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SENSE WORLDWIDE: TRANSFORMING THE RULES OF INNOVATION (PART B)

Master planning

> *"Master planning is about the alignment of and collaboration between all stakeholders – internal and external – involved in business and brand building, and which underpins all activities with robust consumer insight".*
>
> *NESTA Open 100, 2010*

Established in 1998 with a business model designed around an online community of cultural experts, Sense Worldwide had gone a long way in helping clients innovate. In a few years, its online community, named The Sense Network, had grown steadily and the company had refined a structured co-creative approach based on a variety of methodologies and tools. Between 2004 and 2009, this co-creation approach gained Sense Worldwide a substantial list of projects with Research, Innovation and Marketing teams of well renowned clients (see **Exhibit 1 and 2**). The growth of the business allowed Jeremy Brown to attract a growing number of inter-disciplinary employees (see **Exhibit 3 and 4**) who loved joining an agency focused on new ways to develop new ideas.

In 2009, Sense Worldwide encapsulated its experience with distributed social networks and co-creation in what it called a *Master Plan*[1]. Conceived as a comprehensive, macro vision of a client's set of brand activities, a *Master Plan* aims to represent a dynamic blueprint where the activities of the marketing team and its agencies, whether research, advertising, digital, innovation, product or service design, are aligned and coordinated. "A Master Plan is all those core elements coming together" – Trayton Vance, Sense Worldwide Managing Director, explains – "It is a transformational plan, to transform the brand and the business, tapping in the internal and external stakeholders. It a clear proposition of what their transformation looks and feels like".

Master Planning for DIAGEO

One of the best examples of Sense Worldwide's *Master Plan* in action is the project completed for DIAGEO's Tanqueray gin brand. DIAGEO gave Sense Worldwide three

This case series was made possible through the generous cooperation of Sense Worldwide. The authors prepared this case as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements or sources of primary data.

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[1] Marketing Magazine (January 2009). Got to get a Master Plan.

challenges: to review the competitive landscape of the gin[2] category; to specify the target consumer and trend drivers; to capture, leverage and renovate the essence, the magic and core values of the Tanqueray brand. Sense Worldwide first completed an in-depth *Research Amnesty*^{TM} to gain fresh perspectives on current consumers from primary and secondary sources. A series of experts in contemporary culture was then consulted by engaging them on a CNCT [3] web-based community that included a blog-style network and a series of collaborative, analytical tasks and exercises. Next, several co-creation workshops with the DIAGEO Global Marketing Team were held in New York, Amsterdam and Madrid to validate and build on the findings while aligning the thinking with the client. The final deliverable was a *Master Plan* that was used to brief DIAGEO's global advertising company, Wieden and Kennedy. "The highly collaborative, iterative way of working meant that we were able to fast track to a vivid communication brief... that our Chief Marketing Officer chose to disseminate to all our regions as an example of best practice" – Alison Falconer, DIAGEO Global Planner, stresses.

Master Planning for J&J/McNeil

At the end of 2009, Sense Worldwide also worked with Johnson & Johnson/McNeil on the re-positioning of their brand Splenda, an artificial sweetener that was losing sales and was suffering from negative consumer perceptions. The challenge was to disrupt a stable market, by delivering a pipeline of new ideas that could communicate Splenda in a different way. Sense Worldwide first undertook a *Research Amnesty*^{TM} of all existing research material relating to the role of Splenda in hot drink occasions. Next, three *Co-creation Workshops* were held with an average of twenty consumers selected through The Sense Network. Several members of the Splenda team were then involved together with some of the Sense Worldwide designers who were particularly skilled in rapid prototyping. The resulting output led to the creation of a *Master Plan* called *Splenda Book of Insights* where Sense Worldwide clarified the brand's opportunity areas while at the same time outlining an actionable blueprint. A short film featuring 'Michelle', representing existing and potential Splenda consumers was also produced to visually and emotionally reinforce the alignment between the Splenda team and its target consumer market. The *Splenda Book of Insights* was praised by James Jesty, Worldwide Innovation Lead and Innovation Director at J&J, as an important help "to engage more people around our Michelle initiatives and ultimately make a difference to the Splenda business". The *Master Plan* was then used to support the renewal of Splenda's packaging into a chocolate-like portable box.

The synergetic mix of its structured co-creation approach and well-crafted, actionable *Master Plan* deliverables convinced Marketing Magazine to assign Sense Worldwide the 2009 Market Research Agency of the Year Award. The magazine observed that "the judges

[2] The gin category includes a number of "spirit drinks produced by flavouring ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin and/or grain spirit and/or grain distillate with juniper (junipers communies) berries" (Source: European Union (1989). Definitions of categories of alcoholic beverages).

[3] Community Network Conversation Tools (CNCT) is an online platform developed by Sense Worldwide to engage clients and their agencies with the members of The SENSE Networks in communal and collaborative activities such as blogging, sharing videos, pictures or audio files, discussion forums.

credited Sense's intelligent and collaborative working methods that stand the agency in good stead as marketers look to maximise the value they receive from agency's insights"[4]. In 2010, Sense Worldwide was also listed in the Open100, a selection of the one hundred most innovative companies in the UK[5].

Changing the conversation

> *"A powerful global conversation has begun. Through the Internet, people are discovering and inventing new ways to share relevant knowledge with blinding speed. As a direct result, markets are getting smarter—and getting smarter faster than most companies."*
>
> *The Cluetrain Manifesto[6] , 2000*

Jeremy Brown had a many things on his mind while going to the SENSE Loft with his collaborators that late summer day. The early morning meeting with Sense Worldwide's management team had convinced him that the time had come for the company to start practicing what it preached to its clients. Over the years, Sense Worldwide had used co-creation to help clients innovate by transforming their relationship with consumers into a collaborative experience. Global players including Diageo, Nike, Johnson & Johnson, P&G, Unilever and Vodafone were now part of Sense Worldwide's portfolio. However, the idea of co-creation had been around for over a decade and many new competitors had appeared (see **Exhibit 5**).

Sense Worldwide had recently paid renowned attention to The Sense Network that was growing steadily thanks to the return of the Sense Suppers and new initiatives such as Storytold, a series of events where the members of the network could gain mutual inspiration by sharing personal stories. Yet, it was increasingly difficult to make people engage with The Sense Network due to the rise of platforms such as Facebook or Twitter (see **Exhibit 6**) and the explosion of Web 2.0. At the same time, many current and potential clients had started to establish their own online collaborative platforms (see **Exhibit 7**).

The Market Research Agency of the Year Award assigned to the company by Marketing Magazine in 2009 would have been a source of pride for many. Yet, Brown was not completely pleased by it because, since the beginning, he had been trying not to position Sense Worldwide as a research company. "Winning that prize actually put us back in the research camp" - he observes – "Obviously we are going to offer research but, if we want to have proper conversations with board level stakeholders, we need to have strategy, design

[4] Marketing Magazine (December 2009). Sense Worldwide: Market Research Agency of the Year.
[5] www.openbusiness.cc
[6] Levine, R., Locke, C., Searls, D. and Weinberger (1999). The Cluetrain Manifesto (cluetrain.com) Later (2000) published as "The Cluetrain Manifesto: The end of business as usual". Perseus Publishing: New York.

and innovation covered off in the mix as well. I think that the Award was almost a little bit distracting, it is something I had to build back from".

In early 2010, Brown had thus refined the Sense Worldwide's *Master Plan* thinking as being composed of four pillars, i.e. Strategy, Insights, Innovation and Execution with its people-centred co-creation approach at the core (see **Exhibit 8**). With the support of Trayton Vance, an experienced organizational consultant who later became Sense Worldwide Managing Director, he nominated four functional Directors holding those titles.

The Director of Insights was responsible for the generation of new ideas through tools and practices such as *Research Amnesty*^{TM}, *Scoping Session* and *deep-dive interviews*. The focus of the Director of Innovation was their rapid prototyping through design techniques and *Co-Creation Workshops*. The Director of Strategy then translated these actionable ideas into a coherent *Master Plan* with recommendations aligned with the client's strategy. All the three Directors were supported by the Director of Execution who turned Sense Worldwide's solutions into a variety of deliverables expressed with a language suitable for different types of stakeholders.

In recent times, this strategic shift had started to pay off because Brown was having more conversations with CEOs who were interested in leveraging the structured *Master Plan* thinking beyond their companies' limited branding or marketing activities. Major transformational work for clients such as Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield, the UK public service network ITV and a global banking group was becoming business as usual and Sense Worldwide was pitching regularly *against* unexpected competitors such as McKinsey, BCG and Bain.

The company was benefiting financially from the new approach (see **Exhibit 9**) yet it was also facing new challenges because of a mounting need for people with commercial competence and responsibility. "Our talent has always been the most important thing. To date, we have always been looking for those people who just see the world in a different way, who are unorthodox thinkers and who don't fit comfortably into linear roles within businesses because they are the real essence of co-creation" – Brown says – "Now we are trying to roll out a very different recruitment policy, for example with more stringent performance review. Aligning business- and creative-minded people is proving not easy."

It was late August 2011 and leaning against the Sense Loft's window, Brown was wondering how Sense Worldwide could harness the power of co-creation and fully transform itself in the face of the new challenges.

Exhibit 1

Selected Sense Worldwide clients*

YEAR	MAIN CLIENT/PROJECT (STARTED)
2001	P&G
2002	BBC, National Theatre, Unilever
2003	BBC**,** BT, HSBC, Orange, JWT
2004	MTV Network, P&G, Reuters, SG Johnson
2005	DIAGEO, SG Johnson, MTV Network, Nike, Nokia, Pfizer, Reuters, SG Johnson, Tetrapack
2006	Bank of Scotland, DIAGEO, MTV Network, Nike, Nokia, Pfizer, Reuters, SG Johnson
2007	Discovery Network, Electrolux, HP, ITV, J&J, Nike, Nikelodelon, Ogilvy, Pfizer, SG Johnson, The Economist, Turner Entertainment, Unilever, Vodafone
2008	BBC Worldwide, Converse, Habbo, J&J, NESTA, The New York Times, Nike, Philips Design, Vodafone
2009	DIAGEO, Discovery Network, J&J/McNeil, Nike

Source: Sense Worldwide

** The list includes new projects started in each year only. Projects last from few months to multiple years.*

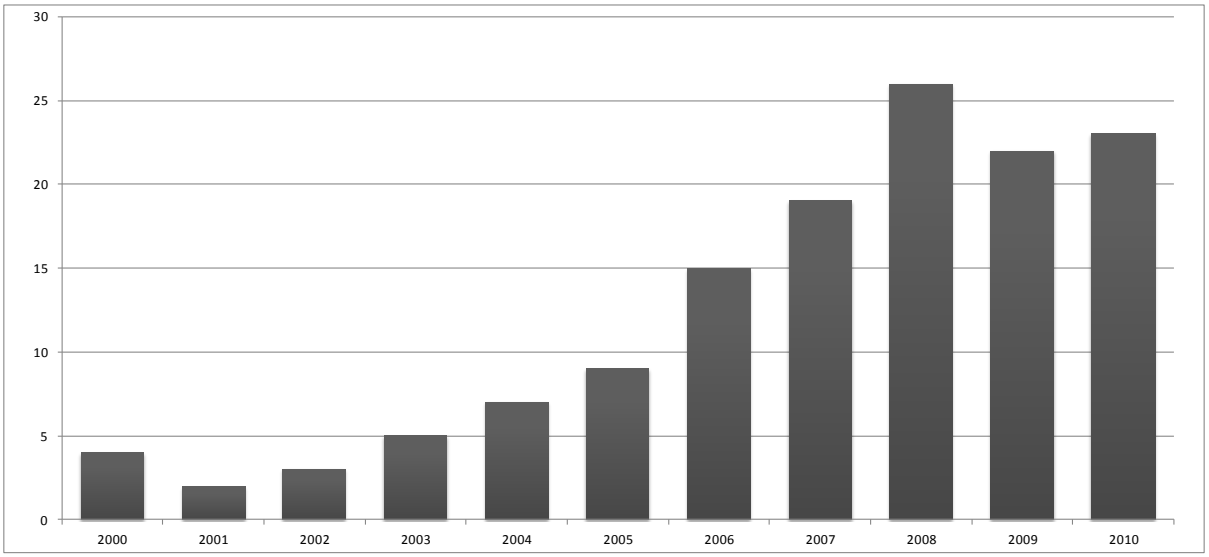
Exhibit 2

Timeline of Sense Worldwide selected projects and network initiatives

Source: Sense Worldwide

Exhibit 3

Sense Worldwide, number of employees by year



Source: Sense Worldwide

Exhibit 4

Public Self-Description of Sense Worldwide Employees

- **Jeremy**: "I was cub scout of the year"
- **Brian**: "I wrote the IBM: Solutions for a Small Planet Campaign"
- **Jacky**: "I launched everything from O2 to babyfood"
- **Raj**: "I've designed everything from cider labels to a holiday brand"
- **Kirsten**: "I have an MBA"
- **Charlotte**: "I do voiceover for Bratz dolls"
- **Ed**: "I was a pop star"
- **James**: "I was a primary school teacher"
- **Ben**: "I executed global campaign at JWT"
- **David**: "I designed cars in Italy, one of them was a Ferrari"
- **Sarah**: "I am a published academic psychologist"
- **Adam**: "I document great British factories for the British Library"
- **Megan**: "I was a technology designer for Samsung"
- **Jill**: "I was a fashion lecturer"
- **Millie**: "I am an underwater filmmaker"
- **Helen**: "I designed one of Topman's best selling t-shirts in 2001"
- **Phil**: "I built robots in France"
- **Drew**: "I am car design journalist"
- **Maria**: "I've got a D&AD award"
- **Laura**: "I was a social entrepreneur"
- **Joanna**: "I've got a black belt in excel"
- **James**: "I designed part of one of the world's biggest websites"
- **Anthony**: "I won the Victor Ludorum three years in a row"

Source: www.senseworldwide.com

Exhibit 5

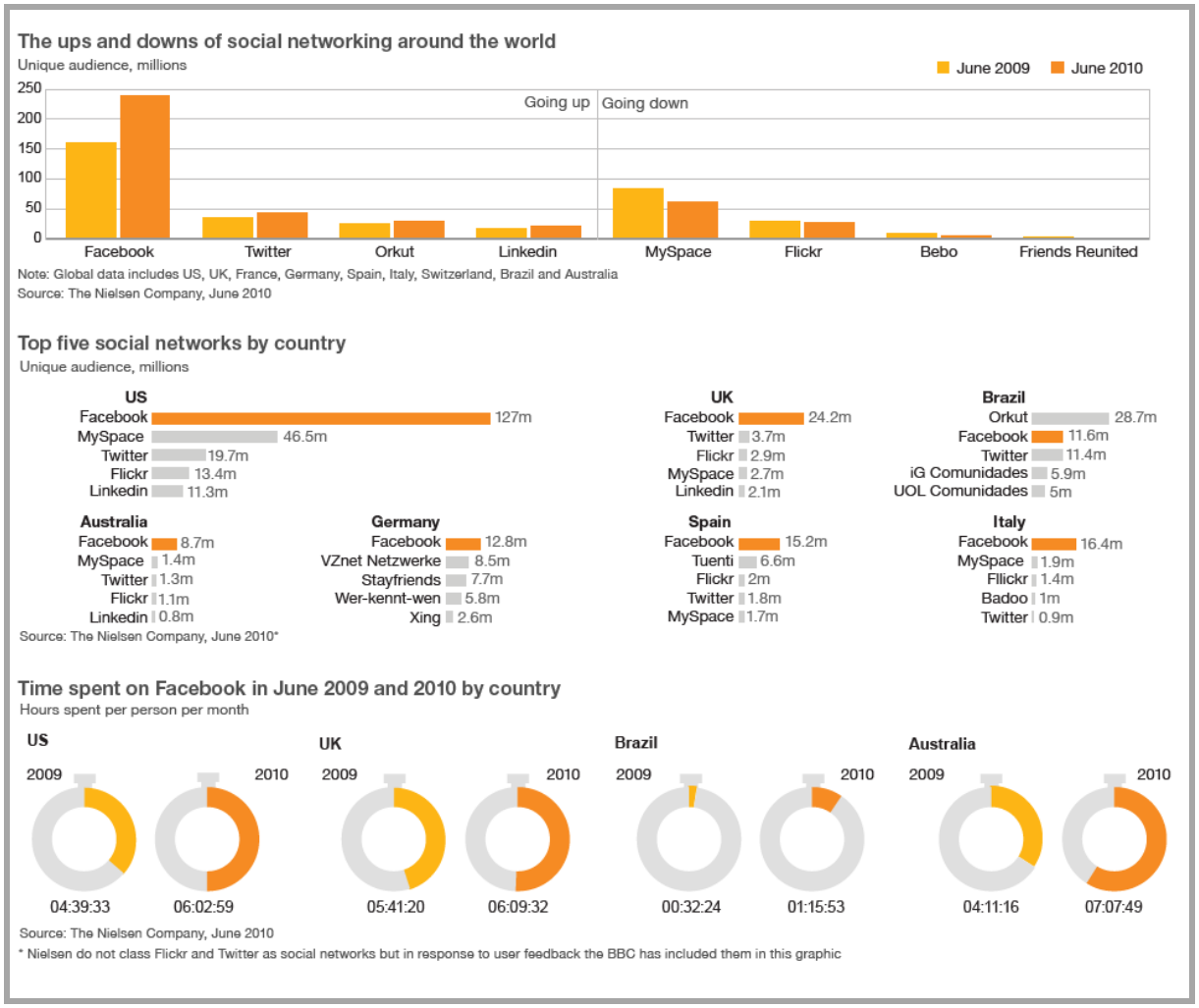
Sense Worldwide perceived competitive space

- 2CV Research
- Bartle Bogle Hegarty
- Communispace
- Continuum Innovation
- Crowd DNA / The Rabbit Hole
- distanceLab
- Dragon Rouge
- Face
- Flamingo
- Foundation
- Fuel Creativity
- Hall & Partners
- HYVE
- IDEO
- Method
- napkinlabs
- NineSigma
- Nunwood
- PDD
- Promise
- Prophet
- Quadrangle Group
- Redscout
- Seymour Powell
- The Clear Agency
- The Truth Agency
- ?Whatif!
- Wolff Olins

Source: www.openbusiness.cc; Sense Worldwide

Exhibit 6

The rise of Social Networks



Source: www.bbc.co.uk

Exhibit 7

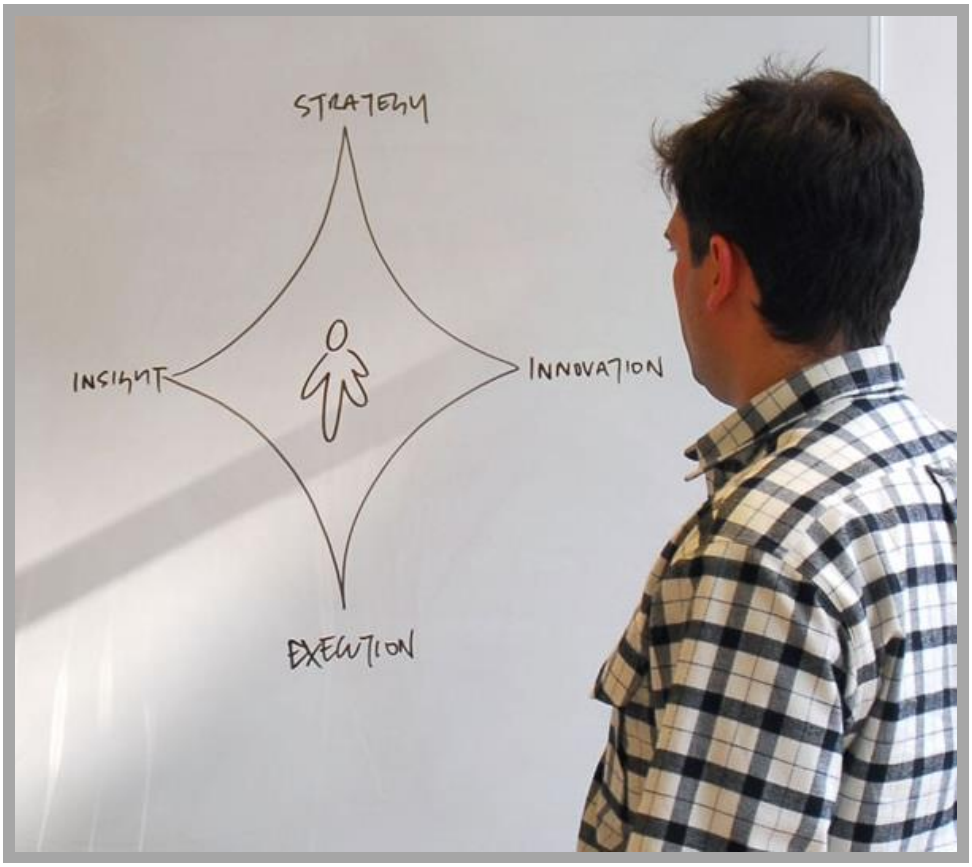
Examples of corporate collaborative initiatives

- Betavine (***Vodafone***)
- ***BMW*** Customer Innovation Lab
- ***Dell*** IdeaStorm
- ***Electrolux*** Design Lab
- ***Fiat*** Mio
- ***Gmail*** M-Velope Video Competition
- Ideas4***Unilever***
- innovate with ***Kraft***
- InnovationJam (***IBM***)
- LeadUsers.nl & Live Simplicity (***Philips***)
- ***LEGO*** Factory
- ***LEGO*** Mindstorms
- **LG** Design The Future Competition
- ***logica*** Interaction Enterprise Solution
- ***Muji***
- My ***Starbucks*** Idea
- Open Innovation ***Sara Lee***
- ***Peugeot***'s design contest
- ***P&G*** Open Innovation Challenge
- The Collaboration Factory (***Cadbury***)
- Vocalpoint (***P&G***)

Source: www.openbusiness.cc; www.openinnovators.net

Exhibit 8

Visual of Sense Worldwide four pillars



Source: Sense Worldwide

Exhibit 9

Sense Worldwide: recent financial results

	Mar-09	Mar-10	Mar-11
Turnover	£1,519,198	£1,406,264	£2,677,125
EBITDA	£ 224,479	£ 22,273	£ 445,043
Net profit/loss	£ 196,223	-£ 5,824	£ 402,322

Source: Sense Worldwide