

## HOW BURNESS BECAME A DIFFERENT TYPE OF LAW FIRM.

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## Précis

Coming out of a difficult transitional period, and in a crowded sector with little differentiation, Burness faced the added challenge of a recession.

They addressed this by embarking on a transformational re-brand, resulting in a clear positioning, sustained growth, improved profit margins and new business opportunities. And a revitalised team.



### Courage of their convictions

Burness’s marketing goals were clear but they were not going to be easy to achieve:

- Scotland’s professional services are notoriously conservative. It’s one thing to have a bullish marketing plan. It’s another to turn conviction into action.
- Professional services brands tend to say the same things and convey similar images. Standing apart in the marketplace is not easy.
- The prevailing industry wind was to cut-back rather than invest in marketing. The Burness management team had to find a way to take staff with them on the road to a new marketing solution, lifting and motivating them in the process. Get it wrong and the new efforts could have a highly detrimental effect.

### Creating a new brand identity

Leith were briefed in December 2009 to help Burness clarify what their brand stood for, where it was heading and how it should come across, and then to encapsulate this in a fresh, powerful new identity that would work across all marketing materials, online and offline.

Given the scale of the challenge, it was agreed from the outset that Burness needed to be taken on a transformational journey. The brand redevelopment process, (*illustrated opposite*) was created to achieve this.

The initial immersion stage revealed a gap between the way clients saw Burness and the way Burness wanted to be seen. The main insights are summarised opposite.

#### BURNESS BRAND REDEVELOPMENT PROCESS:



#### IMMERSION STAGE - BURNESS KEY INSIGHTS:

CLIENT & PROSPECT'S PERCEPTION	BURNESS DESIRED PERCEPTION
<i>Don't know much about them.</i>	<i>Well known, excellent quality.</i>
<i>Can be stand-offish.</i>	<i>Great to deal with and likeable.</i>
<i>They can be superior and posh.</i>	<i>Better quality with an appealing style.</i>
<i>Quiet, understated Scottish law firm.</i>	<i>Bags of energy and confidence.</i>
<i>Boring, dull, cheap, second rate collateral.</i>	<i>Fresh, dynamic, market leading brand presentation.</i>

### Creating a new brand identity

Burness did not just want a new logo. The new brand identity and marketing collateral had to shift perceptions considerably, giving Burness more gravitas, likeability and standout. The workshops revealed a passion to be, and be seen to be, a different kind of law firm. It was agreed that Burness should stand for the 4 S's:

## Steely, Stylish, Smart and Successful.

And building on a professional commitment to quality and excellence as a business, a bold brand promise was created:

## Delivering results through smart thinking and impeccable execution.

Burness wanted a compelling new identity to bring to life a new set of brand values that would instil staff pride. They wanted the new look and feel to embody a set of values that all staff would make palpable in the way they behaved and communicated.

### BURNESS'S NEW BRAND VALUES

<b>STYLE:</b>	<i>Delivering results through strong thinking and impeccable execution.</i>
<b>AMBITION:</b>	<i>Driven (not pushy), confident (not arrogant), committed to achieving. What success looks like to you.</i>
<b>INNOVATION:</b>	<i>Innovate in all that we do.</i>
<b>PASSION:</b>	<i>We love what we do and we want our clients to feel this and come back for more.</i>
<b>FOCUS:</b>	<i>Nothing distracts us from exceeding the expectations of our clients.</i>

### The value of staff engagement throughout

The brand development process was designed to build the brand from the inside out; canvassing the views of the staff and engaging them throughout was imperative. The strategic development process involved extensive internal consultation.

This ensured that the new look and feel would be much more than a 'face lift'; it would be the embodiment of how staff saw themselves and Burness, and how they wanted the firm to be seen by clients and potential clients. The inclusiveness of this strategic stage would prove to have a huge impact, creating an organization full of evangelists and providing the spark that would drive the brand.

## A new dynamism

The next step was to bring the strategic thinking to life in the form of:

- A memorable, distinctive and dynamic marque.
- A contemporary, stylish look and feel, expressed through a fresh new photographic and illustrative approach.
- A tone of voice that captures Burness staff passion and ambition but in a way that was appealing.

When it came to the creation of the new marque, inspiration was drawn from conversations with clients and staff. Two stakeholder comments, in particular, captured the imagination:

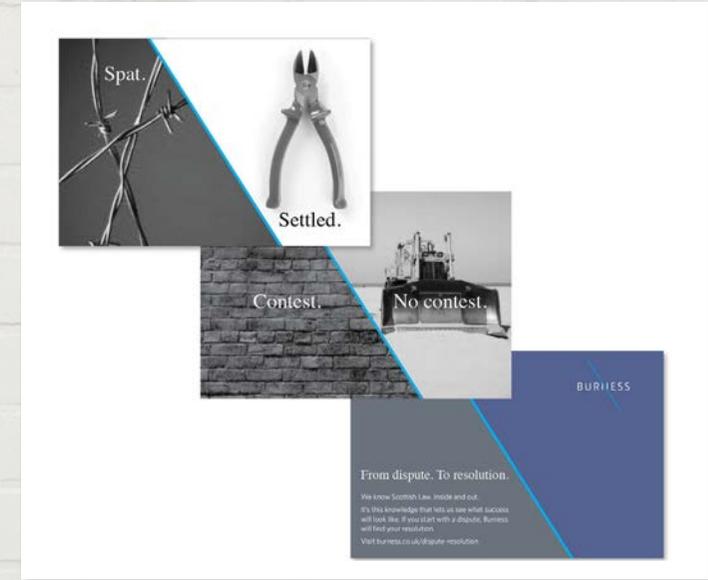
*"We use our experience and intelligence to cut through the noise and the clutter."*

*"We cut to the quick...sharp thinking that gets you to the point, faster."*

Words like 'sharpens,' 'cut through,' 'getting to the point', coupled with the desire for the 4 S's (Steely, Stylish, Smart and Successful), inspired the creation of the 'dynamic diagonal'.



1. Brand marque



2. Burness Dispute Resolution brand postcards

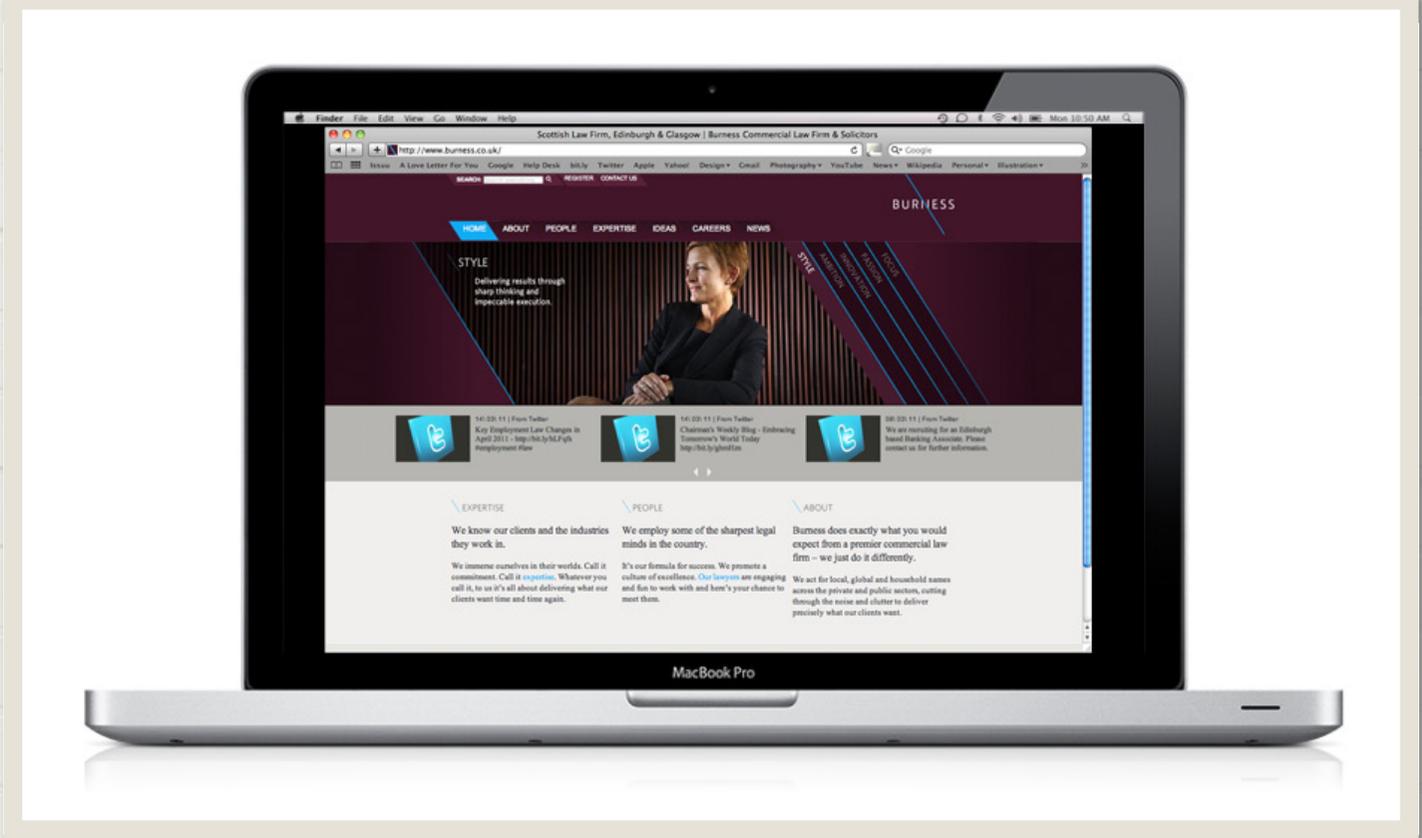


3. Powerpoint slides showing the dynamic diagonal in application

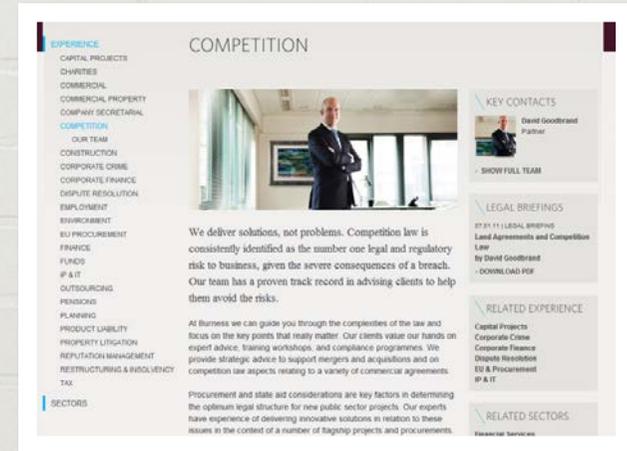
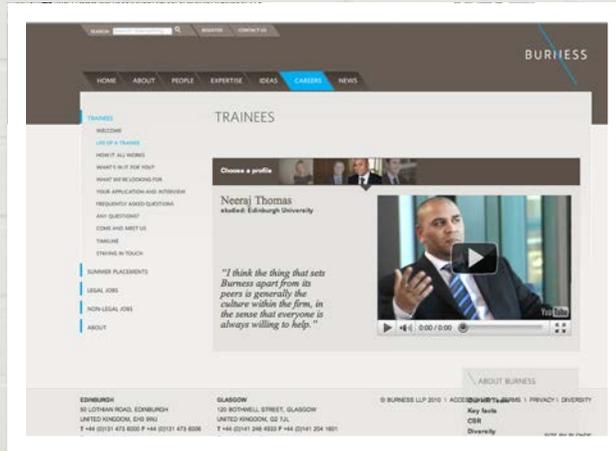
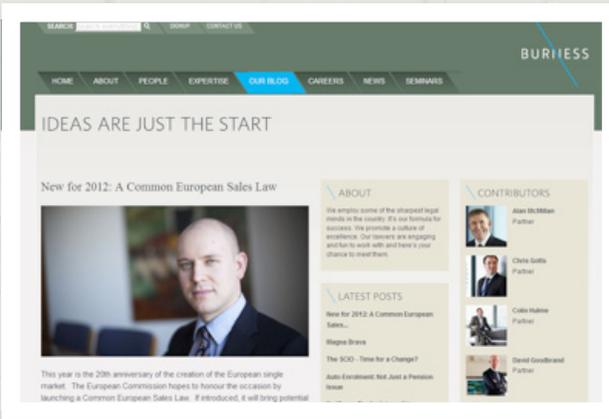
### A new dynamism

This powerful and flexible marque shaped all aspects of the marketing collateral, both online and offline.

The dynamic diagonal proved to be digitally liberating. Blonde (the digital arm of Leith) worked with us to create a distinctive design, which enhanced the diagonal beautifully and memorably. The site works hard at engaging the audience, translating the personality of the firm through a compelling and dynamic site. It also has a strong focus, on attracting top industry talent.



New Burness website and sample pages.



### A new dynamism

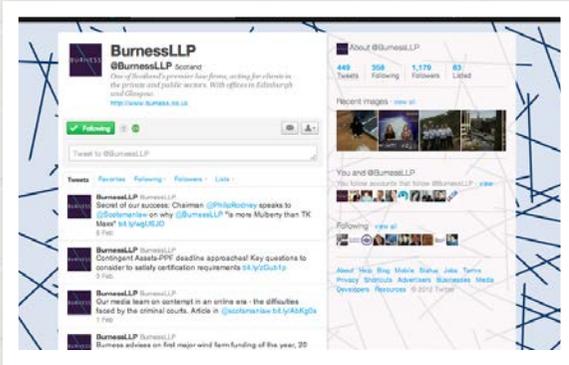
New photography and language presented a contemporary, stylish image, conveying a company brimming with confidence. Imagery reflected the '4 S's' – Steely, Sharp, Stylish and Successful, created in a style that broke the mould of the sector, of stereotypical corporate environments and subjects looking static and disengaged.



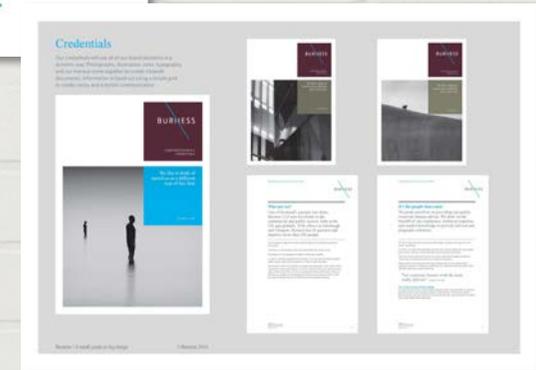
### A new dynamism

- 1. Social Media
- 2. Brand guidelines
- 3. Brand spirit book
- 4. Advertising

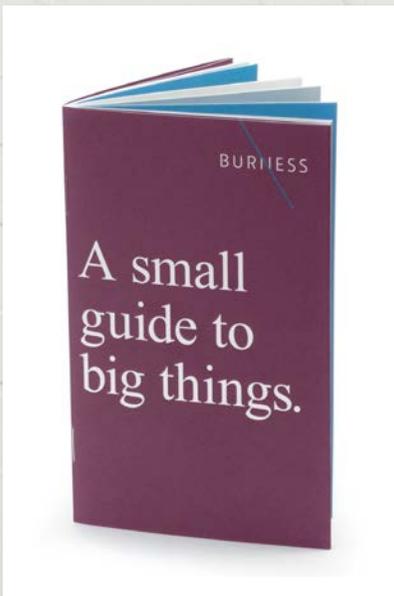
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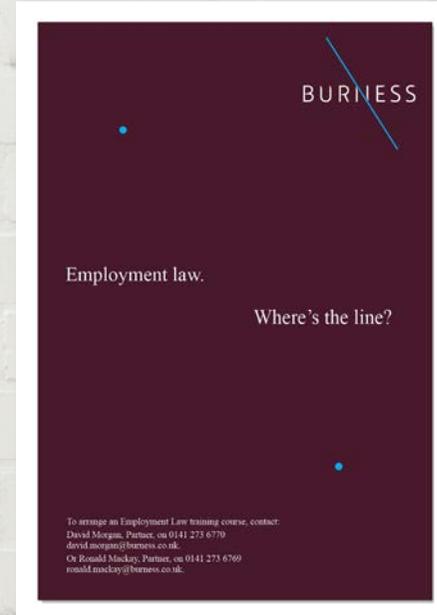
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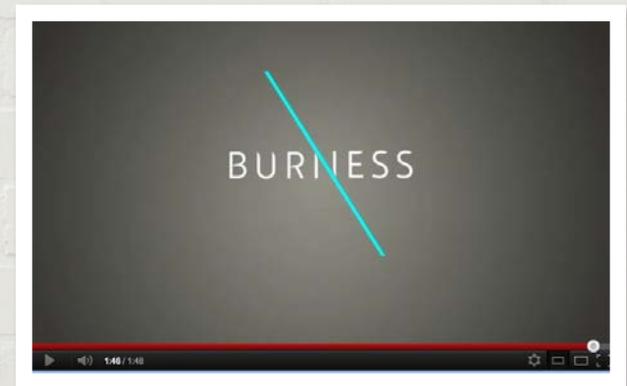
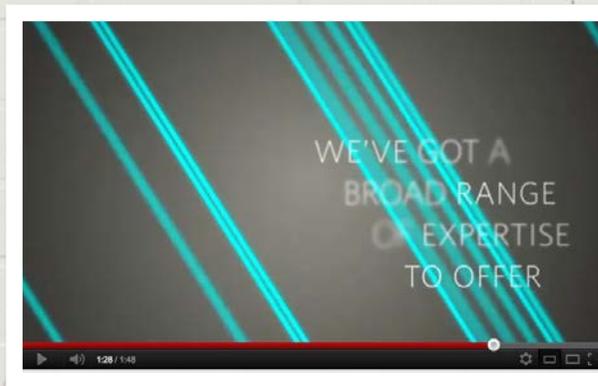
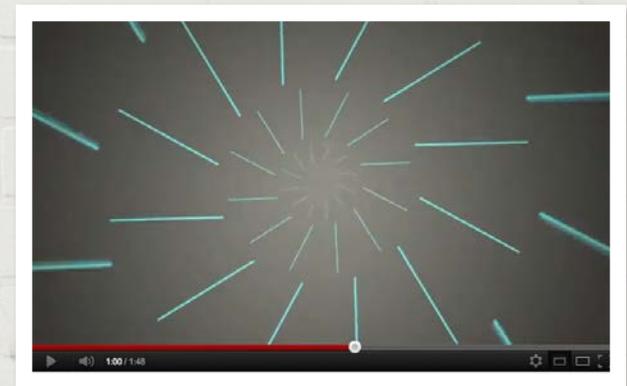
4.



### A new dynamism

Finally, we developed a quirky and immaculately executed animation that set out the firm's ethos and made its new values even more inspirational, another sign of how they now boldly stand out in their sector.

<http://www.burness.co.uk/About/our-ethos>



## Selling the story

There were three strands to launching the brand internally:

- The Beat.
- The Reveal.
- A Small Guide to Big Things – the brand guide.

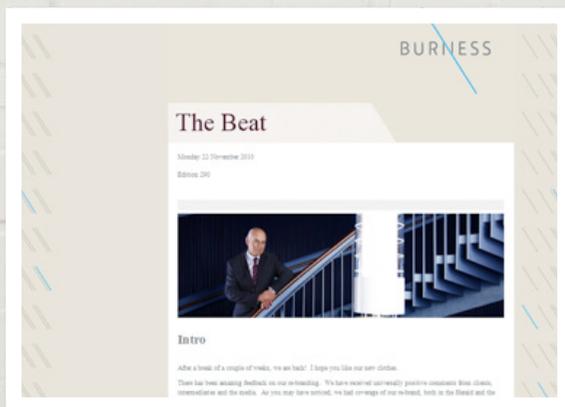
## The Beat

In the weeks running up to the launch, the internal newsletter, 'The Beat', was used to explain the planning and logistical aspects of rolling the brand out and to reassure that on day one it would be 'business as usual'. We also used 'The Beat' to share the forthcoming client communications strategy to launch the brand. Bottom line, everyone knew what was happening and when.

## The Reveal

Each year Burness hosts an Annual Review for all 249 colleagues. This event was used to tell the story of the re-brand and unveil it to staff, 4 days ahead of its launch to clients. A Leith presentation set out the firm's ethos and new brand values using the ethos animation to end the presentation. It was hugely powerful and motivating. At the end there was spontaneous applause. Buy-in was unanimous.

The brand development process had been designed to build the brand from the inside out; canvassing the views of the staff and engaging them in the process was imperative. The inclusiveness of the preparatory strategic work had a hugely positive impact, contributing to the enthusiasm the project received when it was launched. It created an organisation full of evangelists, providing the spark that would drive the brand.



***“When the re-brand was launched to the entire firm, it was an extremely emotional experience.”*** Peter Lawson, Partner, Corporate Finance

***“When the re-brand was first presented at our partners’ conference, there was a palpable sense of excitement and enthusiasm in the discussions that followed. It was repeated, and even surpassed, when the process was completed and the whole staff were given the full presentation.”***

Gary Moffat, Partner, Dispute Resolution

### A Small Guide to Big Things

After the reveal everyone went back to their desk to find two important pieces of print. Firstly a booklet 'A small guide to big things'. A personal exposition of the new brand, written to make everyone feel proud of the new brand and celebrate their part in it. This booklet is now given to all new starts in the firm.

In addition every member of staff received a copy of the firm's new brand guide. The guide reiterates Burness's approach to its business and values of Style, Ambition, Innovation, Passion and Focus.

Crucially, it clarifies what Burness stands for, its ambitions and the direction it is heading. Brand booklets are of little value unless staff bring them to life in the way they communicate with clients.

### Bravery paid off

Burness undertook a re-brand costing £80k, significantly increasing spend on marketing despite the economic downturn and at a time when other firms were reducing theirs.

Whilst no re-brand can ever credibly claim to produce an immediate turnaround, in a professional services business such as Burness, it can (and did) immediately encapsulate and galvanise the firm's focus. The team supported by the re-brand produced outstanding results.

In the year to 31st July 2010, turnover increased 8% to £21.2m and net profit increased by 40%. In the year to 31st July 2011, turnover increased by 10% to £23.4m and net profit was up by 14%.

These improvements in net profits underpin the re-brand's purpose of positioning Burness as a premium player which expertly tackles demanding legal tasks.

***"Following the launch, there was a real sense of employees 'walking tall' and feeling proud of the image of the firm, which attracted a great deal of attention elsewhere in legal circles in Scotland."***

*David Morgan, Partner, Employment*

***"The re-brand captures who we are and where we want to go to and has been a hugely influential factor in our current success. In my own practice, we have bucked the trend and, in a difficult market, have won new clients and advised on a string of quality and high profile transactions."***

*Peter Lawson, Partner, Corporate Finance*

IMPROVED  
FINANCIAL  
PERFORMANCE

2010  
Net Profit  
increased

2011  
Net Profit  
increased

8%

2010  
Turnover  
increased

40%

10%

2011  
Turnover  
increased

14%

### Bravery paid off

The re-brand and creation of a new website aided recruitment. The number of applicants received through the website has increased and Burness has recruited 4 people directly through the use of social media, saving them circa £50k in recruitment fees.



**WEB STATISTICS FROM THE NEW BRAND WEBSITE**

Visits are up  
**+32%**

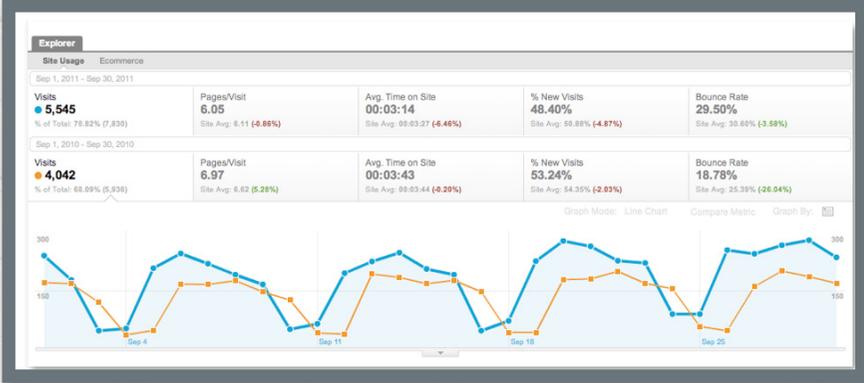
1				
Sep 1, 2011 - Sep 30, 2011	3,987	22,850	59.92%	
Sep 1, 2010 - Sep 30, 2010	3,237	20,962	54.55%	

61-180				
Sep 1, 2011 - Sep 30, 2011	1,301	9,396	16.82%	
Sep 1, 2010 - Sep 30, 2010	975	7,484	16.43%	

**Engagement has increased.**  
No. of Visits and page views have increased around the "key engagement" times.

9-14				
Sep 1, 2011 - Sep 30, 2011	401	2,799	5.12%	
Sep 1, 2010 - Sep 30, 2010	274	2,215	4.62%	

Visits from natural research  
**+37%**



People visiting only once are down  
**-4%**

People making frequent visits have increased.

### Praise from clients, staff and competitors:

Client perceptions of Burness became more positive. Burness's more appealing, contemporary and memorable image caught the attention of key clients, raising the brand's profile.

Burness wanted to truly stand apart from the competitive set and shake off the professional services' conservatism. The re-brand excelled at this.

The re-brand had the desired galvanising and rallying effect, inspiring the staff and enhancing motivation and, ultimately, driving commercial success.

It was vital that staff felt included in the transformational journey and that they believed in its value. Staff were positive about both the process and the end results.

**"I really like your branding and associated photography."**

*Les Montgomery, Chief Executive, Highland Spring*

**"Burness has really progressed in how you market yourselves, and are differentiating yourselves."**

*Kevin Reid, Managing Director, Cruden*

**"Right from the beginning, the re-brand was a thoroughly uplifting experience. It was a climate of much economic navel gazing and cost cutting, so to be involved in such a significant outward and forward looking investment by the firm was very exciting. The journey through the re-brand has a major galvanizing impact on the firm, through the sharing of ideas, ambitions and aspirations. The positive energy pushed the business forward in many ways, stirring up positive motivations, inspirations, confidence and pride."**

*Peter Lawson, Partner*

**"The re-brand exercise has been a breath of fresh air. One of its keys to success, in my view, was the firm's commitment to encapsulating our value and what makes Burness stand out from the crowd... The marketing team sought views from everyone in the firm, not just partners! As a result, most employees feel a real sense of ownership of our new brand which is crucial if we want the market, and our competitors, to see our re-branding was meaningful and genuine."**

*Jennifer Skeoch,*

*Senior Solicitor, Employment*

**"Your new brand identity is terrific – I really like it and your new website."**

*John Morrison, Halcrow*

**"Love the new branding colours – cool, trendy and contemporary."**

*Sian Warren, Scottish Water*

**"Many congratulations on the new brand. Excellent and certainly marks Burness out as dynamic. I have no doubt that clients will be suitably impressed."**

*Ann Levin, Herbert Smith*

**"Love the new brand and website. The colours and whole feel of it is gorgeous. Well done!"**

*Emma Aitkin, Anderson Strathern*

**"Law firms re-brand from time to time but this felt like no other, and made significant waves in the legal community in Scotland and beyond."**

*Colin Hulme, Partner, Dispute Resolution*

At last, Burness has marketing collateral and a brand identity which captures the way the organisation felt about itself.

**“The re-brand encapsulated how we saw ourselves in a way that the old brand could not – dynamic, successful and forward thinking. The re-brand has us firmly placed and recognised by our peers as a major force in our market.”**

*Gary Moffat, Partner, Dispute Resolution*

And this has also been recognised and celebrated externally.

**“The re-brand First Impressions – “Wow! I was not expecting that”. That was literally my first reaction when I visited their homepage. I didn’t say it out loud, obviously, but my inner geek whispered it to itself, excitedly, before calming down and acknowledging that it’s just a law firm website. “But what a law firm website!”**

*Defero Law, A social network for the legal profession*

## Conclusion

Burness have bucked the trend and acted bravely. Aware of a need to clarify what the brand stood for, to freshen up the way it came across and to capture the attention of clients and prospects, it invested in a rebrand at a time of falling profits and relatively low staff morale.

A truly inclusive strategic process led to the creation of the ‘dynamic diagonal’, a visual embodiment of how the staff really saw their company, and a memorable marque of distinction. The new brand came to life through a new website and social media strategy, PR, sponsorship and client engagement initiatives. Inspired by the brand refresh, Burness are delivering a financial and positioning growth strategy, of which the re-brand forms an essential element, despite being in the midst of the toughest of economic circumstances.