



Signature Style

‘We’re not the same company we used to be. We asked ourselves the key questions: What are we? Why are we here? What do we mean to our customers?’

These are key questions indeed, questions about brand. And as the status quo of the world’s economy shifts on its axis, with seismic technological advances occurring simultaneously, it’s pretty clear that brand questions are vital.

We spent some time talking brand values with Milliken’s Marketing Communications Director, Alison Kitchingman, during Clerkenwell Design Week. It seemed appropriate, given the way the landscape of global business is altering, to start by discussing how a mature business has focused on high performance niches in recent years.

‘Milliken is a 150 year old company,’ explains Alison. ‘It’s still family owned – although we’ve changed a lot! Originally, Milliken made textiles and fabrics for the apparel industry. These days, we’re still involved in fabrics...and a lot more besides, including carpet of course!’

‘The company’s changed a good deal in the last 20 years, and what we do in fabrics is a good example of that. In two decades the division’s gone from making fairly generic clothing fabric to become a manufacturer of high performance fabrics that use specialised and proprietary technologies. There’s tremendous investment in R&D – Milliken has the largest textile research centre in the world – with the 2,200-plus patents that go with that. An example of what we do is our flame resistant workwear fabric that has even been adopted by the military.

‘The same high performance can be found in our speciality chemicals division. It’s significant turnover business – examples of our work go from Millad, a clarifying agent used in water bottles and cosmetic packaging, to AlphaSan antimicrobial additive, used in a wide variety of products. Then of course there is our floorcovering ▶▶▶▶▶



document – all those quality charts we know at Milliken all end with that signature. The new brand is all about that. We're all about the future and we like the direction we're going, but we're also very attached to our heritage. And we never want to forget him.

'If you like, we're positioning the new logo as his mark of endorsement. There are key values there. It's about quality of course – it's his mark. It's friendly. It's slightly playful too – but purposeful play. At the same time it's more about people, and more about expression. The new logo puts everything together and represents our approach to carpet.

'A key aspect is that it works for everyone, all our businesses around the world. It unites all the diverse Milliken businesses under one logo. We've always tended to operate in our own silos – it's only recently that different divisions have started working closer together. We're now more focused on our commonalities, specifically in innovation.

'Although the new logo is based on Mr Milliken's signature – written with his blue pen – it's not actually about communicating his personality. He was so humble – it was never about him. It expresses the personality of the company and what we stand for. The people, not a person.

'Clerkenwell Design Week saw the official European launch of the new brand. All the activities at our Berry Street Studio, including our work with the Out of the Dark social enterprise scheme, were about our commitment to our customers and specifically the design community. We used the event not only as a platform to gauge reaction to design concepts and new products but, most importantly, to open dialogue. A dialogue that is two-way – between us and designers that rely on quality, great design and innovation – and it's a dialogue that we intend to maintain. We've evolved – and we're restating who we are and what we do.' ●