

## **GDBA Design Effectiveness Awards 2006**

<b>Category</b>	Branding and Identity, less than 50k
<b>Project Title</b>	County Laois Branding
<b>Date of Project</b>	August 2005
<b>Client Company</b>	Laois Chamber of Commerce
<b>Client Contact</b>	Margaret Ryan, CEO Laois Chamber

## Market Background

Laois is one of Ireland's smallest counties located in the midlands. While it appears to offer less than some of Ireland's traditional 'A-list' tourism destinations, it does boast a healthy low-key, local and unspoilt tourism business. It is also strategically placed as a pivotal point in Ireland between major cities and as such is the ideal business location or meeting point.

Prior to this commission there were a variety of different logos and styles used for county Laois, resulting in mixed messages and a confused brand for the county. There was a definite weakness when marketing or building confidence within the county and projecting a unified or distinctive image to outsiders.

Laois Chamber of Commerce instigated this whole project when it realised how disjointed Laois appeared and how poor the county image was. A small group of business and tourism representatives was formed to provide an improved county image and a more consistent marketing solution to suit both sectors.

## Project Approach – Brief, Objectives & Targets

The initial brief was to design a brochure that would sell the county to both the tourism and business markets, serving the marketing needs of each sector. It was imperative that Laois could be marketed to all groups as a dynamic and progressive county.

Reviewing the brief however, it soon became apparent that in order to achieve their ultimate goal, the county needed a new logo design to develop a strong identity before ever the brochure was designed. Budget was very tight and there was no movement on this, so we had to review the overall project and see how we might deliver all requirements to meet their budget while still achieving the desired, high impact results.

We agreed the following:

1. A new logo would be designed to represent the county in a distinctive and fresh way.
2. Two brochures would be designed; one for Tourism and one for Business, combined within a folder for the county within which they would both sit, allowing for customised marketing together or separately.
3. We would save money by reducing commissioned photography costs and instead we would take photos ourselves as well as consult archives and local Laois photographer's image banks.

**We needed to ensure the logo design had a distinctive look and feel making a high impact impression so that it would stand out from other counties and appeal to everybody.**

A distinctive logo design was developed to reflect the county's pivotal location in Ireland, its rural environs and urban proximity. The logo works as a stamp and is very easily applied to any

application in both colour and b/w. This is imperative for a county logo where it can be used by so many sources with limited control and it has ensured maximum take up and high impact penetration. It has also proved extremely likeable and therefore since its launch, has been taken on board and used by members of all key county organisations, businesses and communities.

**It was imperative that the design appealed specifically to the two main groups of Tourism and Business.**

A single logo was designed and a bright colour palette was expanded to develop the identity. The logo comprises of a strong lime green, white and royal blue. For the business section we used a crimson red as the primary background colour, for tourism we used a royal blue and for the county a strong purple was chosen. The result is a complimentary vibrant palette of distinctive divisions which marry together well. The palette has since been expanded into the different areas, whereby the crimson colour is now used on all Laois business collateral by the Chamber and equally the blue is used by all tourism collateral thus providing a distinctive palette for the areas that work with the logo and expand on the brand.

**A brochure was required to be informative, appealing to all markets, and also be adopted by Laois residents, tourism and business groups.**

We interviewed a broad selection of county groups, individual residents, service providers, investors, visitors etc., to get an unbiased and true reflection of the county. The objective to surprise, delight and thrill succeeded through imagery and well written copy. We focused on stories heard, unusual myths or scenarios that took place in the county and the result ensured even locals and county dwellers were assured of a fresh approach and a completely different view of their county. We developed a tourism brochure, a business brochure and a folder to hold both.

## Project Success – The Facts and Figures

The Laois logo and brochure design was launched in August of 2005 and we are measuring success factors since then, noting significant progress in take up and spread of the design in only one year on.

The brand has been exposed within the county by being taken on board by all county development groups, by the majority of Laois businesses through the Laois Chamber database, Laois LEADER, Laois County Council and by the tourism providers in the county through Laois Tourism.

Previous branding projects didn't have this same affect and a strong component ensuring this success was our insistence that key business and tourism groups were involved in the design process and the roll out through their members. All these groups were invited to a full presentation of the logo and brand style at work ensuring they fully understood its value, and ensured they were on board. As a result they felt a part of it and therefore took ownership of it on its release, which ensured immediate success.

Since the initial logo and brochure design was produced for a limited budget, its expansion has been unprecedented. In the following year alone we have seen at least an additional eight significant marketing pieces produced by different groups for the county using the brand style including a number of guidebooks, a website, county signage, stickers (seen everywhere) and display stands. All of these branded pieces are expansions of the initial design developed and as such prove its success and likeability factor appealing to the audience and thus providing a sustainable design of its own making (unforeseen previously with the initial brief).

The situation now, just 13 months on is a huge success story. The four main groups in Laois to use and promote this identity; Laois Chamber of Commerce; Laois County Council; Laois Tourism and Laois LEADER, all acknowledge the fact that by branding the county so strongly, its status has been elevated, ensuring a much more confident county than existed two years ago. The material makes a dramatic first impression with its audience. It has a distinctive and vibrant image compared to other counties through print, screen or web presence and as such forms a distinctive memorable impression the county is proud of.

*"From a business perspective the Laois logo has made an incalculable difference to our members. Its popularity has ensured its take up through advertising in print and online by our members and we have been asked by members for permission to use it and are encouraging others to do likewise. We now have a very confident county image, which has made a huge difference when marketing ourselves as a business destination"*

Margaret Ryan, CEO Laois Chamber of Commerce

*"Since the launch of this logo, we have used the brochures and since developed the following branded pieces which tie in beautifully; a passport to Laois, an activity guide, a number of display panels, posters and a website. Having the logo and brochure produced, allowed us to create a style for our county which we can now project through all our Tourism material and we have a unified look."*

Honor Deevy, Laois Tourism Officer

*"We weren't involved in the initial brochures for Laois, but when we saw what was being produced, we ensured our literature would tie in well as we wanted to be associated with this very different new look for the county. We immediately took on board the logo design, and of late we are hoping to match the colours and look also for our latest publications"*

Catherine Casey, Laois Heritage Officer, Laois County Council

*"We initiated the design of the last logo for the county of Laois and it was nothing like the success of this design. The difference is incredible. In only one year, this design can be seen everywhere and the enthusiasm to use it and build on its success is unprecedented. The image before this has been one of "boggers" but the new logo, colours etc. have allowed us update. From our own point of view the logo can be used by all sectors of the community ie tourism, industry, food and crafts and this is very positive when we want to portray a united image. All in all the feedback has been very positive."*

Anne Goodwin, Laois LEADER Development Officer

*"When the Laois logo and brochure was launched, we immediately ensured we secured a number of these brochures for our hotel rooms and lobby. We were delighted at last to see a confident image of the county, portrayed as progressive and beautiful. The design appeals greatly to our customers and Laois is received in a very positive light"*

Nollaig Baker, Marketing Manager, Portlaoise Heritage Hotel (Service Provider)

*"I like that we now have an image that feels like eventually we are part of a network, pushing together under one umbrella and because we are not commercial but provide more of a cultural or social role, being part of the county gives us a sense of involvement with colleagues"*

Louise Donlon, Manager, Dunamais Arts Centre (Service Provider)

*"I've always known Laois was a great county, but now that we have a very striking logo design and accompanying brochures, we can proudly show it off to others. It has provided us with a confident image that is a lot easier for us to sell to others. I now also include the Laois logo in all our promotional material"*

Jenny Kent, Abbeyleix Manor Hotel (Service Provider)

*"For a good number of years the business people of Laois lagged behind in promoting the county, its business and groups within the county. They lacked confidence compared to other counties. The creation of the brand helped in unifying the ability to create a common marketing image"*

William Telford, Telford's (Laois Business)

*"The new brand shows the innovation of the young dynamic people we have in Laois. It characterises the progressive qualities of the young people in Laois"*

Aidan O'Connell, Aidan O'Connell & Associates (Laois Business)

*"We've used the logo and brand on our stationery and website. It allowed us to link to the Laois Tourism website which had positive benefits when it came to attracting customers given our challenging location"*

Julian Smith, Rathdowney Outlet (Laois Business)

### **Cost Effectiveness**

The initial budget set for design and print of brochures was €36,000. We reviewed their objectives and rearranged the distribution of costs ensuring the client not only received their brochures as briefed but also a new logo for the county and a brand style for the same budget. This ensured a fully branded pack including the logo, a tourism brochure, a separate business brochure, a branded folder to contain the two allowing both sectors to be marketed collectively or individually, depending on requirements. The end result is a multi-functional piece appealing to a variety of markets and delivered within a very limited budget. It has ensured the county's objectives were far exceeded and the end result has been a massive success story.