



Feedback. Priceless.

CLIENT PERCEPTION SURVEY 2009

www.ferrierpearce.com



Introduction from Corky & Co

It's a brave organisation that commissions a completely frank client perception survey, undertaken by an independent market research company. This is probably why it is still quite a rarity!

It is typical of Ferrier Pearce's bravery, originality and creative approach to business, and reflective of their total commitment to successful business relationships, that they have undertaken their own Client Perception Survey for the second year running.

This year we were given a new list of clients to approach with only one repetition from last year. Unable to find a convenient date for all the clients to take part in focus groups, the research methodology we adopted was a series of individual in-depth interviews. These generally lasted about an hour and were mostly completed in person on the clients' premises, with the remainder, where it suited the client, by phone.

The emphasis for the feedback was placed on honesty and transparency. If you are not prepared to hear if there are areas where a client is not as delighted as they could be, then there is no point in commissioning the research.

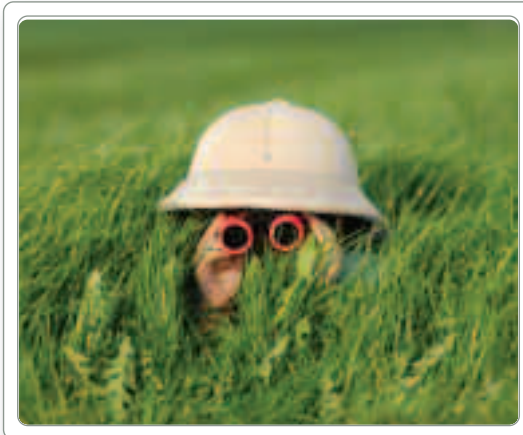
The overall objective was to obtain feedback on the business relationship in general, and to focus on nine key aspects:

- Creativity
- Delivering the creativity
- Cost effectiveness
- Budget management
- Account handling
- Meeting deadlines
- Adding value
- Thinking outside the box
- Tracking trends and keeping up to date

Additionally, clients were asked to award marks out of 10 for each category.



Introduction from Corky & Co - continued



Fearless Pioneers

Last year's survey was generally very positive and 2009 has found once again that Ferrier Pearce scores an impressive 10/10 for meeting deadlines. Clients feel they can trust Ferrier Pearce to deliver, and they know that when push comes to shove, the agency will always go the extra mile for them.

There is a genuine feeling of warmth between Ferrier Pearce and its clients, along with great appreciation of Ferrier Pearce's thoughtful approach to their business. They challenge and develop the client's brief, and thoroughly explore other options in order to produce the best possible solution.

This research forms part of Ferrier Pearce's ongoing ISO 9001 accreditation. We are delighted to have been part of this exercise for 2009, and sincerely hope that both Ferrier Pearce and their clients will genuinely benefit from the findings.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Corky Gormly". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Corky Gormly
Managing Director Corky & C



Background

Ferrier Pearce is an ISO 9001 accredited company. A key part of this qualification is the need to hear and understand client comments and then adjust our activities accordingly.

We do receive regular feedback from client meetings, which has resulted in a number of changes in the way we operate. However, we feel that Ferrier Pearce further benefits from a dedicated client feedback exercise.

For a second year we commissioned Corky & Co to interview representatives from our key client base.

Interviews took place with representatives from:

- Islington Council
- P&O
- HSBC Bank Pension Trust (UK) Limited
- Hymans Robertson
- Fidelity International
- South Oxfordshire District Council
- Vale of White Horse District Council
- Abelica Global
- Crest Nicholson Corporate
- Crest Nicholson Eastern
- Plus other clients that cannot be identified due to non disclosure agreements that are in place.

The findings were presented to the Ferrier Pearce senior management team, appropriate actions discussed and implemented.

This report does not identify comments made by specific individuals during the qualitative interviews.



Results

Where clients were asked to score out of 10 the various aspects of the service provided by Ferrier Pearce, it was interesting to note that in the subjective areas our scores ranged between 6 and 10, whereas areas which are more black and white, for example meeting deadlines, we scored mostly between 9 and 10.

Where we scored below 8 we consider to be opportunities for improvement and have already put actions in place that are resolving those areas of perceived weakness.

What we do well

Once again the feedback from the research confirmed that one of our strongest points remains the ability to deliver material on time. Over half of the clients independently gave us a 10/10 score. The remaining sample, with one exception, scored us 9.

Clients still believe that, based on our understanding of both their market and real needs, we consistently go beyond the brief and provide workable ideas that push conventional communication boundaries and achieve the required results.

They appreciate that their industries do not always lend themselves to a creative approach but that understanding this perceived constraint and often working within rigid corporate guidelines Ferrier Pearce still did an excellent job in providing and delivering excellent creative solutions.

“You can’t be too creative on pensions but they’ve taken it a step further.”



Results



Finding Paths

Our ability to provide both design and communication solutions that go beyond the brief, continue to be greatly valued. This was seen as a demonstration of our team's understanding of both the brief and its background and having considered in depth what was really required.

Clients described the creative response to their requirements with comments that included:

- Good
- Responsive
- Quick
- Flexible
- Adaptable

and often exceeding expectations.

When it came to budget management they could rely on Ferrier Pearce not to present any nasty surprises and, where possible, provide ideas that allowed the juggling of budget allocations.



Value of relationship

On the whole clients continued to value highly their ongoing relationship with Ferrier Pearce and, in particular, the members of the team.



Forming Partnerships

They were also particularly impressed with the Company's understanding of their market and this year emphasised their growing reliance on Ferrier Pearce to help them stay ahead of the game.

“I met them on a stand at the Professional Pensions Show. I got them to pitch because I was fed up with the previous agency. I want to work with people I have empathy with and who understand our needs. They understood pensions, and it's a specialist area.”

Newer clients positively enthused about their relationship with us. Many also wanted to know more about the Company to judge our strengths and full range of experience in order to assess the usefulness of these attributes to their own business needs.

Some of our long-standing clients who are more used to our service standards suggested that we should refresh our account handling activities. This is something we have already implemented.

“I came across them on the web and invited them in, and we had a meeting of minds and personality. What they came back with we were delighted with. I look for people we enjoy spending time with and who tune in and get me, and get that subtlety. I look for great ideas, inspiration, challenge.”



Key deliverables

The research exercise asked participants to discuss key deliverables. These included

- Creativity
- Delivering the creativity
- Budget management
- Meeting deadlines
- Account handling
- Adding value

“Very good ideas and not predictable. They understand the tongue in cheek quirky approach we try to adopt.”

Everyone agreed that our creative ideas helped continually to deliver messages in an attractive and easily understandable way.

The clients also appreciated that there is more to a creative agency than simply the production of ideas. They believed that what separates a good agency from the rest is the ability for all key aspects of the company to work together effectively and produce what is wanted, when it is wanted and where it is wanted.

It is our ability to ensure our team and clients successfully inter-relate and that our effective project management enables us to always deliver on time.

It appears that the proof of our creative pudding continues to be in the delivery.



Creativity



Further Push

Although always very subjective, clients continued to score us highly and praised our ability to make often very challenging subjects both attractive and interesting.

Our creativity goes further than simply producing award winning designs. Clients recognise that our creativity extends to the suggestions we make, often beyond the brief, of new ways to deliver messages.

This is particularly pleasing, as we believe our commitment to new forms of communication and the environment has

now, through effective value for money applications, truly justified our investment in digital marketing.

“They came across us! We were looking for an original concept. What FP did was different. It looked stylish, classic with a funky edge, they didn’t just stick to the brief.”



Budgets



Finished Plans

Clients said that they were happy with the way we handled this area and gave real transparency when it came to providing costs.

In a time of tight budgets clients appreciated our ability to suggest ways of making a budget really 'punch above its weight'.

They also understood how continual changes to an original brief could prove costly if it resulted in unscheduled amendments and recognised the need to keep unexpected changes to a minimum.

“FP looked way out of our league on design and we assumed they’d be expensive, but costs were comparable. We asked Nigel to attend meetings and he did. FP is realistic about what the public sector can afford and they say - this is the Rolls Royce, but if you can’t afford it we do a very good BMW or Mini!”



Meeting deadlines



Fulfilling Promises

All clients agreed that being clever creatively was ideal but no good if that idea could not be delivered on time.

With the majority of clients scoring us 10/10 it would appear that we have the balance of creative ideas and on time delivery correct.

However, it remains important for us to continually look for better and more effective ways of catering for those projects that, through no fault of our clients, are needed yesterday.

“They always deliver. They did first class work in the magazine and they’re very good on creative themes for events. I feel I haven’t had the chance to see their full potential yet.”



Account handling

Account handlers are at the centre of the business relationship, the most frequent contact, and clients unanimously agreed that they rely on them enormously.



Focused Power

In the scoring regime our account handling scored 9 across the board with the exception of one client whom we have since had two meetings. We are working hard to resolve their concerns.

However, we recognise the importance of our association with our clients and are already taking steps to ensure we reinforce those relationships.

The first step in this new move to further satisfy client needs has been the training of staff and their achieving appropriate professional qualifications. This will even better equip them to understand the background to the increasingly complicated projects we find ourselves working on.

We have also changed the title of the account handlers who now form our client relationship team. As well as making sure client's needs are satisfied, and wherever possible exceeded, they ensure everyone feels they are an equal part of the growing Ferrier Pearce family.

“We now have a web-based pension site and FP have really come into their own - they’ve been great! You can rely on FP to do a very good job, and their work looks good too. We had a data protection blip but they addressed it immediately. You can let them get on with it.”



Adding value



Fundamental Principles

It is essential that we continue to add value to the projects we develop and deliver:

“Yes we could really see the difference in quality.”

Pushing the boundaries both in what we design and how we suggest it is delivered certainly proved very popular with the clients interviewed, scoring 8 and 9 in most cases.

Even the client who scored us the lowest when actually asked if we provided added value said: **“Yes they do - we are getting sales and visits.”**

We know that now more than any time in the recent past our clients need to stand out in their marketplace. That is what we are committed to help them do.

“When we first came to FP we looked like a Ford Mondeo - like all the rest - ordinary and steady. Now we’re more distinctive, like a Beetle, more character and quirky.”



How our clients see us

As part of the research exercise clients were asked to symbolise their relationship with us. This resulted in some very interesting analogies and pictures, which we will be sending to the company psychologist!

“I’d draw a smiley face - that’s me and my contentedness with them. Also ££££ to represent costs, and arrows going both ways to show a fluid relationship and great communications.”

“It’s a warm, fuzzy feeling. It’s good. We look forward to all our communications and meetings. We enjoy them.”

“I see FP as a cutting edge high tech company in a modern block with all the latest equipment, looking for the most cost effective solution. It’s a very warm, open company, very approachable, they care about their clients, who you are. It’s tea and scones - very inclusive, warm atmosphere.”

“It’s a country cottage with a nice open fire and a glass of red wine. Quite sophisticated but very warm, friendly and welcoming. The sun is shining outside and I’m the visitor - they’re inviting me in to show me their lovely home!”

“It’s not - ‘you’re the agency, we’re the client’ - it’s a communications team and we support the whole business initiative. It’s a hive! A team of busy bees. We’re all in the hive and I enjoy working with them.”

“FP is the top class athlete and we are the slightly out of shape amateur puffing along behind”

But you cannot please everyone.

“I get the impression I’m not really on their radar. It’s annoying because I’ve only got three agencies I can ask for bigger projects so I do need them.”



Conclusions by Nigel Ferrier – Executive Chairman

I would like to thank our clients for taking time out of their busy schedules to talk to Corky and give their sometimes refreshingly honest perceptions of the service we provide.

No one is perfect and we certainly are not, even if we like to think we get close. However, the research findings stop us from being complacent, ensure we stay on our toes and provide us with the opportunity to improve.

Corky referred to this exercise as a 'warts and all' client perception survey. I must say that we are once again relieved to find we do not have too many warts. It is also interesting and extremely pleasing to see that we continued to score very highly in areas such as project delivery.

We appreciate that what looks good to one person may look totally unacceptable to another. It's all about perception. However, when it comes to project management and project delivery you either get it right or you don't. It would seem that with this 'stand out from the crowd*' attribute we are certainly getting it right.

However, we will ensure that we continue to investigate new ways of bringing client's messages in front of their target audiences in a way that encourages the appropriate response.

I am pleased to say that we have already visited those clients that did not feel as important a part of the Ferrier Pearce family as they should and have implemented a number of changes that will remove any unwanted service level warts.

Finally, I would like to thank Corky for her invaluable work on this project which has proved important for the second year running.

**Crowd – the collective noun for a collection of creative agencies*



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