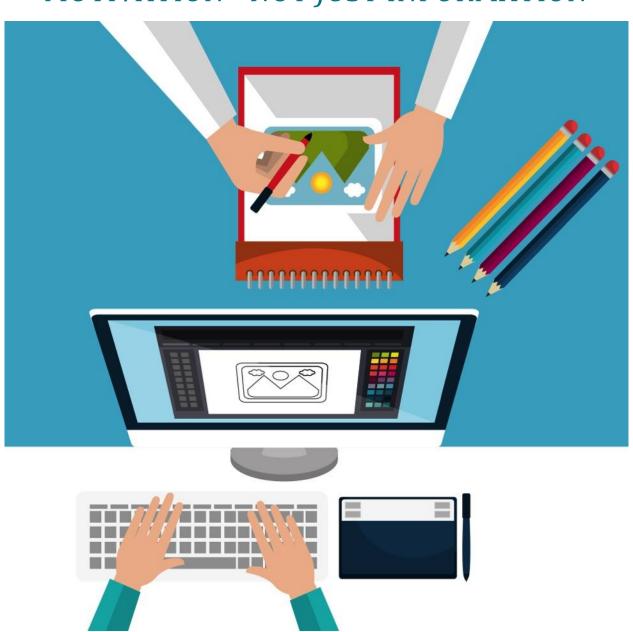


GRAPHIC DESIGN FOR BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

MOTIVATION - NOT JUST INFORMATION



Stephen Bates

Thought leadership for the International Waste Management Community



ABSTRACT

Each year, colleges, universities and art schools around the globe release into the world an army of new designers having learned their craft cocooned from the real world, surrounded by their peers and encouraged by tutors. The wake-up call can often be stark. Picture the scene;

A budding young designer responds to a brief for a new brand identity for an organisation. They spend time researching the market and the competition, agonise over type, colour, shape and form. They develop an idea rooted in strategy, they visualise it, render it and present it eagerly to an expectant client only to be told "Nah! Don't like it". Years of study and skill development laid bare to the abundance of cheap downloadable logos, wives who are 'good at art' and junior staff members who've mastered Microsoft Publisher.

Design in all its forms will always be subjective but the risk and negative effect of undervaluing its importance can be profound, particularly for those institutions seeking to use communications to change behavior where 'motivation' is as important as 'information'.

For public sector institutions, the problem is exasperated by the ever-present issue of budget limitation that forces the thinking that good design is an expensive and unnecessary luxury. In-house communication departments are thus often appointed to develop materials intended to drive critical shifts in behaviour; departments that invariably lack the depth and breadth of experience to create visual identities that grab attention, get stuff read and deliver a measurable shift in public participation.

It is said that communication is proportionally the cheapest component of Waste Management yet arguably the most critical. In the same sense, design is often the cheapest component of communications yet also, the most critically important to the overall communication strategy in delivering success.

In this latest report from Mobius Insight, Stephen Bates discuses the role that good design plays in behavioural change communications for the waste and resource recovery sector and how, when used properly and efficiently, it can have a hugely positive influence on participatory performance.

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1. THE ROLE OF DESIGN

You may have read that the average person in the UK is exposed to between 3,000 and 5,000 marketing messages each day. It's unclear as to where this metric comes from but what's certain is that it's not exactly, 'exact'. Assuming one gets a good eight hour's sleep, that would provide 57,600 'awake' seconds each day and on the upper estimation, that would mean we'd be seeing an advert once every 11.52 seconds. When you take into account TV, Radio, Social Media, Internet, Newspapers, Billboards and all other media, this is entirely possible but it's one thing recognising that an advert exists but another to recall what an advert was talking about, in other words, seeing an advert that registers in the mind. What is known is that we are each bombarded with 11 million 'bits' of information each second1 but the average person's brain capacity is limited to handle around only 40 to 50 'bits. Something has to give and give it does with our brains subconsciously tuning out most peripheral things that it recognises as being unimportant to survival or immediate need. There is now growing acceptance within the advertising industry that the total number of marketing messages we each 'properly' see each day is closer to around 300 to 700. This may appear more attractive to advertisers but on the assumption that an advert is designed, ultimately, to stimulate an action, achieving this remains a very difficult challenge. First, you have to grab attention from all those other marketing messages out there. Next, you have to convey relevance and then need amongst those other advertisers that have also done this. Then, you have to fight against indirect competing forces, consumer apathy and a host of other barriers before someone acts upon the message given. With most advertisers being of the corporate variety with megamoney budgets, the challenge for Local Authorities advertising waste and recycling related services appears at first glance to be daunting, fighting for space and recognition in a sea of flashy, well-funded, slick campaigns selling everything from perfume, coffee and cars to financial services and holidays. Daunting it may be but insurmountable it isn't and good design is the tool of choice.

How and why design works

Our brains process and store information differently depending upon how that information was provided to us. Words alone are generally processed in our short-term memory whereas images go directly into our long-term memory where they remain indelibly etched. Over time, the effect this has increases with one study² that showed after three days, a person retains on average, only 10% - 20% of written or spoken information whereas 65% of visual information is retained. In another study, illustrated text was shown as being 9% more effective than text alone when testing immediate comprehension and 83% more effective when the test was delayed.

According to the Visual Teaching Alliance, the brain is capable of seeing images that last for just 13 milliseconds with visuals processed over 60,000 times faster than text alone. 90% of all information transmitted to the brain is visual.

In short and simply put, we humans are creatures stimulated by the things we see over the things we read by orders of magnitude. By way of example, consider the following illustration:

 $^{^{1}\ \}mathsf{http://www.britannica.com/topic/information-theory}$

 $^{^2\ \}mathsf{http://changingminds.org/explanations/learning/active_learning.htm}$

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Graphic Illustration



Textual Description

A plain figure with four equal straight sides and four right angles, in-filled with a deep blue colour to the edges without shadow or outline.

When design doesn't work

Having established the importance and effect of the visual elements of communications, it is important to note that the poor or incorrect use of graphics can be of detriment, negatively impacting on the ability to drive home a message. When graphics appear on a piece of communication that are off-topic, poor quality or exist purely for decoration, those viewing them will subconsciously try to work out the message and reason for the image's existence which reduces the impact the communication might of otherwise achieved. Examples of poor graphics and imagery include;

- Pictures that are obviously stock photographs
- Poor quality images (pixelated, low-resolution, etc.)
- Clip art
- Generic graphics that display a clear lack of imagination
- Graphics that do not relate to the theme
- Overly-complex and cluttered layouts
- Inappropriate fonts





Above: Examples of the poor use of type and clip art.

Not only does bad design look wrong, it can physically affect the well being of the business that it is being used to promote. Would you entrust the dispatch of a loved one to Smith & Smith who appear to exist to put the 'fun' back into funerals and what state do you think the bouquet would be in, supplied by Kate's Flowers? Given that floristry is itself a creative industry, a poorly designed company logo does not bode well for the services or the flowers the company provides.

The amateur designer will develop something to the point where they say "that looks nice". The professional designer will develop something to the point where they say "that will work". It's a small but absolutely *critical* difference that can define whether a campaign fails or succeeds.



2. HOW DESIGN IS DEVELOPED

The creation of graphic design, be it for a logo, leaflet, website or multi-channel campaign is an evolutionary process to which logic and strategy is applied and rarely the work of a lone designer. Below is the broad approach taken:

The challenge

The design team will review the client brief and consider the primary objectives the campaign needs to deliver on.

The audience

Building an understanding of the target audience is a critical part of the design process as it shapes the message, look and feel of the final design. It is insufficient to simply say something like; "men and women, over the age of 25 living in the town". What are these people's primary concerns and needs? What motivates them to do the things they do presently or not do the things that the campaign seeks to get them to do? Sometimes this insight can be drawn from observation and local knowledge, sometimes it requires talking to the people the campaign will be targeting but never should these things be guessed or assumed.

The barriers

Next, the team will consider what barriers exist that stand in the way of those objectives being met; what are the competing forces both physical and cognitive that will hinder the ability for the audience to act upon the messages that will be provided?

Creative ignition – the spark!

With the above established, the design team will brainstorm ideas. Layouts will be drafted (often old-school with pens and paper). At this stage, no idea is a bad idea with concepts emerging that range from the sublime to the ridiculous. As the process develops, some ideas are discarded others developed further until one dominant idea stands out above the rest, one that everyone keeps looking at. When done well, this is a collective rather than competitive process that leads to a clear "that's the one" moment, agreed by all.

Sense check

At this point, it would be easy to start the visualisation of the chosen idea but the creative process can sometimes lead one away from the core purpose of the campaign so at this stage, a sense check is required. This involves critically revisiting the challenge, the audience and the barriers and consider whether the chosen idea answers on all of these. It's at this point that the question; "will it work?" is asked. The result of this part of the process will either require some tweaking, reworking, starting again or agreement that all is good.

Visualisation

The idea will be worked up to full visuals with examples of the design applied to the materials that the campaign will comprise. It's at this point the designs will be presented to the client for approval along with a rationale for why the design is right.

Market testing and public participation in the creative process

When investing in a major campaign, many public sector institutions seek to reduce the risk by markettesting the design before committing fully to the campaign execution. This is an understandable

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approach but carries with it a number of risks that themselves are potentially more harmful than not undertaken market testing.

Market testing normally involves the recruitment of willing volunteers drawn from the areas and audience profile the campaign will be targeting. This poses the first problem in that those that willingly come forward to participate rarely provide a group that is fully representative of the whole area. They participate because they are socially conscious and active members of their communities and more than likely, already doing what the campaign is seeking to get people to do or do more of – such as recycling. Great effort and not a little expense is required to get a fully representative group to participate in market testing.

Another challenge is that the vast majority of people are not naturally creative. In once sense, for market testing, this might not be such a bad thing; after all, the campaign is not targeting other designers and designers can be critical of the work of others for the sake of it (it is a competitive industry, after all!). What this does mean though is that people's opinions of the approach presented tends to be weighted to towards the subjective at the expense of the objective. As we have seen, people are on the whole stimulated more by what they see rather than read but without appreciation of the creative production process, the default setting people apply in such controlled environments, regardless of the direction given, is to think: "does it look nice?". Again, as we have discovered, good design is less about whether it looks nice and more about whether it will work.

To undertake market testing to a level that would provide genuinely useful feedback often costs an amount more than would be suffered from an underperforming campaign deployed without it. So, is there are role for the public to play in the creative process or should they simply be the recipients of the information with the development left to the professionals? Well, yes, there is a very important role for them to play but not towards the end of the process but at the beginning.

Earlier, we discussed the process of creative development that started with building an understanding of the audience a campaign is to target. It's at this point some great benefit can be had by engaging with the public with the aim of establishing far deeper insight into the likely motivating messages and images that will deliver on the objectives. To demonstrate the power of this, here is a brief case study of a campaign developed by Mobius for Rother District Council.

I Wish I Could Recycle More

Rother is a small local authority on the South Coast of the UK containing the historic towns of Rye and Battle and the seaside resort of Bexhill with 44,000 homes. The majority of residents are above the average UK age.

In 2006, the council appointed Mobius to develop a communications campaign to support a brand new recycling service and a significant expansion of the service then currently provided, which was limited to kerbside paper collection and extensive bring banks dotted around the district, which despite the limitations on materials, was yielding an impressive 16% recycling rate, performance that a few years earlier meant they were in the upper quartile of recycling performance in the UK. The new service would expand the kerbside collections to accommodate garden waste, cans, plastics, cardboard and extended paper collections. It was a service that would be introduced in one go and required the re-routing of collection rounds, new collection days and a change to the requirements on set out. Communications was therefore vital for a successful launch and ongoing participation.

Mobius organised a series of focus groups across the district covering the rural and suburban areas and also undertook some doorstep research. The focus of this activity to was to gain insight into Rother

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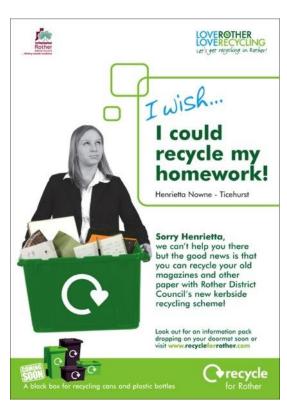
resident's views about recycling, their level of understanding about it, their opinion of the council and their concerns regarding matters that might be addressed by an expanded recycling service.

What was found was a local population who wanted to recycle more than they could. By 2006, many local authorities had introduced extensive kerbside schemes, including those neighbouring Rother and there was frustration that they could not recycle as much as their friends and families living in these other areas. They felt that the council were dragging their heels over the issue (in fact, they were waiting until the end of the then current contract with the incumbent waste contractor to include an expanded service within a new, seven-year contract).

It was also apparent that within in each of the major (and not so major) conurbations, many people knew one another in the same town or village. Community groups and social societies were found to be numerous, strong and very well attended which resulted in large peer-groups of like-minded people.

Using this insight, the Mobius creative team began to develop creative concepts that tapped initially into the population's desire to recycle more. They then sought to capitalise on the fact that many people knew many other people across the district and consider how the council could be positioned as acting upon the desires of the population.





Above: Examples from the Rother District Council campaign © Mobius

The result was a campaign titled "I Wish I Could Recycle More", initially transposing the recycling theme with humorous ones, showing images of real Rother residents expressing their wish to be able to recycle things like "My Husband's excuses for not doing the washing up", "My homework", "My jokes" and so on. Because knowledge of recycling was high, simply promoting a recycling service would have had little impact as people would have thought they'd be reading something they already knew so the reach the campaign would have had would've been less. By putting people (and those that that other people might

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recognise) in funny situations with recycling containers created intrigue that increased the instances of people reading the advert which announced the imminent arrival of a new service, provided by the council in response to the demand of local residents.

The campaign was hugely successful, enabling the efficient launch and a near instant adoption of the new services, boosting recycling to 32% recycling within four weeks, rising to above 45% within eight weeks.



Above: Local people used to promote local services © Mobius

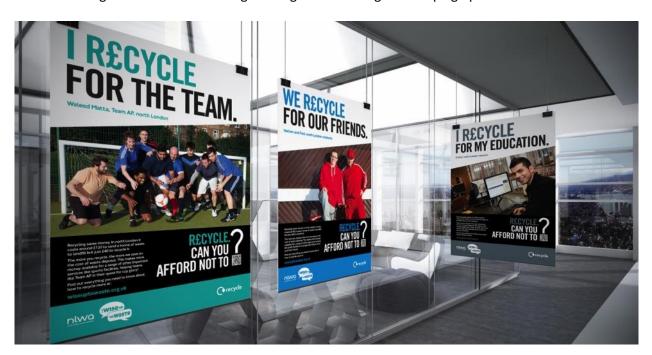
Early engagement with the target audience can also reveal changing priorities amongst people that can be used in campaigns to stimulate a shift in behaviour, as demonstrated across two projects in London, developed by Mobius between 2011 and 2012; one for the London Borough of Hounslow and another for the North London Waste Authority.

Campaigns promoting recycling services run during the first 10 years of the 21st century tended to focus upon the environmental benefits of recycling and the positive impact it has on reducing or even reversing the negative impacts of climate change which by then had become a very hot topic and one constantly at the top of political agendas. However, by 2010, the economic downturn had forced the climate debate further down people's lists of priorities, its place taken by more immediate worries over job security, income and the economy. Councils were facing the prospect of budget cuts and people were worried about what this would mean to council services on which many relied.

Mobius considered that given recycling saves significant sums of money in disposal costs (very significant in London), it could be that this would be effective in motivating people to recycle more by demonstrating the positive financial impacts this has on other council services.



Both campaigns were very successful with Hounslow reporting the largest ever increase in recycled materials being collected in the borough during and following the campaign period.





Above: Examples of campaigns that used the financial benefits of recycling as the primary motivator. © Mobius / North London Waste Authority / London Borough of Hounslow

3. DESIGN FOR SIMPLIFICATION

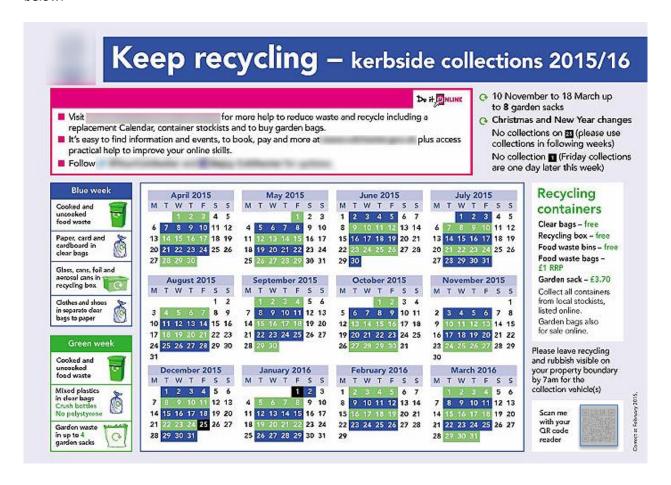
Good design has additional benefits beyond the strategic and aesthetic and can be significantly effective in conveying otherwise complex information in a clear and concise manner. The chances are you have at

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some point in the past assembled a piece of flat-pack furniture from a certain Swedish retailer. Whilst doing so may not have been the easiest thing you did that day, the instructions were clear to follow and you may recall, there was not single world printed anywhere. This is graphic design at its most brilliantly functional.

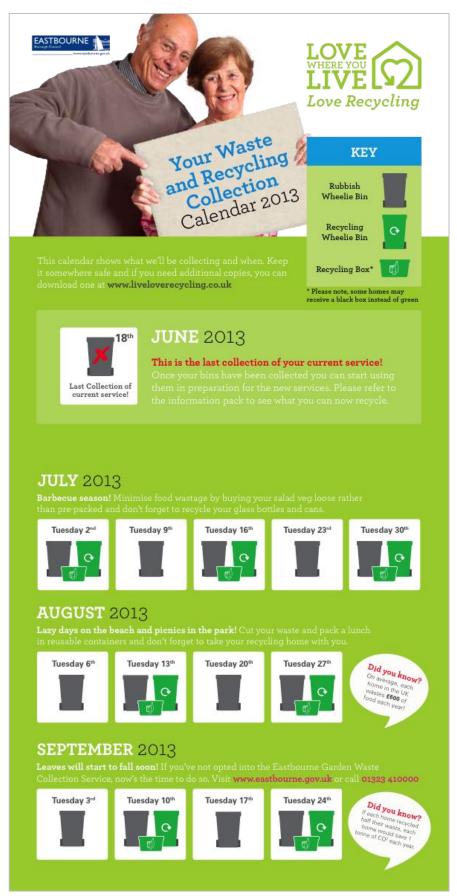
Waste management does, at times, have many complex messages that need to be conveyed to residents, collection frequencies and dates being just one, provided via annual or biannual collection calendars. These are often seen as vital but functional publications and as such, are the sort of item that gets designed by in-house resources or even by waste officers using Word, one such example is shown below:



Whilst all the information that a resident needs to know is here, it's not exactly what you would call 'user friendly' and does require a fair degree of analysis to determine what goes out on what day. One has to remember that compared to simply putting out a rubbish bin once a week, recycling requires additional effort and the greatest amount of recycling is captured when it as easy as possible for residents to follow the instructions and guidance given.

It is possible, and arguably essential, to apply good graphic design to such functional publications in order that complex messages are understood and acted upon by the largest number of people. As an example of this, compare the above calendar to the one on the following page;





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Both publications do exactly the same job but the example shown above displays the information in a much more straightforward way and accommodates motivating messages beyond simply the need to put out the right bin on the right day.

The choice to produce such documents in-house is often driven by the perception that doing so will be cheaper, which actually, it is but as we have already determined, design is the cheapest component of communications and it costs exactly the same amount to print 45,000 poorly designed calendars as it does 45,000 well designed ones. The design cost on the second of the two calendars shown would have added no more than 7% to 8% to the total cost yet what has been created has value way beyond such a modest premium; less missed collections because people misunderstood the information, more material captured, less calls to the call-centre and increased customer satisfaction.

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4. PROCURING DESIGN SERVICES

One recurring challenge facing Local Authorities is the process they are often obliged to follow in terms of buying the services of professional graphic design companies, namely; tendering, a process that is designed to eradicate doubt and provide fairness and parity to procurement ensuring that bidders are treated equally and fairly and that the buying organisation gets the best deal. All worthy attributes but for the procurement of graphic design, is the least appropriate means of selection.

As we have seen, the development of Graphic Design is not a one-step process but more of a journey that requires strategic consideration and close liaison with the client organisation, particularly at the very beginning of the process. Tendering places a distance between the client and (potential) supplier at precisely the time they need to be working closely together. The development of creative content requires open dialogue and research to levels that fall beyond the scope of the tendering process and as such, designers and more critically, designs, are selected on what can best be described as a beauty pageant basis rather than decisions rooted in what's right and what will work. The result is often the selection of an agency that ticks all the right boxes but a campaign that will be less effective, thus negatively influencing future decisions on the need to buy in such services from external suppliers.

This can easily be overcome without circumventing procurement policy by purchasing graphic design separately from other communication functions. It is not uncommon to find requirements for graphic design lumped together with other services such as printing and media buying under a single project procurement tender but there is no reason why the design element cannot be purchased separate to these other, non-creative functions. Let us look at an example of budget split across a typical campaign.

Media space	£45,000.00
Printing	£20,000.00
Postage and mailing	£18,000.00
Doorstepping	£12,000.00
Design and artwork	£5,000.00
Total Campaign Budget	£100,000.00

By procuring all services as a single project provision, a Local Authority would be obliged to follow a full, open tender process. However, the value of the design element independent of the other services would enable them to select a design company directly without the need for open tender and as such select a supplier with a far greater focus upon their ability to deliver something that will work rather than simply "look nice". They would be able to choose a company based upon recommendation and open dialogue, allowing the design to be properly developed and deliver the best result.

As stated earlier and as demonstrated here, graphic design is often the cheapest component of communications yet the most critical to its success.

Applying appropriate budget

Although design may be the least costly campaign component, budget still needs to be applied to an appropriate level to get the best results but specifying that budget can be tricky. However, there are some tools and tips to help the process, the first of which is to consider where you want to be on the following diagram:

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You can request a design be produced very quickly but it is unlikely to neither be cheap nor deliver the best outcomes.

You can request a design be produced as cheaply as possible but it will take longer and nor will it deliver the best results

You can request a design that delivers the best results but this will neither be quick or cheap

The chances are that you have put your imaginary dot bang-smack in the middle of the triangle; the best compromise all round. But think again! The fact is that the additional cost and additional time to move your dot to the top of the triangle from the middle is marginal but the difference in the outcomes the campaign will attain will be profound. More people will see it, read it and act upon it. Thus more material will be recycled and more money saved in disposal costs to levels that way exceed the modest additional, initial investment in design.

Under-investment on the initial design also runs the risk that the campaign under-performs requiring additional spend further downstream to remedy any shortfall in in performance.

It is interesting to note that the three campaign examples described earlier were all the most expensive options available to the clients at the time of procurement.

As useful as this exercise may be, it still doesn't provide any indication of the budget, by which we mean 'money' that needs to be allocated. This again underpins the need to remove design from the tender process as the only way this can be accurately identified is through open discussion with a design agency and assessment of their capabilities.

The design industry works like any other professional service by charging on an hourly basis but one should not be tempted to compare the cost of agencies based purely on their hourly rates. A larger agency with excellent credentials might for example, charge £150 per hour for its services, whereas a smaller agency might charge just £50. It would be tempting to go with the smaller agency if this was the only guiding principle but it may well be that the smaller agency takes six hours to do something the larger agency (with all its resources and experience) can do in two. The end cost is the same but the chances are, the more expensive agency would have done a better job. This is an extreme example and

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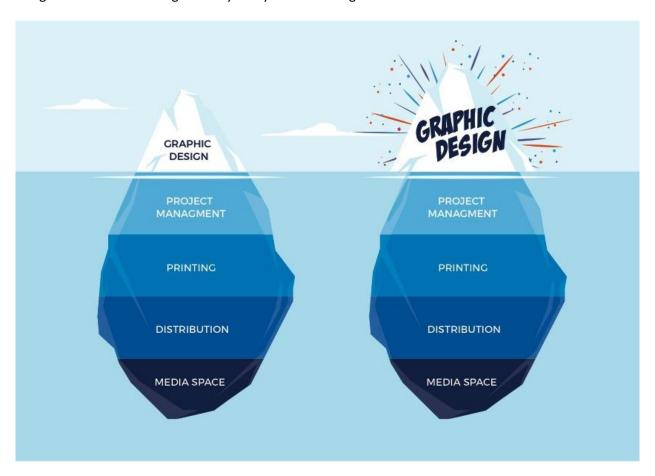
there is of course nothing to suggest a smaller, cheaper agency can't be as good as a bigger one but the point is that hourly rate alone should never be the defining factor in choosing an agency.

Early discussion with the design agency will enable budget options to be discussed. Graphic Design is highly adaptable to need as well as a budget. But this cannot be done under the process of open tender which is another key reason it should be avoided.

The iceberg principal

If we invert the example campaign budget costs shown earlier and liken a campaign to an iceberg, what we see is the design element being the bit that people see; the bit poking above the waves supported by a significantly more expensive array of services that remain unseen below the surface. It

It costs the same amount of money to print and distribute a poorly designed piece of literature as one that has been well designed. Given the investment being made for the whole campaign, spending well on the design ensures that as many people see the iceberg as is possible. The additional cost will be marginal and the benefits greater by many orders of magnitude.



Above: An illustration showing the 'Iceberg Principal'. Below the waterline, all support costs remain the same yet modest additional spend on design can transform the impact (if you pardon the unfortunate use of the word in this context) and reach a campaign can achieve. © Mobius

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4. SUMMARY

As a tool of Behavioural Change, Graphic Design is often overlooked, undervalued and sometimes ignored altogether yet it remains a hugely significant and massively powerful tool that has proven to be a critical component in shifting behaviours of residents across some of the most successful waste and recycling campaigns ever run around the world. The premium required to apply good design to projects is often modest, yet the returns in terms of outcomes are compelling.

The application of good, strategically-driven graphic design can enable local authorities to compete head on for attention amongst a sea of multi-million pound corporate campaigns, and even rise above them to get key messages to residents and motivate change.

About Mobius Insight

Mobius Insight is a thought leadership programme offered by Mobius, one of the world's leading providers of behavioural change communications for the waste and resource recovery sector. Working globally across many varying regions enables us to gain first-hand experience of how behaviour change can best be used to achieve social gains and economic improvements. Our aim is to share this learning and experience with the wider, global waste management community through published papers available on our website, conference participation and commissioned studies.

About the Author

Stephen Bates is one of the world's leading experts on behavioural change for waste management and the development of communications needed to stimulate change. In the UK, he has worked with over 130 local authorities and is the strategic architect behind some of the most effective campaigns and initiatives of their type. Internationally, he has worked for governments and donor institutions in over 20 countries, particularly in transition economic regions. He is a member of the Collaborative Working Group for Solid Waste Management in Low Income and Developing Economic Regions and is a prolific speaker on the subject of Behavioural Change in Waste Management.

Conference Content

This paper is available for presentation at conferences, delivered by the Author.

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