

How our clients see us

Client perception survey 2010



Introduction from Corky & Co

I was both pleased and impressed to be asked by Ferrier Pearce to conduct its 2010 Client Perception Survey.

As budgets become increasingly tight, research is often the first victim of the accountant's proposed cut list. It is therefore testament to Ferrier Pearce's professional approach to its business, and client relationship management, that it has once again conducted this exercise and more importantly is already implementing changes identified as necessary.

Ferrier Pearce is a rare success story in the current economic climate and has actually grown its client base at a time when many similar creative communication consultancies have contracted or even collapsed. This growth and the nature of the new clients has added an interesting slant to the range of responses to the set areas the research covers. With a client base that now ranges across a number of business sectors it has become evident that an individual's answers to the questions asked have come from very different experience bases. However, the constant remains that all the clients interviewed continue to value their relationship with Ferrier Pearce and have recommended the company to their contacts.

All interviews, except for one which was conducted over the phone, were conducted in person and took place between 26 July and 15 October 2010.

To maintain a measurable progress between this and past client perception exercises the research objectives remained:

- Investigate client perceptions of Ferrier Pearce
- Reinforce an understanding of positive relationship aspects and any issues
- Provide guidance for the future process improvement
- Obtain feedback on a number of key criteria

The key research criteria included:

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

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



The results of the 2010 survey were very positive with those interviewed recognising the company's strengths as remaining strongly based on its client relationship handling and ability to deliver cost effective creative solutions both on budget and on time.

There remains a genuine feeling of warmth between Ferrier Pearce and its clients, even where their activities are rather rigorously judged or the relationship is still in its early days. However, one unexpected finding was the vastly different nature, and in some cases expectations, of those interviewed. Each also had their own preferences for their level of client involvement and remote project management. It is Ferrier Pearce's ability to be 'all things to all men' that has enabled the company to satisfy often very different needs calmly, creatively, on time and within budget.

The interviews also identified that clients remain with Ferrier Pearce because of its:

- Knowledge and understanding of its clients' markets
- Design style
- Clarity and visual impact of communication solutions
- Ability to show that its solutions are both different and better than clients have been used to
- Cost effective solutions and adherence to agreed budgets
- Friendly team ethos

This research forms part of Ferrier Pearce's ongoing ISO 9001 accreditation but also ensures that it remains ahead of other consultancies in terms of creative solutions, management of client expectations and project delivery. I am once again delighted to have been part of this exercise for 2010, and know that both Ferrier Pearce and their growing list of clients will genuinely benefit from the findings.

Corky Gormly
Managing Director
Corky & Co



Background

Ferrier Pearce is an ISO 9001 accredited company. A key part of this accreditation is the need to hear and understand client comments. Based on these comments we are able to adjust our activities and, where necessary our relationships, to ensure we continue to exceed the service our clients expect.

Regular feedback from client meetings forms an ongoing part of our client relationship activities and identifies better ways to deliver the range of services we can provide. However, we know that Ferrier Pearce and its clients continue to benefit from a dedicated, annual client feedback exercise.

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

Interviews took place with representatives from:

- Amey
- Arup
- Pension Corporation
- University of Southampton
- A2Dominion New Homes
- Centrica
- BHP Billiton
- Crest Nicholson
- PFC Corofil
- Experian

Other blue chip clients that cannot be identified due to non-disclosure agreements that are in place were also interviewed.

The findings were presented to the Ferrier Pearce senior management team, who discussed appropriate actions which were either implemented immediately or scheduled to be completed as appropriate.

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

However, there is nothing more powerful than listening to what your peers have to say about a product or company and so we have included as many of the comments made as appropriate.



Results

We recognise that where the very nature of our business is creating imagery and communication solutions, that we will be judged based on the subjective perceptions of individuals. Our core objective is to ensure the material we deliver is relevant and engages with the majority of our client's target audiences.

It was interesting to note that we scored a series of 8, 9 and 10 in most areas, however our overall average score of 7 was as a result of low scores from clients who felt that we had not shared sufficient information regarding ongoing trends in the marketplace.

Whereas a response to creative outputs is understandably subjective, in areas where you either hit or miss a target budget allocation or delivery deadline, our average scores were 8.6 and 9.1 respectively, with many clients giving us 10/10.

Where we scored below 8 we consider this to be an opportunity for improvement. We have already spoken to lower scoring clients to confirm their concerns and put actions in place that are designed to resolve areas of perceived weakness.



What we do well

Once again the feedback from the research confirmed that, as well as producing targeted and relevant creative solutions, one of our strongest points remains the ability to deliver material on time.

This is particularly relevant as we recognise that all the material we design, develop and deliver forms part of often complex campaigns and must be in place when expected to ensure the success of the wider communications strategy.

At a time of severe budget control we once again scored well for cost effectiveness. However, it was interesting to see the difference between the scores given by companies who have experienced financial consultancies' high creative costs and appreciate the lower prices Ferrier Pearce quotes, compared to clients used to working directly with a large pool of highly competitive creative agencies.

Also, our move to client relationship management, away from basic account management, has proven to be very popular and we recognise that our CRM team remains core to our successful client partnerships.



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

“They deliver communications which members actually pick up and read! One person said, ‘This is the first one I’ve ever read.’ Particularly good on the benefit statements – much easier for members to understand.”





Creativity

Central to Ferrier Pearce's core offering is the creativity we show when designing deliverables and deciding the best way of delivering them so that our client's customers have the information they need to make informed decisions.

This task is often made more challenging by the need to conform to corporate design guidelines. Increasingly it is our design treatments that attract clients who are then pleasantly surprised by our wider understanding of communication psychology.

"It's a very visual thing. They are strikingly fresh, clean, clear and attractive. That really helps in pensions – people really do read it and it pulls people in."

"Jon and Nigel came in with a colourful and eye-catching proposal, blew us away and got appointed. The creativity was great, some other departments have now stolen our brand off us and used the strapline and colours. Sticking with our corporate guidelines and colours is no mean feat!"

"They stormed the selection process and flattened the opposition! Their design solution gave a very clear, clean, light crisp feel. It lifted off the page and we all felt the fit."

Our ability to span both online and offline deliverables has equipped us to create and deliver fully integrated and, where possible, segmented engagement strategies that has gained us award winning recognition both by our clients and the sectors we work in.

"I was looking for quality of final production and creative ideas. FP did the downloadable web PDF and the interactive where they can click through and get podcasts and videos – FP are the only ones who are really good at that."

"Now they do our benefits statements, have designed our logo etc. I was looking for something our members would read... and a less painful process in getting there! They are very nice people to work with. And, they have a good track record."



808 \$	1.0	58.52	0.09	15.98%	1.0
4232\$	2.0	3.03	0.13	6.99%	2.0
5894\$	1.7	0.27	0.27	0.29%	1.7
334\$	0.8	1.00	0.33	0.21%	0.8
802 \$	1.0	2.00	0.3	1.32%	1.0
224 \$	1.7	0.00	0.22	11.67%	1.7
224 \$	1.7	0.00	0.22	11.67%	1.7
224 \$	1.7	0.00	0.22	11.67%	1.7
224 \$	1.7	0.00	0.22	11.67%	1.7
224 \$	1.7	0.00	0.22	11.67%	1.7





Budgets

Clients remain very happy with the way we satisfy their needs in a cost effective way that ensures they achieve maximum bang for every buck they invest in their communications strategy.

As budgets become more difficult to justify, our survey confirmed clients' appreciation of our ability to make communication spending more cost effective and result driven. Also, we recognise that extreme care has to be exercised to ensure strategies meet target audience's expectations but do not appear too extravagant in a time of austerity.

"We were looking to do a pensions newsletter and had quotes and it seemed ridiculously expensive. I asked Ferrier Pearce for a ballpark figure and it was about 1/10 of the amount".

"The trustees get frightened and saw it as extravagant and flashy, but when they saw what we'd spent they were very happy. The previous style was verbose, technical and long-winded and expensive."

Clients also appreciated our working to different costing models than other consultants and never receiving nasty, unplanned surprises when their final invoice is received.

"We've used expensive consultants who charged actuarial rates. Ferrier Pearce work to a different model. Nigel said he could put their rates up if it'd make me feel better!"

"They always deliver to a quote. Even if it takes longer than anticipated."





Meeting deadlines

Creativity and effective costs count for nothing if the deliverable does not arrive when and where it is expected. This highly visible area of success or failure, for the third year running, proved to be one of the company's strongest assets.

With the majority of clients scoring us between 8 and 10 we are achieving the essential link between creative ideas, project management and on time delivery. However, we realise that we must research and, where appropriate, exploit new technologies that will help deliver targeted messages and encourage expected customer responses.

We will also continue to find ways of improving our delivery timescales so that we can support clients with last minute jobs that were needed yesterday but only briefed today.

"Excellent – they've never missed one! That goes with the management of expectations."

"They pull out all the stops – very good – and we did notice."

"Good - never missed!"

"Can't fault them on that."





Client relationships

As in previous years, the Client Relationship Management team's activities were placed at the centre of our successful business relationships, and overall the scores are very good.

Clients confirmed that access to Ferrier Pearce personnel from Nigel and Jon downwards and the seamless nature of cover operated by the CRM team and creative teams remains key to our successful client relationship ethos.

"Seamless! I usually work with Cass but if she's out Jon picks up emails and they manage it between them."

More clients are also recognising the benefits of working with a creative company who has experience of working within both the consumer and employee engagement arenas. This wide-ranging expertise has positioned us, in the eyes of a number of clients, as a communication consultant and welcome advice that will support their objectives.

"They had a completely different approach to pensions and their commercial approach was evident. We liked what we saw. Pensions aren't just old people! And they say – let's focus on what you can do right now."

"Ferrier Pearce has done a remarkable job for us – I think of them as communications consultants."

Relations have also been reinforced by our team's calm and positive attitude towards clients and projects, which have a habit of changing direction due to realigned requirements.

"I like dealing with them. Open. I'm very appreciative of the tolerance they've shown to us as we mess with the tables. Every now and then I say – 'I bet you sometimes wish you'd never taken us on!'"

"FP brings sunshine into our lives! Can do, can do. They are bright and colourful in terms of personality and output."





Adding value

We never take a brief at face value and will always test stated requirements to confirm true customer needs and see if we can find a better way to deliver more targeted messages. Only in this way can we help clients achieve added value to their stated objectives.

“They’re very happy to challenge us in a very constructive way. We bat ideas around. And, we’re on a journey together. The mood is slightly light-hearted; very professional but they’re not constrained by the trappings of professionalism.”

This ability to identify and then provide added value is supported by our ability to manage, sometimes very complicated projects, and deliver what is needed, where and when it is needed. Clients recognised and appreciated our creative and client relationship teams’ availability and ‘will do’ attitude. We realise that the confidence this creates also allows Ferrier Pearce to provide real added value to projects we work on.

“They’re always positive and cheerful – ‘we’ll see what we can do.’”

“We trust them, and they add value. We don’t have to manage them tightly, and they never get worn down.”

“Fantastic. They don’t try and take our relationship for granted – they try and do new / more. They share research with us. We have planning sessions and talk about what assistance they can give. It creates peace of mind.”



What our clients think about us

At the end of the research exercise clients were asked if, based on their experience of working with Ferrier Pearce, they would recommend our services to an important contact. We were very pleased to hear that some had already!

"I wouldn't hesitate to recommend them. They always come within budget even if the timescale is elongated. They do what they say, and do it very well."

"They listen to clients, challenge them, deliver on time and within budget. They do have clients' best interests at heart!"

"Just on the visuals – just look at the clarity. I have spoken to an investment bank about them."

"Cost effective, good account management and working to tight deadlines. I have recommended them to an engineering school."

"Certainly to go on a shortlist – they have a more commercial approach because they're not tied to a pensions background. They have a real clarity in their communications products that's lacking in competitors."

"I'd say they engage with interest, interpret brand guidelines and I can take a hands off approach because I know they'll deliver."

"I would and I have. Because they do what it says on the tin. Not flashy – one of the best."

"Yes I would. Very friendly, very creative and open to ideas."

"Yes we would. Their mission statement is 'how can we help you, what can we do, is there anything else'. We trust them."



Conclusions

by Nigel Ferrier, Executive Chairman

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

In today's business environment no organisation can afford to rest on its laurels and assume the service it is providing is still meeting its customer's expectations. That is why, as other companies are cutting back on what they consider an unnecessary expense, we have continued to view our client perception survey as a very necessary business investment. And as they say: 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating'. Since we started this exercise three years ago, by resolving issues raised we have not only retained almost all our clients but increased our client base by over 50%.

Although the views of some of our more established clients remain absolutely invaluable we have found comments from some of our more recent Ferrier Pearce family members very enlightening. This exercise is all about continual service improvement and ensuring we are always in the process of upping our game. Some of the suggestions made by some of our new clients will certainly help us do just that.

We never expect to receive straight tens and to be honest the objective of the exercise is to highlight weaknesses and not to pat ourselves on the back. However, it is still pleasing

to see that we have once again scored very highly in key areas including budget management and delivering on time.

Without a doubt our clients continue to understand that creativity remains at the core of our activities. However, they also appreciate that supporting our award winning design treatments we have turned our creativity towards the way we deliver messages and ensure an appropriate customer response. Based on clients comments and suggestions, and the desire to deliver effective communications, we have established two specialist digital delivery companies, Tick and Catch.

Finally, I would like to thank both Corky for her invaluable work on this project, which has proved important for the third year running, and our hard working teams without whom we would not enjoy the success and current business growth during this most challenging of times. I am pleased to say that we are making appointments to visit clients who highlighted issues requiring our attention, and plan to take action to remove any of the highlighted perception issues.

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