

Work package	4
Task	4.5 – Remanufactured product branding
Deadline	Month 9
Status	Completed – April 2008
Work package leader	Paul Micklethwaite, Kingston University
<b>Objective</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Green-Works is seeking to enter new markets for remanufactured products. This requires an updated marketing and branding effort. The company is used as a vehicle for devising a branding strategy suitable for other organisations to enter new remanufacturing markets.</li> </ul>	
<b>Methods</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Market analysis</i> : potential new markets for remanufactured furniture products need to be considered for their suitability for entry.</li> <li>➤ <i>Green-Works case study</i> : the existing Green-Works brand is examined, via internal and external research, a review of existing marketing and promotional material, and a review of relevant secondary sources.</li> <li>➤ <i>New brand strategy and design route</i> : a new generic brand strategy is developed which is suitable for entry into new markets for remanufactured furniture products. This brand strategy is developed through a rebranding of Green-Works, producing a new visual identity and communication design route for the company.</li> </ul>	

## Executive summary

- *This report delivers the 'branding' element of Work Package 4, the objective of which is to develop a blueprint for successful social enterprise based on furniture remanufacture.*
- Green-Works' core business has been the collection and redistribution of redundant office furniture. In now seeking to enter new markets for remanufactured products, the company requires an updated marketing and branding effort.
- A rebranding project, culminating in a new visual brand identity and communication design route for Green-Works, is presented.
- The 4-step strategy employed in this brand development is presented as applicable to other organisations seeking to enter or create remanufacturing markets.

# Task 4.5 Remanufactured product branding

## 1 Introduction

A company's 'brand' is its identity and personality. A brand is made up of everything which expresses a company's values. This goes beyond product and service quality. A customer buying a product is also investing in the values and principles of the company *behind* the product. (Olins 2003; Charter et al 2002)

Generating and exploiting consumer demand for more sustainable products requires inspirational and emotionally engaging brands. The example of Remarkable Pencils Ltd. (Micklethwaite & Chick, 2005) demonstrates that 'green' brands, to be successful beyond niche 'green consumer' markets, must compete with non-environmental brands on level terms, incorporating their advantageous green credentials as a part, but not the whole, of their brand. The rebranding of Remarkable Pencils also demonstrated a deliberate departure from the traditional verbal and visual language of green marketing, including a move away from of a single-issue 'recycled' message.

Green-Works is a furniture collection and redistribution enterprise seeking to enter new markets with remanufactured furniture products. This company is used here as a vehicle for devising a branding strategy suitable for entering, if not creating, new markets for remanufactured furniture. The principles developed in the rebranding of Remarkable Pencils are now applied here to the branding of remanufactured office and contract furniture.

## 2 Market analysis: remanufactured furniture

*"Green Works' in house joinery department designs and manufactures furniture using unwanted office desks and cupboards as raw material. We produce standard ranges as well as bespoke items that have included office fit-outs, libraries, nurseries, playrooms, call centres and much more!"* (<http://www.green-works.co.uk>)

Green-Works is seeking to enter new markets for remanufactured furniture products. A recent survey of the remanufacturing sector in the UK concludes "it appears to be strongly represented in the automotive, refrigeration, office equipment and aerospace/defence sectors." (Oakdene Hollins, 2005) Office furniture is identified as a sector with high potential for remanufacture, but relatively little current detectable activity. Circumstantial evidence for potential growth in this area includes: (1) the emergence of 'green procurement' policies, which may conceivably create demand from organisations for remanufactured office furniture; (2) a body of consumer research which reports a general positive preference for recycled products (Micklethwaite, 2004).

Potential new markets are conventionally identified and investigated for their suitability for entry through formal research. Green-Works' preference, however, was to continue to 'test' the potential markets for its remanufactured furniture that it had already begun to investigate. The company was focused on three categories: office

furniture, children's furniture, and storage solutions. This focus was informed by technical and marketing factors, and was kept in the renewed branding effort. The rationale was that markets are *created* by pioneering brands, often in the absence of supporting market research. Remanufactured or 'remade' furniture is a new concept for UK consumers, and as such demand must be created before it can be developed.

### 3 Green-Works

*“Since 2000 we have diverted more than 60,000 tonnes of redundant office furniture away from landfill and redirected second hand equipment to over 5,000 organisations including schools, charities and small businesses, saving them around 2.5 million in the process.”* (<http://www.green-works.co.uk>)

Green-Works' core business has had two arms: the collection of redundant office and contract furniture from paying corporate clients (via a membership scheme), and the redistribution of this furniture to Green-Works' own customers at low cost. Each arm brings income. On the 'donation' side, the key to Green-Works' success has been to balance its clients' commercial requirements with delivering against their environmental and corporate social responsibility aspirations. This is done by providing cost-effective and environmentally-preferable furniture disposal, in which landfill is a last resort. On the customer side, success is based on successfully selling-on donated furniture. Green-Works' new remanufacturing activity aims to convert furniture which is unsellable, due to its design or condition, into a 'new' sellable product. The company is venturing into design and remanufacture, and as a result Green-Works now offers much more to its customers.

### 4 The existing brand

Green-Works had a 'brand', in terms of its reputation and the values attached to the company by its clients (furniture donors) and customers (furniture buyers). This existing brand was examined via internal and external research, a review of existing marketing and promotional material, and a review of relevant secondary sources. It was clear that the brand was centred on the collection of 'waste' furniture and its redistribution to good causes at low cost (logo strapline: *“Making waste work for the community”*, see **Fig.1**). This is what the company had become known for. But this identity failed to capture other important aspects of what Green-Works does and stands for. The new product design and remanufacture venture provided an opportunity for an updated branding effort.

Green-Works' approach to communicating its existing brand had also not been very sophisticated, and embodied the conventional verbal and visual languages of green communications (**Fig. 1**). There was also inconsistency in applying this identity across different media and platforms (web, print, electronic presentations etc.). These issues also needed to be addressed.

## 5 A new brand strategy

Green-Works management restated the company's core values and strategic priorities. This highlighted an inconsistency between (1) how it perceived itself and wanted to be perceived, and (2) how it actually *was* perceived externally. The Green-Works brand needed to better express the company's actual capabilities and aspirations.

*“Green-Works is an award winning social enterprise which is radically changing the way society thinks about waste. We ensure that redundant office furniture from the commercial world can be made readily available for re-use and remanufacture. By preserving valuable resources, we protect the environment, create real jobs and help regenerate communities across the UK.”* (<http://www.green-works.co.uk>)

*“Green-Works is proving that being green - works. Whether it is from a business perspective or a social one, the company is making a difference through every aspect of its operation. ... successful business practice and social responsibility are not mutually exclusive and we hope [to] encourage traditional businesses to recognise the contribution that they can make to society.”* (<http://www.green-works.co.uk>)

Clearly the company is about much more than the collection and redistribution of waste furniture, but this wasn't conveyed by its existing brand.

Green-Works' brand needed to communicate the core activity of redundant furniture collection and redistribution. It also needed to tell the full story of what the company does, including the dynamic potential of its new remanufacturing capability. Green-Works actually offers four services:

- Furniture removal and collection
- Furniture sales
- Furniture remanufacture
- Furniture recycling

Furniture remanufacture currently focuses on three areas: office furniture, children's furniture, and storage solutions. These product types and sectors were selected for technical and marketing reasons. There are technical limits on what type and size of products Green-Works can make. The company also had a sense of who might buy the products they could make.

Potential customer reservations over product appearance and quality needed to be addressed. Because the material used to manufacture 'remade' furniture is reclaimed from unwanted redundant furniture, the end finish of the products cannot always be as consistent as those made from new. These 'surface defects' are now presented as 'character marks', which actually reinforce the reuse and recycling benefits associated with the remade furniture.

Green-Works has also been an active donor of furniture since its inception, and employs people who would otherwise have difficulty finding work. This charitable aspect of Green-Works' activities, and its own charitable status, are potential key

sources of differentiation from its competitors, and had been underplayed in its existing branding.

The existing brand failed, finally, to communicate the professional credibility and assurance of high standards of service which potential clients would seek in dealing with Green-Works.

The challenge was to move Green-Works from a company providing basic services, to a credible, professional, corporate and consumer brand with a great story to tell. The first stage of this brand challenge was now complete: a clear mapping-out of Green-Works' values, activities and aspirations. The next stage was to combine all these elements in a single, coherent visual identity and design route, to be delivered via Green-Works' website and marketing materials.

## 6 A new design route

A number of early visual brand identities and communication design routes were developed which attempted to capture Green-Works' restatement of what it does and why it does it. All of these identities attempted to move away from the traditional visual and verbal language of green communications, as embodied in the existing brand (**Fig. 1**). The final identity and design route (**Fig. 2**) departs from the old in a number of ways:

- The company name is presented quite differently, both textually and visually, in the new logo. In particular, the recycling symbol (the 'chasing arrows') and hyphen have been removed. The typeface is also much cleaner and more contemporary.
- The strapline has been removed and not replaced. Green-Works activities are now communicated more subtly via a number of new graphic devices.
- Colour is used much more dynamically, suggesting transformative change while using a 'natural' green-blue colour palette.
- The three-dimensional effect, with an element of optical illusion, suggests the company's focus on physical products.
- The simplicity and robustness of the logo design lends itself to considerable adaptation, eg. via alternative colourways.
- The overall effect of the new logo is much cleaner than the old logo, and conveys a much greater degree of professionalism.

This visual identity is now being used to market the company across all its promotional platforms, including the website (**Fig. 2**). Crucially, navigating from the website homepage according to which 'arm' of Green-Works is of interest is now much simpler. The remanufacturing arm is now renamed as the more-accessible 'furniture remaking'. This restructuring of the website reflects a clarified conception of what the company actually offers to its wide range of clients. This lends itself to a more effective streaming of enquiries which can be used across all other media, including in relation to telephone enquiries. Finally, a style manual has also been

produced to ensure that the new visual identity continues to be applied consistently and does not begin to drift, diluting its effectiveness.

## 7 Conclusions

Green-Works is seeking to enter, or create, new markets for remanufactured products. This has prompted an updated marketing and branding effort which integrates this new activity with what the company has always done, and continues to do. The brand development process has been described here. The underlying *strategy* employed in this brand development can be used generically by other organisations seeking to enter or create markets for remanufactured products. While the project outcomes presented here are specific to Green-Works, the 4-step strategy can be applied more broadly:

1. An analysis of the existing brand, seen internally and externally (via internal and external primary research, review of existing marketing materials, review of secondary coverage of the brand).
2. A restatement of the company's core values and strategic priorities, and identification of the 'brand story', including a consideration of how product remanufacture fits into a wider set of values and aspirations, and how the company compares to its competitors.
3. Targeting of product types and sectors, based on formal research or informal intelligence (what can you produce, who might buy it).
4. Development of a brand identity and communication design route which captures the brand story, is appropriate for the identified target markets, and moves away from the traditional visual and verbal language of 'green' communications.

Step 4 is clearly where the creative magic happens, and cannot be codified. It relies instead on careful selection of suitable communication design specialists with whom to collaborate.

The immediate goals of this project were to clarify the Green-Works brand; to understand the market opportunity for the company's new 'remade' furniture; and to consider how to give all its audiences a clear, recognisable, and consistent vision of Green-Works, as both a remanufacturer and a business. In addressing these goals the project has sought to present a model for other branding efforts in the area of product remanufacture. Where there is no existing brand, as with a new venture, Step 1 will not apply.

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## Acknowledgement

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Fig. 1. Green-Works' existing brand identity, emphasizing the company's low-cost positioning



**Fig. 2. Green-Works' new brand identity, showing its operational structure (from the company's relaunched website)**