

INTERACTION & TEAMWORK

3.1 Social and communication skills

Adapting to and adjusting well in the new environment of working life is not just about having the necessary skills and technical capabilities, but more importantly, having good social skills and being able to develop and maintain good and harmonized relationships with others in the workplace. Over these few months, I have maintained a good working relationship with my colleagues and there were also several lunches and mini gatherings such as birthday celebrations with colleagues that helped us to bond and develop relationships with one another beyond the workplace. I also managed to develop closer friendships with some of them even though they are much more experienced and older than me. Other times, interactions with some colleagues were not so pleasant but upholding professionalism even as an intern was crucial as it is after all, a small industry, and the chances of working with the very same person in future in another agency should not be underestimated.

In addition, I have observed and realized the importance of being sensitive to people from different cultures and nationalities, especially because most of the staff at Design Bridge come from various parts of the world, such as the United Kingdom, France, Thailand and even Ireland. Misunderstandings or miscommunications sometimes arise because people of different cultures or from different countries may perceive the same matter differently. However, with tact and some sensitivity to the language and words

we use, such conflicts or miscommunications can be avoided or minimized. The same also applies to the regional clients that we serve; we need to be culturally sensitive and stay updated and knowledgeable on regional events happening in their countries.

3.2 Teamwork

In school, projects are very common and teamwork is essential for the smooth running and execution of projects. The phrase ‘No man is an island’ is indeed applicable in the real world as well. As I have also observed, in an agency like Design Bridge, the success of every project relies on teamwork between the client servicing team and the creative team. The client servicing team has to ensure that complex client directions are translated into clear and inspiring briefs for the designers while the creative team tries their best to challenge and explore all aspects of the briefs.

In addition, the two teams also have to work together during creative brainstorming and all other subsequent reviews during the project. As such, respect for one another, keeping to scheduled review or meeting times, and being prepared for each meeting, are all essential in ensuring that the teams work well together and not get into conflicts even when they have different opinions on the same issue. While personal opinion can sometimes be useful for the teams to gather further insight into the project, it is important that the client servicing team and the creative team echo the same voice when they are presenting concepts to the client. A happy team ultimately relies upon compromise and flexibility among its members. If there are too many conflicts between the client service managers and the designers, it would be a trying time and also makes the running of the project more difficult.

CHAPTER 4

PERSONAL LEARNING REFLECTIONS

4.1 Time management

Besides picking up social and communication skills and learning about the importance of teamwork, I have also come to realize what it takes to excel in the working world. Being able to manage time properly is one of the essentials, as I am responsible for planning my own time and checking my calendar to ensure that there are no conflicts in the meeting times for different projects.

As much independence was given to me to manage the projects on my own, and sometimes I had to handle different projects at one go, I learnt how to manage my time and prioritize the different tasks so that I could be able to complete all of them on time. Although time management was also required in school, the deadlines in the real world are tighter and have to be adhered to more strictly as it is no longer just accounting for myself. There is the company's reputation at stake and hence, it is a much heavier responsibility. However, the experience and responsibilities given to me at Design Bridge has helped me managed my expectations of the working world better.

4.2 Positive work attitude & Initiative

Maintaining a positive and optimistic attitude also helped to tide me over times whereby I felt frustrated because it seems as if I reached a 'peak' in my learnings and experience and there was nothing stimulating anymore, or at times whereby I could not really help out as we were waiting for client's feedback before beginning a new phase of work. I have learnt that sometimes the workload is similar to the high and low tides at sea, and as long as I am patient and attentive, I can still learn by observation of other projects that I am not involved in.

In addition, a positive work attitude is also helpful as others can sense the positive vibes and optimism and it will thus help to boost the team's morale in times when the client is difficult to handle or demanding many last minutes changes to the designs.

Initiative is also another asset that is very much appreciated in the workplace as it is no longer like school whereby people would spoon feed you with information and teachers would read and help to edit your assignments.

For example, there were times whereby I realized some things were missing or inaccurate in the project, or the briefs were unclear. I took up the initiative to clarify matters or to bring to my colleagues' attention so that we can discuss about it. Being initiative is important as the working world is much less tolerant of mistakes, and

deadlines have to be kept to strictly. Besides, having initiative is also a good way of maintaining a harmonious and happy working relationship with colleagues.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

4.1 Summary & Conclusion

In summary, it has been a really fulfilling internship experience here at Design Bridge. Not only have I gained practical knowledge and real-life experience of branding and dealing with real clients, I have also managed to develop relationships with my colleagues and honed my social skills. Besides, a lot of independence was given to me despite the fact that I am only an intern. It also helps that my supervisor seldom directs me or oversees my work after the second month because I had to learn to deal with other colleagues and clients by myself and I am not protected or shielded from the reality of the working world. Sometimes, it also feels as if I am actually one of the staff here rather than an intern because of the level of trust they have in me and the responsibilities they delegate to me.

I am pleased that the company does not have the typical narrow-minded belief that an intern should always be “governed” and treated as a level beneath its staff, and be given mundane tasks to do to while away the time. Instead, Design Bridge has given me much room to explore and discover the perks and difficulties of client servicing. Before I started this internship, I never expected that it would be so satisfying and that I would be so fortunate to meet such friendly and helpful colleagues and actually be extending my internship period for another month. However, now it feels as if the months have passed

too quickly and this internship is too short as I still have much to learn and observe. It is with pleasure and gratitude that Design Bridge has approved my internship extension.

I believe that the knowledge and experience gained through this time at Design Bridge would come in handy and be able to put to good use upon my graduation, as it has opened up another possible career route for me.

REFERENCES

- ❖ Media Kit 2008, courtesy of Design Bridge
- ❖ Design Bridge web site (<http://designbridge.com/>)
- ❖ Design Bridge Info (Intranet)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

2

An Indian man, 40+, in front of a neighborhood minimart, buying 1 Fruit Tree Apple flavor, 1 Peel Fresh Orange for his children and 1 bottle of healthy drink.

"I buy Fruit Tree for my own consumption because I like the taste and also the brand, Marigold for my children because they are used to drink Marigold juice and Orange juice give them vitamins and energy, and the herbal drink is for my wife because she doesn't like fruit juice and thinks that it's better for her body than any other beverage".



3



A Chinese woman, 60+, in cold storage. Her behavior in front of the shelf was interesting because she first took Marigold Peel Fresh Apple & Pomegranate, read carefully the information on the box sides, put the product on her basket and walk along the fruit juice shelf department. But she finally decided to change her consumption decision by replacing Marigold brand by Fruit Tree from F&N with the same flavor. So I asked her why:

"I cannot see written "100% fruit juice" on this one (Peel Fresh) so I prefer to buy Fruit tree, I think it's more natural".

General remarks:

- ✓ Consumers' health consciousness is clearly visible through their behavior in front of the fruit juices shelf. They like coming by themselves to the store read carefully the information on the packaging and make their own decision in function of their expectations and needs.
- ✓ Contrary to what we could believe, men like fruit juices and buy it generally for them. I had also the example of a Chinese father who encouraged his son to try a juice in front of the fruit juices shelf: "It's good for your health, the taste is nice, a lot of vitamins inside. You have to try it".
- ✓ Consumers are willing to pay for good fruit juices, they need to see throughout the packaging (white colors, simple and clear information) that the juice is a premium one, with a delicious taste and good for their health. And generally, when a consumer has found a good fruit juice, he is loyal to the brand and will continue to buy the same one.



Analysis

- ✓ Enriched to
- ✓ Low/no sugar
- ✓ No preservatives

Quality of Juice

✓ At home

✓ At work

✓ At university of the day

Fruit juice preference overview

Survey conclusion

Analysis

- ✓ Enriched in vitamins
- ✓ Low/no sugar
- ✓ No preservatives
- ✓ Quality of juice
- ✓ Taste & Flavouring

(Remark: price not an overpowering factor)

The most deciding criteria that makes a drink healthy

Criteria	Value (approx.)
No preservatives	5.5
Organic	2.5
Hydrating	2.5
Enriched in vitamins	14.5
Low/no sugar	12.5
Low in fat	2.5
High in calcium	2.5

Which criteria influence your purchase decision?

Criteria	Value (approx.)
Quantity	1.5
Taste/Flavor	12.5
Brand image	3.5
Price	3.5
Pack design	2.5
Quality of juice	17.5
The pack convenience	4.5

DesignBridge
Competitors landscape

The brands selected

Marigold-Peel Fresh

Marigold-100% juice

Marigold-Peel Fresh

Brand Identity

History/Positioning

Look & Feel

Tone of voice

Tagline

Brand essence

Target Audience

Market

On the Singaporean market since more than 20 years, well known as a longstanding home-grown brand, was several Award of Readers' digest trusted brand.
Plus: Enriched with high vitamins and available in 12 flavours.

First Quality, convenient, colorful flavors, healthy.

Honest, refreshing, approachable, talk to you.

"It's fresh... it's good for you... so drink up!"

Nothing continues to refresh Singapore today like the taste of MARIGOLD PEEL FRESH.

All ages.

Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Europe, US.