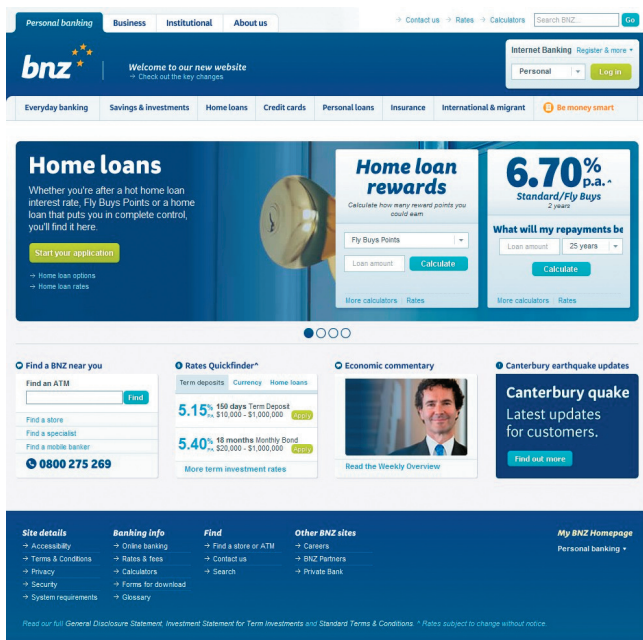


5 Minutes

With Donna Maxwell, portfolio director at design agency DNA.



Louise Lawton \\ DNA has been around for a while and has maintained a great industry reputation – what’s the secret?
Donna Maxwell \\ It comes down to the people and who we choose to partner with. We attract talented and curious people, but also look for pragmatic and nice. Nice means that we build great client relationships; this in turn grants us access to the inner workings of our clients’ worlds. We get to go beyond where a design agency normally goes and this helps us to be more effective.

LL \\ Do you work collaboratively between your Auckland and Wellington offices?
DM \\ We do, increasingly so. As our offer has grown broader and deeper, across digital, retail and brand design, it’s become paramount to have specialists on the team, the likes of retail strategists,

researchers, IA and usability experts and developers. We have these, and they are spread across the two teams. We also have some of the best heads in the industry across the more traditional creative, design and strategic roles, and so when we need to respond to specific projects we are able to mobilise pan-office teams and pick the best people for the challenge.

LL \\ You have been building your digital arm – is this due to demand or necessity?
DM \\ Demand. Necessity would suggest that non-digital work is dying, which is not the case... but what has developed is the need to deliver specialised digital services in interaction, web, application interface, touch screen, retail and campaign areas. And these developments aren’t necessarily recent; we have had a digital arm since 1995.

What is probably more topical for us is the increasing need to provide integrated solutions for client challenges. This has led us to a more multi-disciplined team approach and allowed a whole bunch of cross-learning and streamlined processes. The disciplines, in their pure form are very specialised (on and offline), but at their core it’s just about defining and delivering smart solutions to best meet our clients’ needs.

LL \\ Are the lines between design and ad agency blurring?
DM \\ Yes. In my view the traditional agencies needed to reinvent themselves, because clients were demanding it. They were looking for sophisticated, creative solutions that would carry an authentic brand message effectively across multiple channels, rather than the old-school ‘big idea’ that many agencies were focused on. And all have tried in various ways. You look at the big groups, they’ve each worked different approaches – they’ve fragmented into specialist arms, merged, bought, renamed and fused properties to try and build a contemporary offer. The results have been mixed, but on the whole it has created overlap in the perceived services and expertise across agency types.

The strength of a design agency like ours is in a broader approach – we work with clients on programmes of work where we are designing and building the way customers experience brands and products in a very three-

dimensional way; modelling a cumulative brand experience by customer profile, channel and time. Meanwhile, the comment I still hear from marketers is that the ATL (Above The Line) agencies are prone to limited thinking – campaign by campaign, or channel by channel – I guess this is due to both their organisational structure and where they’ve come from.

LL \\ Is there a particular project you are proud of?
DM \\ We have just completed a complete redesign and overhaul of the BNZ website. BNZ is focused on making its channels and customer touchpoints open, contemporary, and customer-centric. Alongside an upgrade of its entire retail network, BNZ has made a significant commitment to improving their digital touchpoints.

Working alongside BNZ for the website redevelopment we wrote a brand spanning new IA and content framework for *bnz.co.nz*. The new architecture was informed by BNZ’s brand and customer experience principles, and took into account results from extensive customer testing. The project’s key objective was to provide a robust framework that would ensure the site offered its visitors a great customer experience.

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