

CMS LLP

Merger brand campaign and positioning

C/M/S/

Law. Tax

From 1st May, CMS, Nabarro and Olswang come together to create a new future-facing law firm.

Creative / Modern / Specialists /

With 70 offices worldwide, our new firm will do business as CMS.
We look forward to showing you what we stand for...

Energy / Financial Services / Infrastructure & Project Finance / Life Sciences & Healthcare / Real Estate / Technology, Media & Telecommunications

cms.law

CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP is a member firm of CMS.

Your World First

Creative / Meets / Strategic /

A new brand positioning and visual language for the world's sixth biggest law firm. When we learned that our long-term client Nabarro were planning the UK's biggest ever law firm merger – joining forces with CMS and Olswang – we were very keen indeed to be part of the conversation about branding for a new City-based legal powerhouse.

In our favour, our highly successful decade-long collaboration with Nabarro, resulting in their brand being one of the strongest in the legal sector. Against us, well, potentially our size – despite having earned Nabarro's full confidence over the years, and Neon's track record in successfully delivering several other major international branding projects.

David vs Goliath: the rematch (same result).

In the pitch for this gargantuan, highly complex and time-critical project, we were very much a David among some of the true Goliaths of the branding business. Same result, though: after an extremely intense and competitive strategic pitching process, Neon carried off the prize; quite possibly our best single achievement since we started back in 2008.

And to make our win even more rewarding, what was planned to be a two stage pitch against six other agencies was cut short after the initial pitch – with Neon the unanimous choice of all three firms' Senior and Managing Partners and their respective heads of brand/brand communications.

With less than three months to complete the project, to hit the 1st May launch date for the new super-firm, we must admit there were a few moments when we wondered if winning the pitch had been such a brilliant idea, after all.

Future-facing law...

But, with a lot of strong coffee and quite a few sleepless nights, we powered through. Our first step was to develop a distinctive strategic positioning for the new CMS, based around their offering to clients of true sector focus on a global scale, equipping them to face whatever challenges and opportunities lie ahead – encapsulated in the promise of a "Future-facing law firm."

From C/M/S to Rule of Three

Creatively, we took as our starting-point the existing CMS logo, focusing on the initials and the graphic detail, and using them as the basis for a highly noticeable and intelligently witty launch campaign, based around "C/M/S" headlines, such as : Creative/Modern/Specialists; Complexity/Made/Simple; and Competitive/Muscle/Strengthened.

Moving on from the immediate launch period, we evolved the campaign to encompass a series of bold "Rule of Three" statements about the key strengths of the new brand – for example, highlighting the firm's massively increased geographical reach, with offices in 65 countries worldwide; or, more succinctly, Here/There/Everywhere.

Focus/focus/focus

Next, we zeroed in on sector-focus; so often promised by major law firms, but so rarely delivered. At last, we announced to the world a global firm genuinely Walking/The/Talk and Speaking/Your/Language.

From there, with the broad sector claim firmly established, we rolled out sector-specific ads across a veritable plethora of media, including broadsheet newspapers, prestige publications such as The Financial Times and The Economist, sector specific publications as well as taxis and airport large scale hoardings.

A triumph in terms of relationship building, too

Both strategically and creatively it was undoubtedly one of our most demanding projects. In terms of client relationship management, too, it's one of our proudest achievements. With the project run by a team of senior partners from each of the three merging firms, we needed to build consensus and win support for our work, at every stage – with the clock always ticking down towards that 1st May deadline.

Frankly, it left us exhausted. But we couldn't be happier that our long and happy relationship with Nabarro has now merged seamlessly into what we hope will be an equally productive and enduring association with CMS.

Collaborative/Mutual/Success? We very much hope so.

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"The brief that we provided to Neon was both time critical and complex given the number of stakeholders and their background/history. Despite being time critical Neon did not sacrifice spending sufficient time to really understand the brief which then paid dividends in abundance later. The ideas presented were a good range with some real flashes of creativity. Notwithstanding that a range was presented I appreciated that Neon were not scared to advise what they thought was the strongest idea from the range nor did they shy away from being bold in their selection. At all stages – whether general communications, presentation of the ideas, the delivery of the final product and accompanying materials – all were beautifully produced which was both impressive to the immediate stakeholders and the wider population within the firm."

STEPHEN MILLAR
Managing Partner
CMS