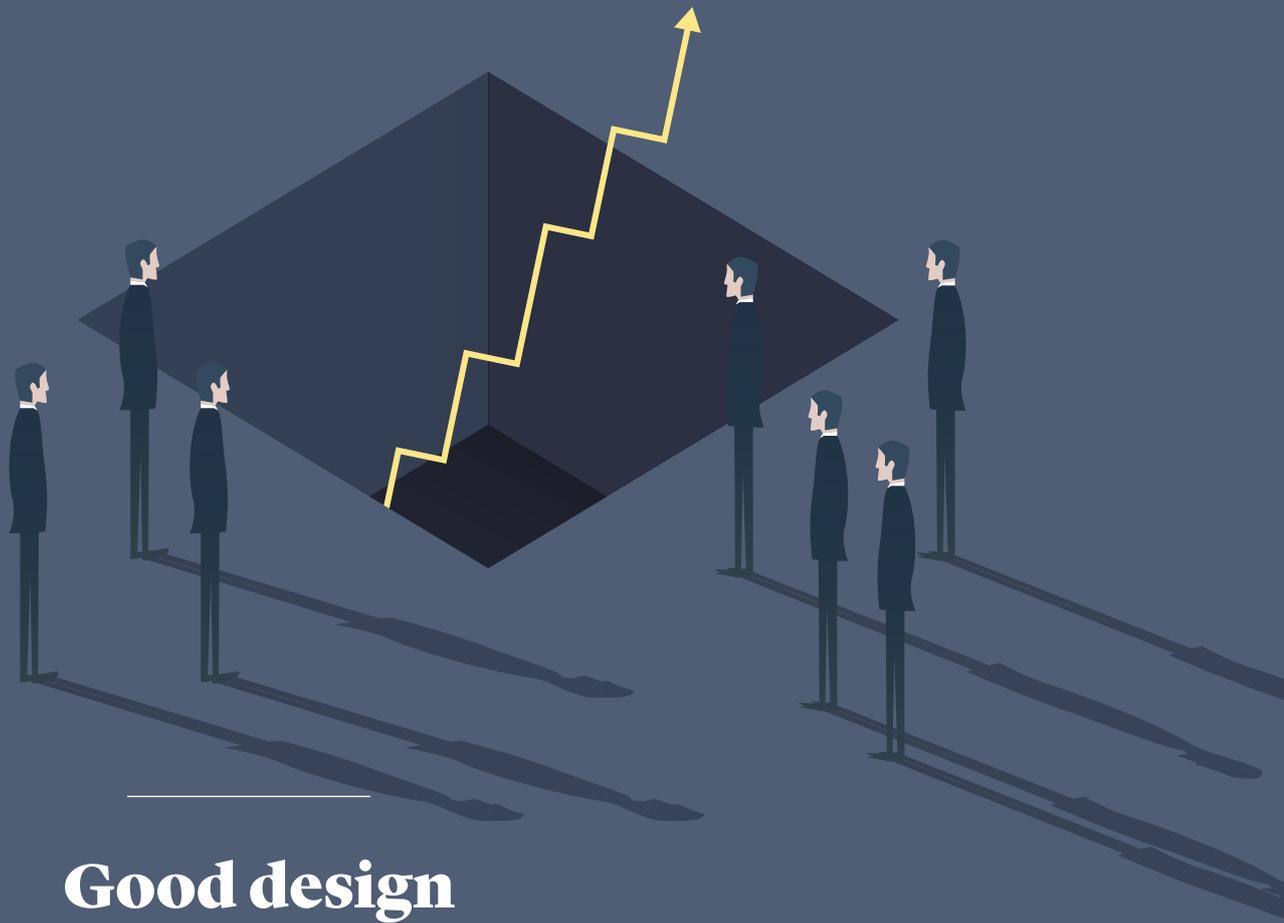


# nsu. the papers.

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Issue 04/ 2017  
**Three things.**

*a series of briefings from the frontline*



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**Good design  
is good business.**

And why you need to start  
treating employees like your  
own internal customers.

‘Good design can materially  
help make a good product reach  
its full potential.’<sup>1</sup>

THOMAS J. WATSON, SECOND PRESIDENT OF IBM



Design-centric businesses  
beat the S&P by

**228%**  
over the last 10 years.<sup>2</sup>

---

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW





‘Forester Research shows that, on average, every dollar invested in User Experience brings 100 dollars in return. That’s an ROI of a whopping 9,900 percent.’<sup>3</sup>

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ANDREW KUCHERIAVY, CEO OF INTECHNIC

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## The power of three.

### **Turtlenecks & jeans.**

'An iPod, a phone, and an Internet communicator  
An iPod, a phone, and an Internet communicator  
An iPod, a phone... *are you getting it?*

These are not three separate devices.

This is one device.

And we are calling it iPhone.'<sup>4</sup>



### **You don't have to be first.**

When the late Steve Jobs gave his famous presentation, more changed than maybe we give him and Apple credit for. After 9<sup>th</sup> January 2007, the technology and design worlds were provoked to do things better... and, critically, challenged to do them together. From now on, technology wouldn't have to be ugly. Technology could be fast, efficient, ground-breaking and a design piece. And from now on, customers would demand it all to work intuitively and expect it to look and feel beautiful.

As their product suite developed over the next few years, Apple made the case that design and technology working in tandem could be good (maybe great) business. And this included the entire user experience.

**‘Apple's cash pile has swelled to over \$250bn, a sum greater than the combined foreign reserves of the British government and Bank of England.’<sup>5</sup>**

Customer experience innovation puts the paying customer front and centre of your proposition and customer journey design, along with cues and hooks to give people a reason to come back and shop with you again. Apple's Genius Bar is a cracking example of customer experience innovation that redefines what is effectively a complaint function and turns it into an experience; no-one books a visit because their device is working perfectly, right?

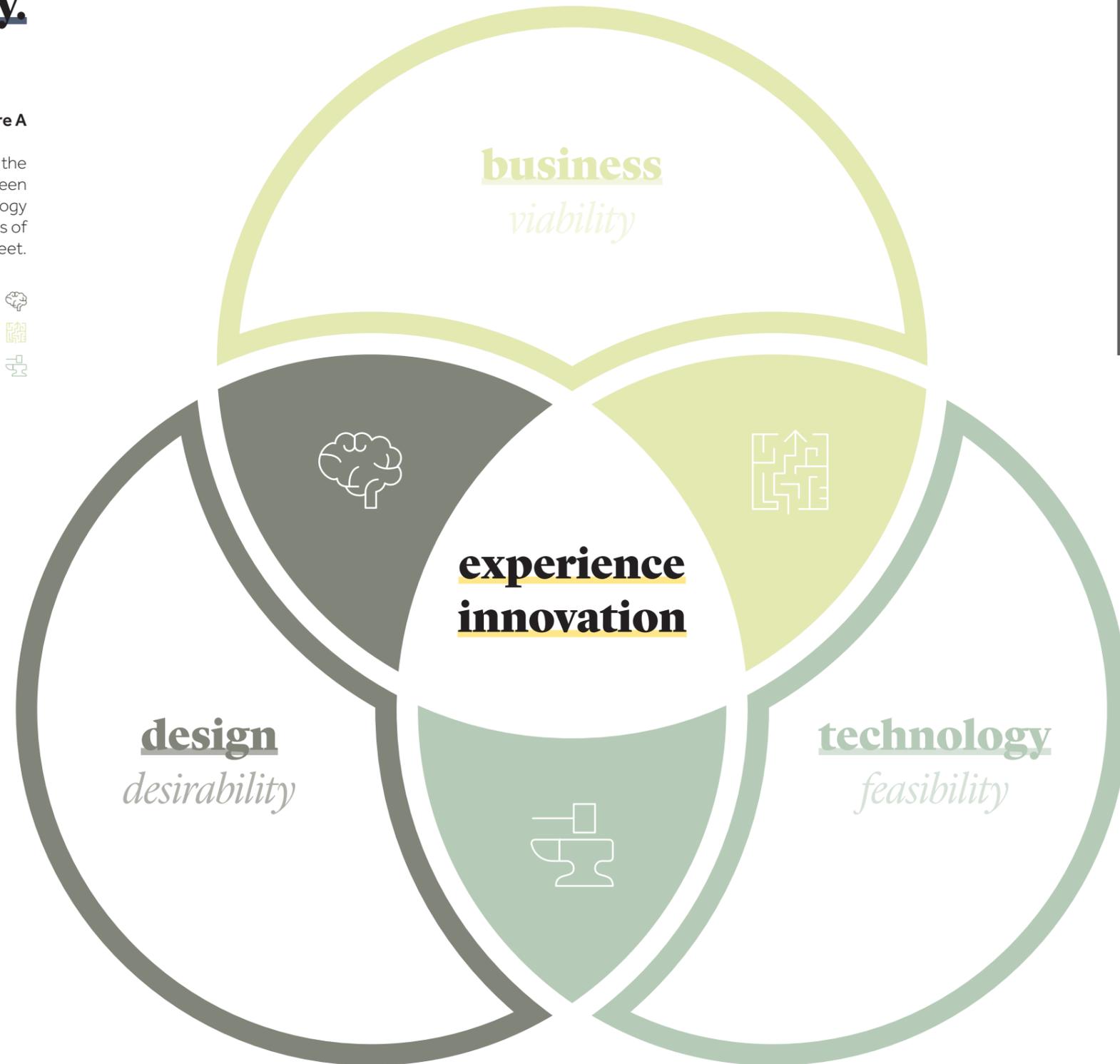


# The intersection of business, design and technology.

Figure A

A venn diagram that shows the logical relationships between business, design and technology resulting in specific areas of innovation where they meet.

- Emotional Innovation 
- Process Innovation 
- Functional Innovation 



According to the global creative consultancy, Lippincott...

'[Experience innovation is] creating new ways to delight customers by taking a broader view of their lives and how they interact with your product, and delivering new, unexpected signature moments.'



INTERVIEW  
ROOM

ENTER

‘What if we gave the same attention to detail and commercial drive to improving the experience of employees?’

### Repeat business.

Apple didn't invent the smartphone, but it made one very easy to use and their brand loyalty amongst digital natives is the strongest.<sup>6</sup> Facebook wasn't the first social network, but its simplicity was instrumental to its growth to 2 billion monthly active users.<sup>7</sup> And there were many other search engines before Google, but none made it as easy to find the most relevant information... and Google now has 90% market share in much of the world.<sup>8</sup>

As these examples show, we're willing to put effort and budget into innovating and improving the experiences of paying customers, but what if we gave the same attention to detail and commercial drive to improving the experience of the employees working every day to serve those customers?

Your employees bought into a promise when they accepted a job offer from you. Question is, would they come back for more by choice. If we asked them, would they buy again?



‘Anything that the consumer sees —  
anywhere in the world —  
will go through his office.  
No exceptions.’<sup>9</sup>

---

ANGELA AHRENDTS, FORMER CEO OF BURBERRY ON  
CHIEF CREATIVE OFFICER CHRISTOPHER BAILEY

# **Marketing's not just for your customers**

## **A sea of meerkats.**

Pattern recognition is the basic mechanism by which our brains function. It's imperative to learning. Our mind groups everything that is similar and separates things that aren't. Take this document for example. The type scheme helps you understand...

what's a caption

## **what's a headline**

**what's a subheading**

...and what's body copy.

This is the similarity principle, documented by Gestalt psychologists in 1923.



Take the following for example:



The 'Os' shown above are the same piece of content undergoing incremental improvement. Even after 20 'Os', it's still an 'O', so your mind creates a pattern and groups them all together. After a while we ignore them, they're the same and our brain creates a pattern for it. Then suddenly you see an 'X' and your brain doesn't have a pattern for that, so you notice and remember it.

The trick is to take that X and prevent it from becoming simply another pattern. If you keep delivering 'Xs' you'll end up with Aleksandr Orlov - the furry meerkat who was once a memorable marketing phenomenon but now exists alongside an opera singer, gyrating builders, a nodding dog and a throw-back to Pulp Fiction... all of them flogging car insurance. Now they're all Xs.

**At NSU we focus on creating content that's distinguishable from the pattern. Content which stands out in a sea of Os and continues to do so.**

**Follow the money.**

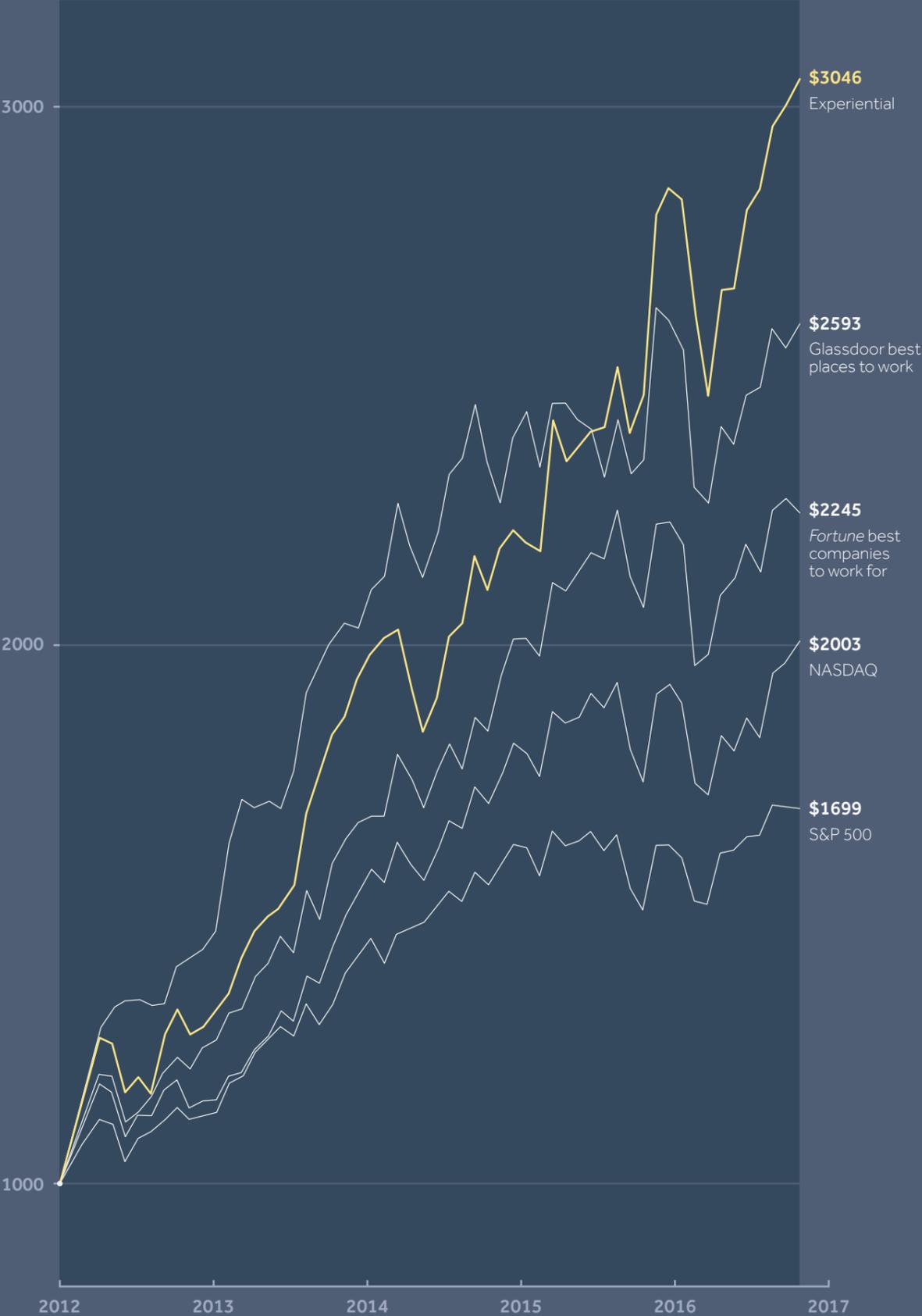
Marketers spent £21.4bn on advertising in 2016, with a 3.7% rise marking the seventh consecutive year of growth.<sup>10</sup> The battle for the most popular Christmas advert costs UK companies around £5.6bn every year.<sup>11</sup> Yet current research shows that organisations currently invest approximately \$720 million annually in engagement improvement, just 3.3% of the advertising budget.<sup>12</sup>

Marketing campaigns come loaded with sizeable budgets, deep strategy and board level sign off.

**Can the same be said about your engagement strategy for employees and the people interacting most often with your customers?**

**Figure B**

How investing in employee experience affects stock prices based on a \$1000 investment.<sup>13</sup>



## Internal means personal.

For some reason, organisations seem happy to hand off activity on internal culture, company values and customer behaviours to too-often disconnected HR functions, with Brand and Marketing divisions solely focused on external brand activity and customer loyalty. If you truly want to narrow the gap between your brand promises and on-the-ground behaviours, try marketing your key messages to frontline staff with the same level of energy and see if they buy from you. Getting this right is surely too important to leave to chance.

We see employee engagement through the eyes of the frontlines of an organisation, because quite simply, it's where all the action is. **When it comes to engagement, organisations should ensure employees have the same high-design, mobile-driven and social engagement experiences that mirror the ones their customers have come to expect.**



Treat employees like your own internal customers.

Develop engagement material and programmes that are compelling and connect people to the reason they joined you in the first place.

Hold their attention and get them to come back, just like you try to achieve with your customers.

**If you want them to care about what they do, show them you care about who they are.**



‘...the people who are charged with internal communications—HR professionals, typically—don’t have the marketing skills to communicate successfully. Information is doled out to employees in the form of memos, newsletters, and so forth...’<sup>14</sup>

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COLIN MITCHELL, SELLING THE BRAND INSIDE

## **An evolving landscape.**

### **Keeping pace.**

The technological impact of the late noughties and beyond went further than simply waking organisations up to the importance of design and technology operating together to create products that customers would queue round the block for. It shaped an entire generation. Once we experienced the world at our fingertips, we quickly became accustomed to an on-demand, faster-than-last-year lifestyle, with increasing expectations at every touchpoint of our lives.

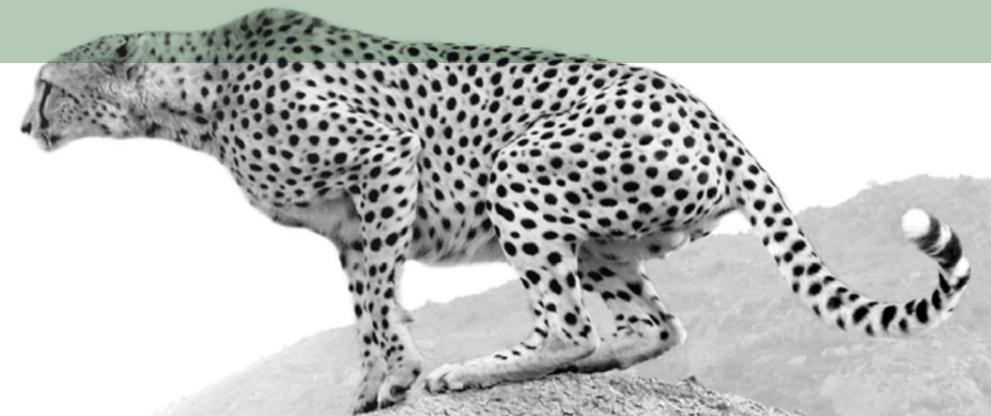
The workplace is no different.

There's a massive (and in our opinion largely unmet) demand for entirely new ways of working; a radically improved employee experience beyond initial induction and what we demand from the companies we work for in terms of development, growth opportunities and the recognition that however large the outfit paying our salary, we matter.

Increasingly, internal company culture and engagement also matters. According to Deloitte's Human Capital Trends survey of leaders from around the world, these might be the most important issues facing many companies around the globe.<sup>15</sup>

While once upon a time the employer was king, 70% of millennials expect their organisation to understand them to the same degree they're expected to understand the business they work in.<sup>16</sup>

‘...we quickly became accustomed to an on-demand, faster-than-last-year lifestyle, with increasing expectations at every touchpoint of our lives.’





88%

of learners learn more by finding things out for themselves than through face-to-face classroom training.<sup>17</sup>

75%

of learners are willing to use technology to share their knowledge in order to help others learn.<sup>18</sup>

### No more gurus.

Thankfully, organisations are increasingly looking to apply the same design-centric and technology-driven thinking to the way they engage and develop their staff and the cultures in which they operate. Outdated training methods are being replaced by self-led mobile learning, mixed media and internal storytelling. One-off company 'away-days' and other short-term fixes are thankfully being dropped from operating budgets in favour of longer-term development programmes focused on shifting the employee experiences and connecting people in far more authentic ways. The shift from trainer or guru-led engagement 'interventions' to sustainable learner-led models will never be reversed, offering (we believe) increasing benefits in employee motivation and opportunities for personal discovery and development.

**‘Technology is reshaping the learning landscape and altering how people access learning, use resources and record evidence. In essence, staff are becoming more self-directed than ever before.’**

At NSU, we believe investing in great design alongside the effective use of technology can transform employee engagement content and support best-practice sharing and storytelling activity in ways that massively improve employee experience over the long term. When something's authentic, compelling and looks beautiful, we're all interested.



‘This is the generation that doesn’t want to be marketed to, they’d rather be engaged.’<sup>19</sup>

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JEFF URBAN, ENTREPRENEUR

## Landing the one percent.

### Lucky number seven.

Today, content is virtually inescapable. It's estimated that we're exposed to as many as 3,500 adverts a day. If you headed into any major city on a 45 minute journey in 2013, you'd likely have seen more than 130 adverts, with 80 different products being featured. You'd shudder if you knew the number on the day you're reading this, even if we do manage to tune out 99% of it.<sup>20</sup>

So how do you make that 1% land? Over the next few pages are a few thoughts on what we think about when creating employee engagement content...



### **01.**

## **Always ask 'so what?'**

Content is created to be consumed, so to make it into the 1%, it has to live with someone.

Always ask 'so what?' - why is this a better use of someone's time than doing something else? How will it help them?

Why does it matter - how will it connect with the audience... and why should they care?

**02.**

## Go deep in the message

Don't scratch the surface - make it real & honest or it'll be ignored immediately.

Take people on a journey - great content is personal and emotional, so where possible, get to the story behind the story.

*'Display the struggle between expectation and reality in all its nastiness.'*<sup>21</sup>

This is where real life happens. Businesses are often rubbish at this when it comes to internal messaging, but employees have great bullshit detectors... and they're switched to Always On.

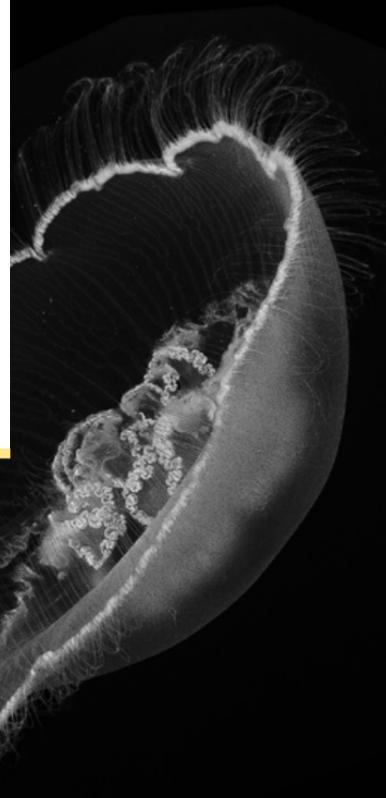


**03.**

## Remember to pull

Don't just broadcast - create opportunities to hear back from people and engage them in a conversation.

People hear from their own - internal success stories of your key messages in action connect best with an audience, and they're there if you take the time to look for them.





y Mary Quant



ene Chair  
y Robin Day

**04.**

# Obsess about quality

You wouldn't create a half-arsed, last minute advert for customers, so never, ever do it internally.

Quality in the message - if it's good it'll be timeless and can be applied to current business priorities.

Quality in the research - like decorating a room, it's all in the preparation... and that means giving time and attention to getting the design right.

Quality in the deliverable - make production top quality and keep polishing until it's beautiful. That way your audience knows you mean it.

Quality in the delivery - mobile is obvious, but creating a responsive social element will give it extra punch.

Penguin Books  
Designed by Edward Young

**05.**

## It's offline too

Great content hangs on discovery. You can't find stories, connect and build rapport from behind a phone or laptop – you need to be out there, on the ground and building relationships to find the hidden greats.

Never underestimate the power of being there, alongside frontline staff. It's not enough to simply create and publish digital content. Provide face to face support and advice to make sure key messages land and help deliver sustainable change.



**06.**

## It's the message, not the medium

Distribution methods change,  
but great content will always be relevant.

The fundamental is to engage people in stories  
that will live with them - how people consume  
will always be evolving.



**07.**

## Measure what matters

Click rates and stats only tell half the story.  
Look for impact rather than numbers -  
regardless of how many people watched  
something, what really matters is what  
happened afterwards.

Hold your nerve - early adopters and  
word of mouth are critical for internal  
engagement, and critical mass for  
meaningful frontline change might be  
lower than you think.



‘We hunger for direction and inspiration. We want what’s important to us to get better—our bodies, work, home, and relationships. We want to imagine ourselves transforming our lives, and the lives of others. We want to feel good about our evolving narratives. It’s why we read books, scan the Internet and flip through magazines. We’re looking for the before and after stories. We want to feel the pull of possibility; of moving beyond our existing reality.’<sup>22</sup>

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TOM ASACKER, THE BUSINESS OF BELIEF



### **Bigger than ourselves.**

Employee Engagement isn't a survey. It's not a score to be reviewed against some sector-based benchmark. It's not an HR activity. And it's definitely not a one-off 'push' comms event.

Engagement is an emotion. It's a reaction, a state of being and a feeling of being connected to something bigger than ourselves. Engagement shouldn't be an add-on and viewed as discretionary. It should be what we do.

And when we truly innovate the design of engagement experiences for the people who choose to work with us, we might just be onto something.

Beautiful design, easy access and a personal connection to the work we do

Beautiful design, easy access and a personal connection to the work we do

Beautiful design, easy access... *are you getting it?*

These are not three separate elements.

This is **one approach.**

And we think it's here to stay.

**Telling stories  
from the frontline.**

NSU Media is an employee engagement agency focused on telling stories from the frontline of organisations that inspire, support and develop their people.

Our programmes help frontline managers form a strong internal identity and lay a foundation for ongoing learning and sustained improvements in performance and customer satisfaction.

[www.nsu.media](http://www.nsu.media)

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**Three things.**

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