Distinctiveness in Higher Education

Supporting universities in identifying and communicating their distinctiveness

David Willey

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

What distinctiveness is... and isn‘t

http://www.distinct.ac.uk/resources/resourceindex/whydistinct

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

Why distinctiveness?

- Distinctiveness confers competitive advantage, enabling an organisation to stand out from the crowd
- A clear and cogent organisational identity enables those who interact with the organisation to identify with it, and become loyal to it

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

What is distinctiveness?

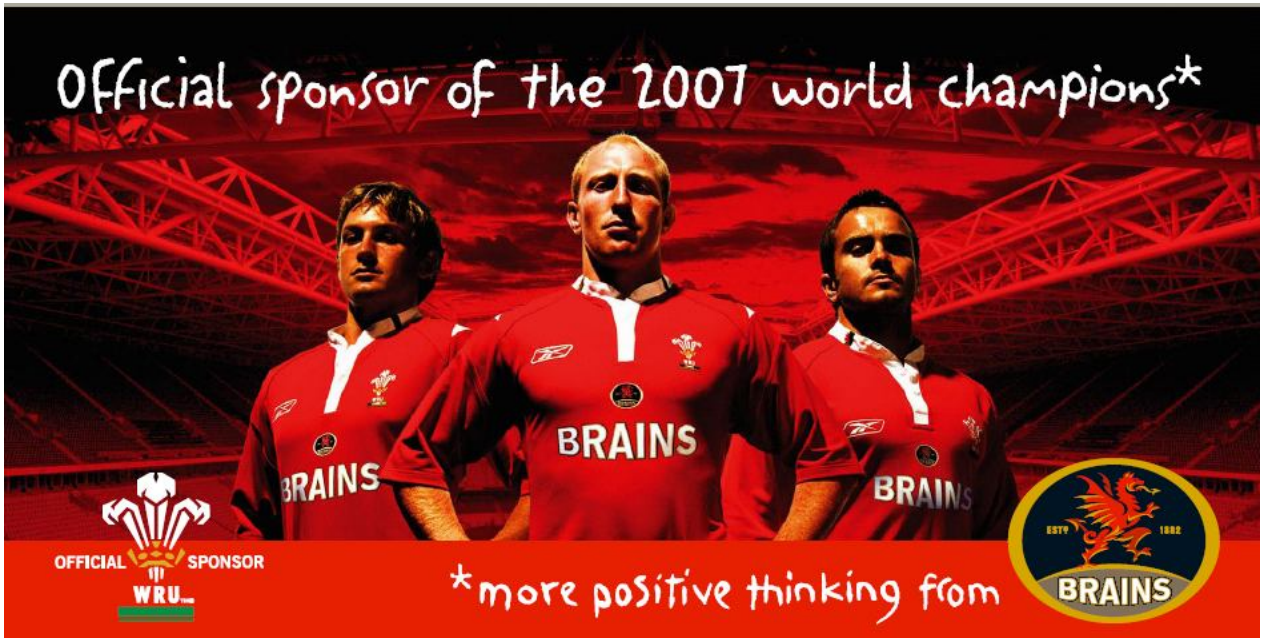
- Being distinctive is not about being unique; it is about being identifiable
- Usually based on a distinctive blend of attributes
- Critical to success is finding an expression of identity that works both internally and externally

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

Brains

- Launch

- 2004



distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

The 3Rs

- Real
- Rare
- Relevant

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

Project background

- A Leading Transformational Change Project
- Funded by HEFCE as part of LGM
- The partners were Oxford Brookes University, Bournemouth University and the University of Bradford
- Approach:
  - examine the experience of HEIs, and
  - apply learning from beyond HE

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

Project aims

- Develop a shared understanding of what distinctiveness is
- Capture lessons for developing and executing distinctiveness strategies
- Highlight the role of leadership in developing and communicating distinctiveness
- Transfer knowledge across the sector

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

The Distinct Framework

Draws on interviews and case studies from HE, private, public and voluntary sectors, as well as surveys, discussion groups and pilot workshops

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

THE CASE FOR CHANGE

'What are the strategic drivers for establishing your distinctiveness?'

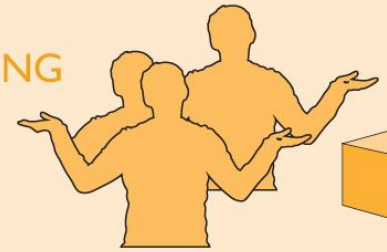
- Increased profile in sector
- Student and staff recruitment and satisfaction
- Raising standards
- Diversifying income streams

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

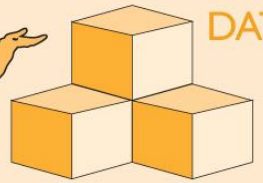
ESTABLISHING YOUR DISTINCTIVENESS

EVIDENCE

LISTENING



DATA



REALITY CHECK

Real? Rare? Relevant?

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

Leadership choices

- Choices to be made
- Persist through the doubt
- Can be aspirational……
- …but test against what you can deliver

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

IMPLEMENTATION

GUIDING YOUR INTERNAL DECISIONS

- Student experience
- Research
- HR
- Leadership behaviours
- IT
- Estates
- Finance

What do we stop doing, start doing, or do differently?

EVALUATION

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

IMPLEMENTATION

COMMUNICATING YOUR DISTINCTIVENESS

- Tone of voice
- Visual identity
- Marketing campaigns
- Internal communications

EVALUATION

Leadership

Leadership is essential

Leading transformational change

Developing support for leaders:

- Coaching/mentoring?
- TMP
- Facilitated Group Learning?

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

Learning points for the sector

- It is possible to be distinctive!
- Leadership commitment is essential
- Drawing on existing theories, the framework provides support in an HE context
- Vital to see this as an ‘all encompassing’ process
- It is a rewarding journey

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

Information available to you

- Website
- Publication
- Workshops
- Contact: contact@distinct.ac.uk

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION

Distinctiveness in Higher Education

Supporting universities in identifying and communicating their distinctiveness

David Willey

distinct
HIGHER EDUCATION