

# Clarifying a complex offer.

**Project Title:**  
Edinburgh First  
Rebrand

**Category:**  
1.0 Corporate/  
Brand Identity

**Sub Category:**  
1.2 Design and  
implementation  
costs under  
£100,000

**Client Company:**  
Edinburgh First  
(The University  
of Edinburgh)

**Design  
Consultancy:**  
Tsuko

**Submission Date:**  
08 July 2011



**“A major contributing factor in the recent success of Edinburgh First has been our re-brand. We have clarified our direction and established clear market positioning with targeted audience-led communications tailored to confidently communicate our vast range of products to many differing markets.”**

**Kirsty Hay, Marketing Manager, Edinburgh First**

# Who?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (241 words)

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## **Edinburgh First.**

**Is it the local buses? A council initiative? A tourism operator or visitor attraction? No, its actually the University of Edinburgh's commercial accommodation and events offer!**

The Edinburgh First re-brand is a worthy design effectiveness paper as it demonstrates the effect good design and communication has on business results.

Good design brought clarity to the communication of a complex offer and de-mystified a confusing brand name. This has directly resulted in increased revenue.

This project has exceeded business objectives and KPIs, has changed customer perception, improved reputation and delivered a positive effect on its people.

## **Commercial impact:**

- › **30% increase in total annual sales**
- › **30% increase in annual accommodation sales**
- › **19% increase in annual conference and events sales**
- › **43% increase in new business revenue**
- › **57% increase in accommodation sales via website**
- › **38% increase in absolute unique visitors to website (April-December)**
- › **0.5% growth in market share**

## **Project launch date**

12 March 2010

## **Budget**

Under £100,000

# A lost brand.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

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## Outline of the project brief

A complete re-brand of Edinburgh First, including all key touch points, in order to meet the following business objectives:

- › Increase revenue
- › Attract new audiences
- › Build loyalty amongst current audiences

Please note that Edinburgh First is a not-for-profit business that operates with a charitable status, investing all 'surplus' back into the University. Specific quantifiable targets for the above objectives are therefore not made available.

## The key issues

Edinburgh First identified in 2008 that its broad and complex offer, poorly defined positioning and potentially even its brand name may be limiting penetration of new audiences. Additional issues included:

- › Existing identity lacked character and was low impact
- › Low local and market profile
- › Poor understanding of proposition, potentially linked to name and relationship with the University
- › Broad, complex offer targeting disparate audience groups
- › Poorly defined audience segmentation, no clear profiling
- › Lack of understanding of current positioning
- › Unresolved brand architecture
- › Disengaged internal audiences



Previous Identity



Previous Website



Previous Signage



Previous Van Livery

# The largest provider of venues in Edinburgh.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW (CONT.)

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## The challenge

To develop a distinctive brand identity and graphic scheme that could unite the varied offer, and provide flexibility for audience targeted communications.

## Project description

In 1999 the University of Edinburgh Accommodation Services launched an external facing brand to promote commercial use conference and events spaces and hotel, B&B, serviced apartments and campus accommodation.

While successful, and eventually contributing around £9m to the University's bottom line, in late 2009 it was felt that a stronger brand identity was required to more clearly express the broad Edinburgh First offer.

The aim was to maximise its middle-market positioning, increase its prominence and - most importantly - relevance in the market and minds of its varied target audience groups, namely the conference organiser, the business tourist, the private visitor and the private wedding/celebration client.

## The market

The University of Edinburgh is the largest provider of conference venues in the city after Edinburgh International Conference Centre, and in 2010 the city was the 29th most popular worldwide (2nd in UK) to hold an association conference.

Edinburgh's tourism market remains strong despite the recession, and it is an increasingly competitive and price driven marketplace. In 2009 3.5 million people visited Edinburgh, staying 12.8 million bed nights and spending a total of £1bn. 3% of these (approx. 106,000) were business tourists.

Edinburgh has the second highest occupancy rate of any city in Europe, and occupancy has increased year on year since 2006. Edinburgh has a total bed stock (serviced and non-serviced) of 42,469 and 2000 of these belong to Edinburgh First's B&Bs, 3 star hotel, and range of serviced apartments.\*

Edinburgh First targets a broad ranging audience profile of both business and leisure tourists for accommodation, therefore it competes with every B&B, serviced apartment and hotel operator across the city, from budget to 3 star price point. Edinburgh First's wide ranging conference and events offer also competes with venue providers across the city, from small hotel business centres, to state-of-the-art venues.

In 2009 Edinburgh First earned 0.96% share of the city's £1bn accommodation market, and 2.5% of the city's conference market.

\*Source: Visit Britain ONS, Edinburgh Visitor Survey, Deloitte, City of Edinburgh Council, ICCA, The Edinburgh Convention Bureau

# Being clear.

DESIGN SOLUTION (431 words)

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## The solution

The five challenges that required resolve were:

### 1. Confusion over the name and what Edinburgh First does

The solution was to turn this challenge on its head, and use it to our best advantage by adding a descriptor as part of the core identity. The vast and varied product and service offering could be distilled to 'conferences, events and accommodation'.

**EDINBURGH FIRST**  
for conferences,  
events and  
accommodation

New Identity

### 2. Express and explain the relationship with the University of Edinburgh

Research confirmed that the relationship with the University was important to some audiences, but in fact risked poor perception in others. The solution was a flexible approach to brand architecture, which employed the University crest and a concise explanation of its relationship with Edinburgh First; positioned as an endorsement where and when appropriate and would add value given the University's high profile.



Identity and University Endorsement

# Speaking directly to each audience.

DESIGN SOLUTION (CONT.)

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## 3. Tailor communications in order to appeal to specific target audiences

The solution was to create a design framework that could be applied consistently across all communication channels to build a strong overall visual brand style, yet offer flexibility in order to target messaging and tone of voice. Reinforcing the brand identity through configuration of titles, a vibrant and characterful colour palette, employing statistics and insightful messaging throughout copy combined to develop a coherent family that could target specific market segments effectively.

One of the strongest examples that demonstrates this approach is the website, which signposts users by their motivation to engage, provides appropriate tone of voice and information based on their enquiry type and matches all suitable products or services to their needs, by employing intuitive search functionality.



Website - Meetings and Events and Accommodation  
audience-centric gateway pages



Audience specific tone of Voice



# Illustrating brand character.

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## 4. Build distinction in the market

Most of Edinburgh First's local hospitality and global conference venue competitors promote their services using empty venue photography. Our solution to deliver distinction was to lead with a suite of bespoke illustrations, evoking the 'experience' of their diverse venue spaces, relevant to each audience. This allows Edinburgh First to 'own' a style that achieves stand out in the marketplace.



## 5. Internal disengagement

The solution was to engage staff throughout the process from initial research to launch. The most notable gap causing frustration was within the sales team. Consultation led us to develop marketing tools and bespoke sales presentations to target each audience group, to better support the sales conversion process.

In addition, a series of staff engagement events were hosted with client and Tsuko teams to showcase the new brand identity, explain the aims and objectives, and reinforce the important role that all staff play in representing and delivering the desired experience. Print materials and the intranet support this ongoing activity.



# Commercial impact: Increasing revenue.

## RESULTS

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### **30% increase in total annual sales**

Edinburgh First's average growth rates before the rebrand project in the years 2006/7 and 2007/8 fluctuated, however the rate of growth after the re-brand has exceeded previous annual growth trends.

### **30% increase in annual accommodation sales**

### **19% increase in conference and events sales**

*Source: Senior Management Accountant, University of Edinburgh: 08/09 and 10/11 accounts.*



# Commercial impact: Attracting new audiences.

## RESULTS (CONT.)

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### **43% increase in new business revenue**

Monthly sales reports have shown a marked increase in revenue generated from new-client business.

### **38% increase in absolute unique visitors to website (annual)**

A user-centric website designed to attract a vast and varied audience, then quickly and intuitively aggregates relevant information, has dramatically improved website enquires and sales, and improved user experience. This is demonstrated by the analytics below.

### **57% increase in accommodation sales via website**

An entirely new website, which guides users depending on their specific needs and provides detailed profile pages for the various types of accommodation on offer, has had a considerable impact on direct website sales.

### **0.5% growth in market share**

# Commercial impact: Building loyalty amongst current audiences.

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## 62% increase in (unsolicited) positive feedback emails/letters received

The re-brand and audience-centric design scheme has brought clarity to the positioning and communication of the Edinburgh First customer experience. Guest expectations are managed across every brand touchpoint, which has resulted in a significant increase in unsolicited positive responses from guests.

Year	Period	Number Received	Difference
2009/10 (pre-launch)	July-April	<b>128</b>	<b>+120</b> (+62%)
2010/11 (post-launch)	July-April	<b>208</b>	

## 76% increase in visitors to website

By analysing like-for-like periods in which Edinburgh First would expect a rise in visits to the website - such as pre-summer (for the Edinburgh International Festival) and Autumn (for Christmas and Hogmanay celebrations) - we see a steady increase in numbers following the launch in March 2010, and peaking to record numbers of visitors (and a longer average dwell time) as the website gains traction and reputation since launch.

Year	Period	Measure: visits	Difference
2009 (pre-launch)	May-June	<b>12,472</b>	<b>+29.6%</b> (+3,693 new visitors)
2010 (post-launch)	May-June	<b>16,165</b>	
2009 (pre-launch)	September-October	<b>6309</b>	<b>+75.98%</b> (+5,247 new visitors)
2010 (post-launch)	September-October	<b>11,556</b>	

## 21% decrease in days lost to sickness absence (comparing 2009/10 with 2010/11)

**Edinburgh First has achieved 'Bravo' and 'Certificate of Excellence' ratings for all six accommodation properties on TripAdvisor in the last year. Service delivery has not changed significantly - remaining consistently good - therefore it can be concluded that the re-brand has improved clarity of offer, resulting in customer expectations being met to higher levels of satisfaction; they now know what to expect, they receive a service standard aligned with their expectation and are therefore totally satisfied and prepared to comment and recommend across social media channels.**

# Internal impact.

## RESULTS (CONT.)

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A second wave of qualitative research - telephone interviews - with industry leaders, existing and new clients, and staff members 15 months after brand launch provides evidence that the brand has improved awareness, appeal and perception externally. Internally staff are motivated, proud and empowered to act as ambassadors of the Edinburgh First brand, with a record reduction of 1,488 sickness days post brand launch.

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*"What I am hearing from staff here (Edinburgh Convention Bureau), and from my own perception, there has been a tremendous difference in the attitude, in the integration, in the understanding and in the professionalism.*

***It has almost been a sea change.*** *I'd put it as strongly as that. I think (the brand) gives a greater sense of what they are about. It is very clear, very precise and you get the message very quickly."* (Industry Expert)

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*"Working in the sales team, **the old brand was a bit tired and had little impact. The new one makes me very happy.** It makes me proud of what we have to offer. It makes it easier to be confident about our brand."* (Staff)

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*"It is a brilliant tool for us. **We have definitely increased interest and leads.**"* (Staff)

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*"There is a **pride in the brand identity now.** They have a reputation, a very good reputation and they are building on that brand loyalty which obviously wasn't there before."* (Industry Expert)

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*"**We are now market focused.** We can communicate what products and services we have to offer."* (Staff)

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*"I think **the rebrand has cemented all of the good things** that we have."* (Staff)

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*"**It has made a significant difference.** It has been important in reinforcing the quality of our product and reinforcing customer loyalty. In terms of new business, **it has enabled us to more than stay ahead of the game.**"* (Staff)

# The big picture.

## OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

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## Other influencing factors

There have been no fundamental changes to the way that Edinburgh First runs its business and communications, other than a year on year reduction in its advertising spend.

The same communication channels are employed; printed brochures for conference and events, accommodation and weddings. Targeted online advertising for accommodation. Targeted print media advertising for weddings and conferences. These have taken on the new brand feel, but are not significantly different in content or exposure. There has not been a focused PR campaign.

Website visit success is partly be due to the introduction of keyphrase analysis, managed in house since the introduction of the new website with content management system.

Masson House has 132 bedrooms and to 09/10 was offered seasonally as part of the 'Pollock Halls' student stock. In September 2010 it became a year-round commercial operation after a full refurbishment. Since re-opening Masson House, along with Richmond Place's 35 serviced apartments, these properties have generated around £700,000 of new income. Even taking this contribution out of the equation, the impact of the Edinburgh First rebrand has still contributed to a significant increase in total annual sales of around £1.5million since its launch; of course the new brand has made a major contribution to the success of Masson House and Richmond Place apartments.

## Research Resources

- › *Edinburgh First sales data*
- › *Edinburgh First customer feedback data*
- › *Senior Management Accountant, University of Edinburgh*
- › *Edinburghfirst.co.uk Google Analytics*
- › *Post-launch brand perception research report*
- › *Visit Britain ONS*
- › *Edinburgh Visitor Survey*
- › *Deloitte*
- › *City of Edinburgh Council*
- › *ICCA*
- › *The Edinburgh Convention Bureau*
- › *The Edinburgh Economy Watch*

# Brand about town.

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Brand Architecture Model: Strategy and Definition



Brand Identity Guidelines



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**EDINBURGH FIRST**  
for conferences,  
events and  
accommodation

**15 venues**  
**1000 theatre style**  
**500 reception**  
**2000+ bedrooms**  
**400 flats**

From prestigious and iconic University of Edinburgh venues to our state-of-the-art John Muir Conference Centre, Edinburgh First offers an impressive range of venues, accommodation and catering options. We deliver great service at good value and recognise that flexibility is key to delivering successful events.

Contact our team on  
**+44 (0)131 651 2189**  
[edinburghfirst.co.uk](http://edinburghfirst.co.uk)

Managing a superb portfolio of distinctive venues, accommodation, catering and event services at the University of Edinburgh.

**EDINBURGH FIRST**  
for weddings  
and celebrations

**6 heritage venues**  
**8 reception venues**  
**4 licensed venues**  
**156 luxury bedrooms**  
**1 great-value package**

Choose from our superb range of heritage and modern venues for your wedding, civil ceremony or reception and leave the rest to us!

For weddings and receptions large and small we can take care of every detail so you don't have to. Our wedding coordinators can arrange your catering, marquee, entertainment, bar service, waiting staff, fresh flowers, menus, seating plan, accommodation and more...

Contact our team on  
**0131 651 2189**  
[edinburghfirst.co.uk](http://edinburghfirst.co.uk)

Managing a superb portfolio of distinctive venues, accommodation, catering and event services at the University of Edinburgh.

Targeted Press Advertising

**EDINBURGH FIRST**  
for accommodation

Enjoy your stay with  
Edinburgh First at  
Pollock Halls

We're here to help,  
at '0' for Reception

Useful Information

Local Maps

Facilities

Check-in

Check-out

Spa/Wellness

Accommodation Inroom Guest Information

**EDINBURGH FIRST**  
for conferences,  
events and  
accommodation

**Kirsty Hay**  
Marketing Manager

Edinburgh First  
The University of Edinburgh  
Edinburgh Park  
18 Pollock Place  
Edinburgh EH4 1JQ

+44 (0)131 651 2189  
+44 (0)131 651 2271  
#edinburghfirst  
[edinburghfirst.co.uk](http://edinburghfirst.co.uk)

Business Stationery



# Brand about town.

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Exterior Signage and Location Identifiers



Banners and Exhibition Display

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Vehicle Livery

