Partners Wealth Management is a City of London-based wealth manager prim
Last year the firm decided it needed to revamp its website. ***James Roberts*** talke
process it went through

Websites as part of strategic busi

There was a threefold catalyst for Partners Wealth Management to revamp its website, says board partner James Roberts:

1. To bring the website and firm's branding up-to-date with the changes that were occurring under the Retail Distribution Review.
2. To codify the firm's processes so clients had a really good understanding of the firm's proposition.
3. To help the alignment of advisers' views to the firm's processes.

Roberts (pictured), and the other board partners at the City of London-based wealth management firm, were very much aware that they were starting from the point where, as Roberts puts it: "Our website was literally screaming *old website* at potential clients. It was a web page of tell and sell, copyrighted in 2006 and designed with a wide range of different fonts. Our driving desire was to revamp the website and create a coherent more modern brand."

The firm brought in Inspire, a marketing and design company with experience of working in the wealth management market, and gave them a brief for the new website.

"We talked them through the end-to-end client process and our brief to Inspire was we wanted the essence of what we did explained to people without the detail of what we did given away for free," says Roberts.

"It was important the website took the process that every good IFA takes their client through – life planning, investment, tax strategy and great service – and put that over in a slightly more sophisticated way.

"We were really focusing on the clients we wanted to target and the message we needed to deliver in order to attract more of those clients."

Yet despite thinking they had put together a comprehensive brief and knew what they wanted, the final website was hugely different to the one the firm originally envisaged, says Roberts. "What the Inspire team – marketing strategist Carrie Bendall and graphic and web designer Nick Brown – did was enable us to see the bigger picture. They raised the issues we needed to address but more importantly, they opened our eyes to the possibilities and exactly what we could achieve with the website. This included elements we had just not thought about before.

"Core to this was to really think about what our message was, and how it should be delivered across the different media – not just the website but our signage, our letter-headed paper, our business cards, Powerpoint presentations and pdfs. Inspire made us see that everything was interlinked and there had to be just one version of PWM, and then brought everything together to create a cohesive brand."

Removing the clutter

A fundamental part of this process was to strip away the clutter in the brand message, says Roberts. "Over the years we had developed a number of different ways of portraying the company. For example, on the home page we had the company name Partners Wealth Management, a strapline of *Strategic planning and asset allocation* and an emblem with W and M imposed upon each other. Elsewhere we talked about ourselves as Partners Wealth Management LLP. We portrayed our brand in four separate ways in our title alone and across all areas of the company we counted that we had 27 versions of ourselves."

Inspire made the firm focus on the message they wanted to convey in their title, to identify the word(s) that mattered and to scrap the rest.

"Stepping back and looking at it, we realised that there are thousands of wealth management firms in the country but what made us different

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was our focus on the partners of law firms and the partnership we have with our clients – from which it was clear the only word of importance was *Partner*," says Roberts. "It seems simple when you look back on it but, of course, we had been concentrating on what we do – investment and tax planning for people in the legal profession – and we needed experts from outside of the firm to come in and do what they do, which is marketing and branding, to make us think in a different way."

Once the branding issues had been tackled, Inspire delivered a range of different website designs, colours and styles from which the firm then chose. "This included whether we wanted photographs, abstract photographs, illustrations – all of which could be used alongside a carefully chosen colour theme and font to create the message we wanted to get across in the way the website looked," says Roberts.

The project from start to finish took six months,

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The Inspire viewpoint

Carrie Bendall, marketing strategist at ***Inspire***, comments on the process they and Partners Wealth Management went through to create the new website

Partners Wealth Management gave us a very good brief. It was part of a strategic business planning exercise that the firm was undertaking and they knew why they were changing, they knew who they wanted to target as clients and they had all their processes written down – which made it easier to understand them before we met them.

Voyage of discovery

The next stage was a voyage of discovery, suffusing ourselves in their business, understanding their processes, their likes and dislikes in terms of other websites and designs, looking at their key clients and how those key clients were communicating. From this we structured design ideas and wording and presented back to the board with our ideas and suggestions.

Good website design is a journey you have to take together, in particular listening to each other. A particular stipulation in the brief was that Partners Wealth Management did not want to change its identity. Through the design we tried to show how changing the identity – moving to focus on the word partner for example – the firm could evolve its branding rather than change completely. When they saw the benefits they took to the design straight away.

With Partners Wealth Management, the five elements of their process - Lifetime Wealth Model; Tax Optimisation Strategy; Investment Strategy; Family Office; Consistent Service Experience - are so core to what they do that it had to become absolutely

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with the first three months "where all the heavy lifting took place and the final three months where the roll out and fine tuning of the detail occurred," Roberts adds.

One of the key points Inspire suggested was basing the website around client testimonials, especially as the firm derives the bulk of its new business from referrals. "It was a different angle and one we had not placed as much importance on," Roberts says. "Now what populates every page of our website is statements from clients in our very specific space – partners of professional firms.

"Any partner of a professional firm could not leave our website without thinking *a lot of my colleagues and peers are on here and they are very happy with the service they are receiving*."

Prior to launch the website was tested with contacts in the industry and since launch the firm has been "avalanched with positive feedback from clients", Roberts says. "One of the best reactions we have had is from the partner of a City law firm who said: "I knew what you did for me felt good but I never knew how to say what it was that you did. Now I do."

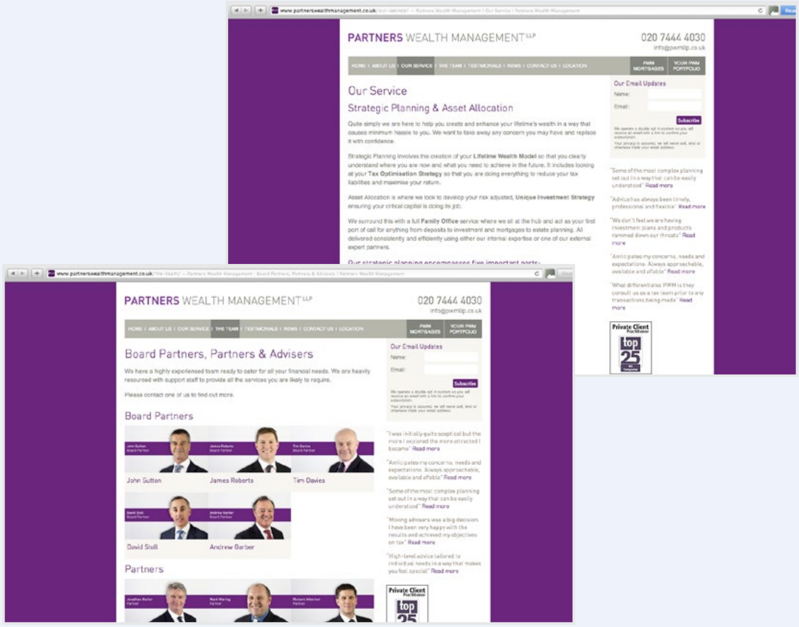
This reflects one of the major benefits the firm has received from the website, says Roberts. "This has come through new advisers joining us, who have all at interview referenced the clear articulation of our proposition and processes – the website, brochure and everything else behind it. Their comments have been: "If we can clearly see what the process is then clients will be able to understand it too."

The firm does not necessarily want clients to find it through the website, for example via a Google search for a financial adviser, and the website has been designed accordingly. "What we want from our website is for an existing client to say to a colleague *I use Partners Wealth Management* and then when the colleague goes on to the website it is a positive experience. The website is a means to get people to do the next step, which is picking up the phone.

"For referrals, from which we almost exclusively get our new business, the old website was possibly a barrier whereas now the impression is good for both the referrer and the referee – it is an enabler and an enhancer. To say we are pleased with the results would be an understatement."

CONTACT

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION GO TO
www.partnerswealthmanagement.co.uk or
www.inspiredc.co.uk



fundamental to the website design and all five are central to the Home page layout.

Referrals are a major source of the firm' business so it was important that the website reinforced what Partners Wealth Management stands for and for clients to readily see and understand what they would go through, so when they walk through the door they would be ready to start the process. It's about credential checking by clients before they pick up the phone to talk to James and the other partners.

Projection of strategy

A website is so fundamentally a projection of a business's strategy that it has to be right. It is not a standalone item for any business. The review of the Partners Wealth Management website, for example, was firmly part of the strategic planning exercise that the firm was undertaking. It was the visual output of that exercise.

Any firm looking to review or set up a website must know who their clients are, in intimate detail, and what they are trying to achieve for them. If you don't have that depth of understanding of your business and your clients then you don't get as good a result. When you do, the website can be stunning and attention grabbing and the client impact can be astonishing.