

A Singular Practice

circus





*Fluent in many disciplines, we are
anchored to none.*

*We are robust in our analysis, creative in
our thinking and collaborative in our style.*

A SINGULAR FOCUS



Circus is a boutique management consultancy. We help organisations clarify why they exist and for whom. And how to make this tangible across every encounter.

This is our complete offer. It is all we do. We are singular in our practice.

Since our foundation in 1998, our sole endeavour has been to work with clients to build successful brands through a clearer definition and articulation of their purpose and world view.

Sometimes our work is described as Brand Strategy, sometimes as Purpose, sometimes as Proposition or Vision and Values.

Whatever the descriptor, our role is to help clients to better articulate the essence of the entity they are leading. And, to use brand strategy as a business driver, building deeper engagement and commercial success.

*Great brands succeed through engagement
– the totality of the experiences they create
for their customers, people, partners and
the wider world.*

BRAVE, MEMORABLE AND TRUE



At Circus, we never underestimate the challenge of creating and building a great brand. We admire those organisations that seek to draw us into their world.

These brands are confident and clear about their purpose. They know why they exist and for whom. They are happy to polarise. Their reason for being is tangible. They are opinionated and active. Yes, they want to be commercially successful, but this is not an end in itself – merely an accelerator of their ambition.

They understand their own culture and know how to bring their personality to life in ways that create deep and lasting engagement. They have a way of behaving that reinforces who they are, adding layers of fresh meaning upon layers of old strength. They know how to live their story, rather than simply tell it. They encourage participation; they enlist us in their endeavour.

Well managed brands are single-minded and efficient. They know that their power comes from delivering a consistent, transparent experience across all touchpoints. Their strategy inspires both colleagues and customers. They think inside-out and outside-in. Every encounter is infused by the same ideology, building memory and – over time – our trust.

*A brand's culture is its metaphysical
environment and its historical rule book.
It has to be understood and respected.
To move forward, you need to look back.*

CULTURE AS DRIVER OF VALUES – AND VALUE



Circus works with organisations where people, interaction and experience lie at the heart of the offer.

We are orientated towards retail and consumer services, places and spaces, wellbeing, educational and cultural bodies, financial services and professional practices. For such organisations, culture is central, as it is through their people that they differentiate.

Culture is what attracts and repels. It is why the very best people want to work for us. Why consumers will seek us out and advocate on our behalf. Or forgive us more readily, when we occasionally slip up.

Yet, often, this valuable asset has not been defined in a way that helps newcomers contribute to the onward journey. This is a risk: culture that is undefined is hard to protect and to impart.

In a period of change or invention, cultural clarity becomes ever more critical. New ownership, new leadership, a disruptive competitor, geographic expansion or a new service proposition – whatever the context, our role is to clarify and codify strategy, enabling and inspiring colleague and customer alike.

To do this well and sometimes at pace – is to start with the culture; and to appraise what should be enshrined and what should be evolved. Attempting to create or bottle the magic of any organisation requires empathy and objectivity. To imagine the new, requires a leap into the unknown; a leap with others.

*Imagination is the meta-currency
that lives above all others.*

*Without imagination, there is only
the status quo. Forever.*

IMAGINATION AND RIGOUR



We work with clients to analyse the past and imagine a different future.

This calls for commercial insight, and a precise approach to data and analysis. But it also calls for imagination and courage. Which is why, with our clients, we seek to create a fertile space where imagination and rigour can co-exist and cross-pollinate.

The power of imagination is immeasurable. Imagination fuels product innovation and service design, and all the stuff of commercial invention and reinvention. Imagination creates movements, belief and understanding. It invents the future for all of us.

But we know that before you move forward, you need to understand where you are. Rigour revels in objective metrics – inside-out and outside-in. For Circus, imagination without such rigour is merely day dreaming.

We recognise that these skills don't often sit together in one place. This is why, as clients, we first invented Circus. It is also why we always work in collaboration with experts – inside the client organisation and with professional partners. We enjoy and value the perspective and experience of others. Collaboration makes the thinking smarter, and the mobilisation sure footed.

THE CIRCUS DOUBLE DOUBLE



We have been collaborating with those who own and lead brands for nearly twenty years. Over that time, we have developed a view that important brands are built on four fundamentals – the Circus Double Double. In our view, it is in their combination that truly great brands are born, nurtured and sustained.

IDEOLOGY IS KEY

**INSPIRATION
MATTERS**

**SACRIFICE IS
NECESSARY**

**DISCIPLINE IS
UNDERESTIMATED**

IDEOLOGY IS KEY

To succeed long term, brands need a clear purpose, just as much as they need sound finance.

Truly great organisations carefully weigh their role in the world. They have nothing to hide. They are transparent. Their integrity flows from openness and clarity. This is key to the trust that they engender.

INSPIRATION MATTERS

The extent to which a business inspires its stakeholders is a proxy for the value of its brand.

Great brands are like great people. They inspire us with how they view the world and we want to be in their company. They are creative and magnetic. They are active participants, not bystanders. They are optimistic and engaging. They are interested in us, and we in them.

SACRIFICE IS NECESSARY

Strong brands are prepared to sacrifice opportunities and revenue streams that are not aligned with their ideology and principles.

They are prepared to walk away from money and from partners. This is hard stuff. They like debate: they use more than one measure to navigate their commercial futures. They think long term as a matter of a habit.

DISCIPLINE IS UNDERESTIMATED

Once a strategy has been created and brought to life, it takes real dedication and stamina to stick with it; to keep it on track, relevant and vibrant.

As a leader of a brand, it is easy to be distracted or seduced by another thought. Sticking to the knitting can feel dull – but, to our eyes, it is a worthy pursuit. It makes for efficiency and alignment. And, over time, for sustained commercial success.

APPROACH: BRAND AS BUSINESS DRIVER



We work on a project basis, shaping our process and our vernacular to the client's culture and organisation. Generally, our clients are dealing with change of some kind and are seeking to ensure that their organisation builds value and resonance.

For the most part, a Circus assignment will follow this pattern:

DEFINITION & CODIFICATION

TRANSLATION & MOBILISATION

DEFINITION & CODIFICATION

We collaborate with client teams to articulate a clear sense of purpose. This can involve an entire organisation, a product proposition, a service or a destination. We synthesise existing intelligence and gather new insight, consulting and building consensus as we go.

Our approach typically involves an initial period of in-depth investigation, including stakeholder research, trend analysis, data review and creative workshops, where we seek to broaden the canvas for thinking.

We look for inspiration in the places that you would expect (your people, your sector, your customers), but also in the less obvious places such as literature, art, film, politics, fashion and science.

At this stage, our role is to imagine different scenarios – exploring possibilities and alternative paths. When interrogated and resolved, we codify the agreed strategy – in whatever form is most useful to the client team.

TRANSLATION & MOBILISATION

Once the strategy is codified and agreed, we use our Brand Engagement® model to explore the impact of this strategy on the organisation.

This model forces us to consider impact across all four planes of a brand: Voice, Offer, Place, Behaviour; and for all participants.

We work with the client team to consider not only the end-goal, but also how to get there – the journey and the processes involved. Our role here is to help client leaders, professional partners and colleagues to translate strategy into long term plans and everyday actions.

We inspire and equip teams with knowhow and tools. We create guiding principles, lead workstreams, write briefs and help run pitches. Sometimes we stay involved throughout the journey, sometimes we hand over to client and agency teams.

POSTSCRIPT – THE CIRCUS BRAND



At Circus, we enjoy the company of those who share our curiosity and optimism.

We believe that the best businesses are built on ideology, and that a strong sense of self and purpose can only come from an expansive imagination, a generosity of spirit and the courage to do, rather than follow.

At our office in Marylebone, London, we host a programme of exhibitions and talks in collaboration with artists and makers. This is not only to celebrate their expertise and dedication, but also to give us and our clients a new lens through which to consider life and the stuff of the everyday.

Our name provides a clue to the way in which we see our world:

What is a circus if not about looking at things in brave and new ways? What is a circus, if it's not about emotion, drama and engagement. The circus is a place where imagination and narrative are crucial, but so too are rehearsal, rigour and discipline.

Our practice is singular.

Our performance is plural.

Please visit us at our home in Marylebone High Street
or at www.circuslondon.com and join us as client,
collaborator and colleague.





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