

Quality Assurance Policy

We strive to provide our clients with services and products that meet and even exceed their expectations. We are committed to continuous improvement and have established a quality management system that provides a framework for measuring and improving our performance, enabling us to deliver high quality work at every stage of a project, from brief to delivery. The system incorporates the following elements:

- Regular gathering and monitoring of client feedback including complaints
- Selection of training providers/associates against set criteria
- Staff training (external and on-job)
- Selection of suppliers
- Regular management reviews
- Communication to all stakeholders
- Performance monitoring of partners and suppliers
- Providing up-to-date materials
- Full project management through to delivery
- Internal review programme

This quality management system is available on request, and included in all new staff 'welcome packs'. Our creative and managing director is ultimately responsible for quality, but all employees are encouraged to be accountable for individual projects. This statement and the methodology that follows are reviewed annually.

Clear communication – by a senior management team

Each project is headed up by our Creative Director and a Senior Designer. They are jointly responsible for the whole project at every stage. This ensures rapid and effective response to urgent needs as well as assurance that work will be planned, implemented and communicated in a coherent manner.

A dedicated creative team manages and carries out all creative and development work. They will liaise directly with the client. All work will be discussed and managed within this senior management team in consultation with the client.

Rigorous documentation – by all staff

Each project has a title, number and dedicated file which tracks and builds the history of the work. Its contents include all or some of the following, as appropriate:

- Contact details of all those involved in the project
- Briefing notes
- Project plan
- Copies of contact reports made following all meetings
- File notes of telephone conversations
- Notes, sketches, laser proofs of design work
- Reference and research material
- Estimates
- Expense log

Meticulous attention to detail

We rigorously adhere to all available corporate identity guidelines, without losing sight of the specific requirements of particular projects.

- Interrogation of briefs/available materials and research to understand specifics and to bring out true meaning
- Proof-reading before production
- Proof checking and press passing
- Awareness of the fact that the small things as much as the large make all the difference
- Good IT practice such as consistent file management
- Punctuality/delivery

Effective team working

The chosen team is clear at the outset about the aims of the work, timing and cost allowance. They are assigned on the basis of skills, experience, suitability and enthusiasm.

An important aspect of our team work approach is the facilitation of an open and effective critical process to encourage and bring forward ideas that lead to optimum solutions. In practical terms it also means that at least two people understand the work in detail at any time so that the day to day process can progress efficiently.

Creative partnering

Once the project team and plan are in place and the work is in progress, a creative partner is assigned who is not directly involved in the detailed work but who is familiar with the brief. The creative partner will assess the work at an objective distance to facilitate the creative process and draw out any areas that require further attention. This could be on any aspect from overall creative concept to font size. It ensures that the work delivered at presentations is fully developed for each stage.

Speed of service (KPI)

- We answer the phone within three rings
- We answer emails within two hours
- We are available for meetings within two days
- For large or complex projects such as prospectuses, annual reviews and websites we send proposals including budgets, within five days of receiving a brief, and project plans to a timescale agreed with the client.
- For small scale projects such as leaflets and flyers, we send proposals within two days of receiving a brief, and project plans to a timescale agreed with the client.
- We produce contact reports within 24 hours of a meeting

We work to specific client deadlines if elements are requested sooner than outlined above.

Turnaround times

Turnaround times differ depending on the scope, scale and complexity of each project. These are set out in the project plan at the start of each project and agreed with the client, taking into account realistic working times but most importantly, our client's requirements. Once agreed, we will stick rigorously to the project milestones and make sure that the work is completed by the agreed deadline.

Flexibility

Working quickly, flexibly and accurately is second nature to us. Some of our clients have many different responsibilities so we always try to make their work with us as straightforward as possible. We are prepared to go the extra mile to secure the best results, such as working out of hours or helping with specific needs.

We understand that unexpected delays or changes may occur due to clients' internal processes, and we see dealing with those as part of the professional relationship and will make every effort to accommodate any changes of plan.

Value for money

We provide our clients with communication materials that are fit for purpose and that deliver value for their investment (quality/price). We work in teams and our studio is open plan. This promotes formal and informal communication and knowledge sharing. We also aim for short communication lines between ourselves and clients. We have regular work in progress meetings and at any one time ensure that at least two members of staff are fully conversant with a particular project (including a project leader/single point of contact that stays with the project throughout).

Training policy

Everyone at Crescent Lodge is a self-starting graduate, and the best way to describe our training and development policy is 'on demand'. That is, if a member of staff has an interest in learning a new skill and sources an appropriate provider, the company will encourage and support them as a matter of course.

In most cases, continuous professional development at Crescent Lodge takes the form of practical skills training that can be fed back into the business. Subjects covered by courses and seminars attended by our staff have included project management, first aid, colour management, mathematics, new business marketing, understanding the tendering process, proofreading and website programming.

To inspire and refresh creative minds, we encourage all staff to take time out of their working day for gallery and museum visits, theatre and film performances, or any form of cultural stimulation they believe to be of benefit. All we ask is that they share what they have seen and heard with the rest of the team.

Project process

The brief

The first step of a project is to respond to a need that the client expresses formally in a brief or informally in a meeting. In some cases the final brief is developed in discussion with clients.

The proposal

In response to the brief we put together a proposal outlining requirements, objectives, budget, specifications and scope and scale of work, as well as details of the appointed team and points of contact.

Project plan

On appointment we produce a detailed project plan, dividing the work into a series of stages, specifying deliverables for each stage. A project schedule or timeline is included that sets out project milestones such as meetings and sign-off points (see below) for each stage.

A cost for each stage, agreed by all parties before commencement, does not change unless substantial alterations are made to the brief. We invoice either on completion of each stage or on completion of the full project by agreement.

Typical project milestones

	Client	CL
1 <i>Brief:</i>		
– Requirements discussed with the client	x	x
– Brief received/clarified/agreed	x	x
2 <i>Proposal:</i>		
– Proposal sent to client		x
– Written approval of proposal and budget	x	
3 <i>Project plan:</i>		
Developed and agreed in consultation with the client	x	x
4 <i>Stage one: design concepts</i>		
– Discuss design concepts	x	x
– Feedback and agreement on route forward	x	x
5 <i>Stage two: design development</i>		
– Discuss design development	x	x
– Feedback and amendments to be made	x	x
6 <i>Stage three: refinement and amendments</i>		
– Round one of amendments – proof sent to client		x
– Feedback and new amendments	x	
– Round two of amendments – proof sent to client		x
– Feedback and new amendments	x	
– Round three of amendments – final proof to client		x
– Artwork sign-off for production	x	
7 <i>Stage four: artwork and production management</i>		
– Artwork prepared and uploaded		x
– Production specifications written and provided		x
– Proofs checked	x	x
– Delivery managed		x
8 <i>Review</i>	x	x
Review documentation circulated		x

Project milestones are defined and applied to a timescale that is agreed by all parties and monitored throughout the project. We aim to manage work within the timescale agreed and remain flexible and responsive throughout.

How we work with others

When clients ask us to work with their suppliers, we remain involved with quality management.

We always:

- Call a meeting with the supplier to discuss and agree objectives
- Provide a detailed specification, taking the supplier's capabilities into account and identifying any areas of potential risk
- Agree the stages in the process at which we will be given access to the work for the purposes of quality control or ensure approved hand over to those responsible
- Attend and monitor press-passes, if advisable.

Creative services

Illustration and photography are house resources and we also commission and manage from external sources depending on the requirement. Translation services are also commissioned and managed by us in consultation with our clients.

Production services

Foreign language typesetting (non Roman alphabets), and high volume specialist typesetting can be produced to specification on a quality, efficiency and cost basis. Printing and other manufacturing services are commissioned by competitive tender. Potential production services are short-listed, based on track record, recommendation and research. Identical specifications are given to short-listed suppliers and, following detailed comparison of estimates, a choice is made.

We involve product and development suppliers early in the creative process to discuss specifications and technical issues such as format, finishing, materials functionality, imagery and colour – this promotes value in relation to quality and price but also identifies possible process and technical problems before they occur.

Digital media

Design consultancy, development and project management are provided with some programming carried out in-house. Specialist programming involving databases are provided by clients' in-house facility or external development experts, depending on complexity, time and cost efficiency.

Review processes

We make every effort to maintain high standards in terms of the work we deliver and the services we provide.

Ours is a creative business, and constructive criticism is a vital part of the creative process – an everyday tool that we use to refine and improve the work.

Should any problems arise, we encourage our clients to discuss them immediately with their project contact. Should no resolution be reached, the client would be invited to consult our creative and managing director, Lynda Brockbank or if appropriate, our finance director, Rodger Banning.

Our 'complaints procedure' is embedded in transparent quality control procedures that permeate every aspect of the business. Our project plans function as service delivery agreements, setting out, costing and scheduling for every project, phase by phase. Internal review meetings allow each team member to share information and co-ordinate their efforts, with documented project management meetings giving client and consultancy a forum for discussing the work in progress, reviewing completed work, planning new work – and, of course, resolving any problems that may have arisen.

Disaster recovery plan

Crescent Lodge understands the need to have a contingency plan to fully prepare for unforeseen events that could hinder the performance and continuity of the business. We define a disaster as 'an occurrence that takes place unwillingly causing the disruption to normal business processes'. A disaster can come in different forms ranging from data corruption to natural disasters. Whilst it is not always possible to identify every potential risk that we might be exposed to, we endeavour to minimise them.

Time taken to re-establish business in the event of an emergency or disaster
Maximum 36 hours

Primary actions of key personnel in the event of an emergency or disaster

Company directors to consult – in person or by telephone – on how best to delegate ongoing work to current projects and appoint key point of contact for clients according to staff availability (most likely to be our creative director or project administrator).

Off-site secure storage of data

LTO tape backs up each night, is removed from site and cycled on a 'father-son' basis.

Remote access to critical client and project data

Our server set-up enables secure remote access by key management personnel to contact information, accounting, and project files (creative and administrative).

Keeping in contact

Our website will be updated remotely with details of any situation arising and will also list key contact details. All staff, depending on their personal home set-up, are able to collect and respond to email remotely, should key personnel be unavailable to respond.

Client access to project work

Depending on the timescale and status of specific projects, we are able to remotely post work for review on our FTP site. Secure access to specific client areas will be given in the event of an emergency or disaster. Where hard copy provision to the client is necessary, we will rely on bureau services from established suppliers.

Hard copy back-up

Contact information is updated every six weeks and a hard copy produced. It is stored off-site by management.

Hardware/software

Designers may use a laptop to enable remote working, installed with like for like software. In some cases projects are worked on both in and out of the studio, hence current project files are accessible.

In the event of in-studio hardware loss (fire/flood/terrorism) a suite of computers and appropriate support hardware will be leased. New software packages will be purchased and installed.

Personnel issues

We have a flat and collaborative organisational structure that enables employees routinely to access and continue their work from one to another.

Business continuity plan

25 years after incorporation, the Crescent Lodge founding directors remain at the helm: Lynda Brockbank as creative and managing director and Rodger Banning as finance and systems director.

Their policy has always been to maintain their independence, along with high professional and operating standards – and to maximise every opportunity arising from technological advances and other changes within the design industry of which they are a part.

Every time Crescent Lodge establishes a new client relationship, it does so with the long view in mind. We have, for example, been working with University of the Arts London for almost 20 years, with Royal Mail for 15 years, with the MS Society for 10 years. We find there is no better way to ensure continuity than securing repeat business from satisfied clients.

We attract a wide variety of clients, which is good for a creative business and for staff retention and morale.

Last but by no means least, we make an ongoing investment in back-up technology and off-site security to protect all our work (and continue functioning as a business) should the worst happen.

Succession plan

At all times, a minimum of two employees are conversant with each project. For at least a week before any member of staff leaves the company, their activities are 'shadowed' by the person designated to take over. All current work is accessible to the entire studio on the server, and all emails are collected in a central mailbox to which members of staff have access.

In the event of a medical emergency, key members of staff are covered by insurance. In terms of an exit strategy, our founding partners favour the management buy-out route, and, when the time comes, intend to do everything in their power to facilitate hand-over to a competent and enthusiastic management team. Should any senior manager become unable to work unexpectedly, we would use our extensive network of contacts for interim freelance help and, if necessary, for a permanent replacement