

EPIISODE 056

GSK

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Emma Barratt, Wolff Olins

AND

David Stevens, Wolff Olins

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Follow-up, a weekly podcast that goes in depth into projects recently reviewed on Brand New featuring conversations with the designers, and sometimes their clients, uncovering the context, background and design decisions behind the work.

INTRO

Hi, this is Bryony Gomez-Palacio and welcome to episode number 56 of The Follow-up. We are back from our brief break courtesy of the Brand New Conference and we are looking forward to picking up the bi-weekly schedule once more.

This week we are following up on GSK, a global biopharma company with a purpose to, quote, “unite science, technology, and talent to get ahead of disease together”. The product of a myriad of mergers dating back to the 19th century, the modern iteration of the British multinational pharmaceutical conglomerate GSK began in 2000 with the merger of Glaxo Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham. The world’s sixth largest biotech company, they are best known for their work in vaccine production, prescription medicines, and (until recently) consumer health products. (This last division has been spun off into its own company.) If you have ever brushed with Aquafresh or had a malaria vaccine, you’re familiar with their work.

The project, designed by the London, UK office of Wolff Olins was posted on Brand New on June 16, 2022. You can pull it up on your browser at bit.ly/bnpodcast056 that is B I T dot L Y slash bnpodcast056, all in lowercase.

This week we are joined by Emma Barratt, Global Executive Creative Director at Wolff Olins and David Stevens, Executive Strategy Director at Wolff Olins.

In this conversation we get to hear about how much GSK's determination to do something bold and visionary going into this rebrand helped shape the process and outcome of this project. Starting with the pitch phase we get a sense of how discerning the client was in choosing the right partner and how determined Wolff Olins was to position themselves as the right choice that would help GSK reach that ambition. Facing a challenging, negative perception from the media, Wolff Olins had the difficult task of creating a new identity that would shift that perception and create a sense of excitement in the market and with analysts and investors around GSK's new positioning where science, technology, and talent are united to deliver something new. Not an enviable or easy task for sure.

Now let's listen in as Armin follows up with Emma and David.

ARMIN VIT Hello everyone. Today I am pretty excited because we have a bit of a change of pace as we haven't followed up on a big corporate identity in some time, and it doesn't get bigger than GlaxoSmithKline changing to GSK with the help of Wolff Olins. Emma, David, welcome to The Follow-Up.

EMMA BARRATT Hi. Thank you for having us.

DAVID STEVENS Thank you so much for having us. Lovely to be here.

ARMIN David, we're gonna start with you. For a company this size, the decision to redesign their identity is not taken lightly. So what I'm curious about is at what point in their process did Wolff Olins first become involved with this project? Meaning was the decision to redesign already in place? As well as to rename, already in place? Or did you do some work prior to the redesign that defined the need for the redesign?

DAVID GSK had a great big commercial factor looming and that was, they had planned the demerger, so the separation of their consumer healthcare business, which traditionally deals with things like toothpaste and over the counter medicines and you know, all the kinds of things you normally see in supermarkets and big box retailers. Versus their science focus portfolio of things like vaccines and medicines, you know, has been on the front of everyone's minds in the past couple of years. So there's a commercial reason, separate those out into two entities, have new CEOs of both of them, and try and drive the performance of those. And indeed the consumer healthcare side, which has now rebranded as Helium, has been listed on the stock market and is its own business, with its own CEO. GSK had several reasons why they felt that a new brand was essential. I think there's the emotional things like GSK needed to be perceived as a leader in its field, and its field is actually newly defined as one as biopharmaceuticals, so not just big pharma and the traditional pharma brands of old. To signal to all of its people, first and foremost, that it was changing as a company. It wasn't just kind of being left behind as you know, the bit of the old company that's just remaining as was. And to the market, to analysts, to investors, to get them excited about a bold, visionary, future where science, and technology, and talent would be united to deliver something new and exciting, and benefit the world's health.

ARMIN And all of these thoughts, did they come to you with them? Or did you help them figure out some of this stuff out?

DAVID It was really interesting. They came to us with a clear sense of the need for a new identity, and the desire to feel fundamentally different, bold, and visionary. So that was super clear. But what was in the process of being developed was their core purpose, their strategy, their tone of voice, defining how they speak about their portfolio. A lot of the decisions about how to present the business, how to talk about the business was still to be made. And at Wolff Olins, as in many other businesses, this idea of defining your purpose for us, it shouldn't just

be a kind of subset or sideline to developing an identity and starting to design. And we wanted to make very sure from the start that we worked hand-in-hand with GSK to help them develop that purpose, develop the right tone, and develop the right personality traits that we could set us up for success and allow us to design something meaningful, that wouldn't just be straight into questions of color, and logo placement, all that kind of good stuff.

EMMA The words bold, iconic, and transformative actually came from the CEO even at pitch stage. I remember them because I wrote them down. To be given the permission right from the very top to be able to push the needle and be disruptive in a sector, and especially in the biopharma sector, is a designer's dream. That they had such big and bold ambitions. And what was great about having written it down, and it having come from the CEO, is every time we spoke with them or with her, we needed to push work through and be brave, we just replayed those words. They were just a constant reminder of how big the ambition was.

ARMIN David, you had mentioned in an article with Creative Review that the client had this desire to be bold. So I was curious about in what way. And apparently in a very overt, very convinced, very assured way that that's what they knew that they wanted. Out of curiosity was this feeling shared by everyone in the room? Obviously when the CEO says, I wanna be bold, daring... was this shared by all of the team involved or was there someone, and you don't have to name names, but was there any inclination of like, no, no, no, let's dial back down a little bit. We are a big company, we can't be that bold, and daring, and visionary at all time.

DAVID So I think what's interesting is GSK have a fantastically powerful personality and visionary person in [Dame] Emma Walmsley who's their CEO, but she knows full well she can't succeed without the support of an awesome team, and an awesome board, and with the support of her people. So while she is key to setting the ambition for

someone like a Wolff Olins in a briefing, we've worked very closely with various different product heads, business unit heads, commercial people, to try and articulate the vision and make it real. The issue with GSK is you can sort of sit there and think, okay, is this just—and this is what the context was—that business was getting hammered in the financial press, consistently, for months and months and months before we started working with them and after because there's so many question marks over the direction, business strategy, like is this company tanking? Or going anywhere? The CEO needs to be out there front and center fighting battles in PR every day, and internally to try and retain people's confidence. Certainly our work was about work with a strong leadership team and it's not just you know, one voice leading the way.

EMMA I also think there was some healthy competition as well. The fact that the company was breaking into two, leading behind the consumer arm of things, you know, it was the B2B side of things. You would be competitive, you would be kind of wanting to make yours bigger, and better, and bolder. And I think there was definitely an element of that as well. Everybody working on this, and being part of this, the new GSK wanted to put their stamp on it as well and make it the best that it could be.

ARMIN What was the timeline of all of this? Emma, you mentioned that it was a pitch and we don't have to get into the details of the pitch 'cuz I imagine that being a little bit of a touchy subject, but just when did that start? When did you get the job? How long did this whole thing take?

EMMA It's actually still ongoing—

ARMIN Ok [laughter].

EMMA —we don't end. And this is common with Wolff Olins projects. We don't end once the creatives out there, we know we often help be kind of guardians of the brand. We help onboard everybody internally, and we help make sure that the brand's governed and the standards are

kept, and in GSKs case we're actually helping them extend their brand into their products, and services, and advertising, and beyond. So it definitely hasn't ended but the original pitch and the work started really quickly after the pitch. It was about 18 months ago if not longer. David's nodding his head 'cuz he was on the the pitch with me. So yeah, definitely around the 18 months mark. We're definitely approaching two years ago that this phase of work started. The kind of work started in the pitch, because we were pitching to the CEO. From that moment off, she was judging us and our thinking, judging us in our creative output, judging us whether she could collaborate and work with these individuals, how smart we were. That was the first phase I think. Testing our creative thinking. Also, did we have the ambition? Did we share a big enough ambition?

DAVID Yeah.

EMMA As she did.

DAVID We were actually looking back over the pitch the other day and it's one of those situations where we took quite a high risk attitude to it. As in, we presented a lot of work that could be read as this is a recommendation, and this is final product, and you know, this is the direction. Even though the tone we presented in was this is for provocation but, we felt we needed to show ambition and the fact that we could deliver something almost, you know, without working with them, without a brief that would blow them away. Rather than take the kind of nicely-nicely, let's have a chat about it, let's get your input, let's see what you think first. I'm not dismissing a a full process, I'm just like you need to kind of go too far, be too ambitious first, to then be wound back. Even so, there's lots of elements of that pitch, certainly the tone of it, some of the wording, some of the design elements, that you still see in there today. And I think that's testament to GSK accepting the fact that they needed to push it.

ARMIN That's an interesting insight into how this all started. That from the beginning it wasn't just answering a Request for Proposal, but

answering that demand or that desire, to be bold and visionary, and it started from the get-go before you even got the job. A good reminder that that part of the process which many designers and design firms kinda like, oh you know I'm just gonna fill out a Word document and be done with it. Like no your job starts there.

EMMA I remember being on a call that you know this is a big, big name in the industry and a lot of the big brands were pitching this piece of work. And I remember GSK saying that this was not a creative pitch, we just want to see your thinking. To us that was great. We can't show our thinking unless we show the work at the same time. And that's what won as the pitch.

ARMIN Once you got the pitch, what was the first part of the process for you?

DAVID First part of the process was interrogating the purpose, sit behind the design thinking, and the personality, and tone of voice. Because... we needed to get to a place where we had a consistent, simple, guiding light to design experiences, websites, office environments, Keynote presentations. Even though GSK is a corporate B2B brand, it actually has quite a rich experience with a lot of touch points. So trying to design with that in mind meant that we needed a strong purpose we could keep going back to.

ARMIN Emma, as the person in charge of leading the design aspect of this project, and with that purpose sort of defined, what were some of the initial key insights that helped you start to define what design direction GSK should, or could go in?

EMMA We knew from the strategic work that we had done, we knew what was unique about GSK. We knew it was the years of expertise in science, and this breadth of experience that they had in their talent more than fields, and the way that they were using technology and in particular machine learning. So we had these ingredients that we could play into. Because they'd broken away from the consumer product side of things, we knew that we could really dial into those areas. So they

were almost our ingredients to work with. And in the very early days, like every brand you start to look at territories, or creative worlds where you could start to bring this thing alive. And if I remember there were three territories or worlds that do stick in my head because I think you still see the threads of those worlds in the work today. And that was this idea of a collective, you know? It's not about one individual, it's about the collective of minds and all these different fields and all these different areas of GSK—science, technology, and talent all working together towards one goal of being ahead.

This idea of adaptability. You see it in the logo, the GSK logo that's always moving. That was one of our earliest designs. The idea that because GSK have this advantage in being able to think differently because of this breadth of expertise, they see things that other people don't. And then I think the final area was this idea of unlocking because you have this almost foresight or way of seeing things, you're able to unlock things that others don't. And you see that in the motion behaviors, you see that in the logo behaviors, you see that in how we're using our art direction imagery. So those seeds are still there today. They made it through to the final work, is what I'm saying.

ARMIN And actually one question that I should have asked before, how did the new name come about? I mean it's not a stretch to go from GlaxoSmithKline to GSK, but I imagine that there was research, that there was testing, that there was just trying to figure out if it was right to move away from such a well known name, to a shorter name that maybe they referred to themselves that way internally, but I don't know if that was the case externally where people just called them GSK.

DAVID The name is a strange entity because of the way that sort of financial markets and papers report versus how people talk about it day-to-day. GlaxoSmith Klein is, I think 20 years old. GSK has long been the common shorthand, but in the press you'll still see people talk about GlaxoSmithKlein's performance, in financial pages. But in the main talk about its GSK. I think what we did was not necessarily change

the name, but make the usage of the name a) block caps and b) a lot more powerful and overt visually. Whereas previously it was contained within this triangular heartbeat / plectrum symbol that partly demonstrated commitment to health, and care, and science, and warmth, but unfortunately stood in for the actual name of the brand quite a lot because it obscures and makes the brand name smaller in a lot of places. And as Emma and the team worked out very quickly, it's not built for digital environments. So that logo and name, as in wordmark was very problematic and quite recessive. Something that we really had to address and think about could we make GSK a lot bolder, a lot more confident even when it comes to kind of the wordmark really.

ARMIN Got it. So now you have your strategy on how to use the name, you have your territories, at what point do you start showing something that resembles the final design to GSK? Is that during the initial three territory exploration? Does that logo come after? Like at what point does GSK get involved with like, hey this is a logo that looks interesting, let's explore that.

EMMA I think the creative work, or the exploration was always there 'cause that's how you solve the strategy. And the territories, and the three areas that I talked about a minute ago, adaptability, unlocking, and the sense of being a collective, they were there from the beginning to help solve their strategic roots and because they are the strategic roots almost visualized. Is your question more, at what point did we start to craft the logo and GSK start to input into the thinking behind the logo? Or start to respond to the three territories?

ARMIN I'll backtrack a little bit in that most often or, well what I found in having these conversations is that usually a strategy is words only, or mostly words. But it sounds here like from the very early beginning design was as much part of the strategy and the thinking, as opposed to it coming after. Like we sign off on the strategy, now we go back and explore design options, and bring that back to—

DAVID Right, right, right.

ARMIN It sounds like that was not the case here.

DAVID No, no I think that's definitely what Emma's saying. The truth of the matter is, as we developed our thinking, we very much wanted to put visuals with it. I think a couple of reasons for that. One is just that's how we work and that's how we think we get the best work, you know sort of division between strategy and design. But I think there's some more, kind of, maybe not such obvious reasons why that's important for someone like GSK in general. So I think as you are completely redeveloping your purpose, and personality, and tone of voice, to not see any visuals, and not see it in application, and try and sign it all off as sort of couple of different sequential strategic pieces, distinct pieces is really difficult. You're constantly thinking, how does that look then? How would that sound? So if we went down that route, does that close other doors?

Trying to show what we meant in terms of visual look and feel was really important. To just being able to get the strategic routes. And then, as well this is a science-led organization and they wanted to test the different routes and work we put forward. And I think if we didn't have visual stimulus as part of that testing that people could respond to, again a lot of respondents would just kind of be like yeah, whatever. The general response would be poor, and not very engaged because it's just words on a page and you wouldn't really learn that much. We learned things about what do people like, but that perhaps felt like a cliché, what did people hate because it felt like every other brand out there. So I think you know, we desperately needed to show what we were talking about visually and verbally as well. Like give a sense of the tone. Without doing that we would've really struggled.

EMMA I would also like to build on what David just said. It's alien for Wolff Olins to think like that. To David's point strategy is nothing without visuals attached to it, and visuals and nothing really without them being rooted in the business' journey or business' reason to exist. And

just on top of that, Emma Walmsley is quite a visual person as well, and she always wanted to be involved in how the identity and brand was shaping. Not only is it the our way working, it was their way of working as well. Bringing to life the North Star of their strategy. And I think David landed it when he said, I think his personality was the very first thing that we started to visualize how might the end-user, how might the internal team start to experience the strategy through the personality.

ARMIN Thank you for the thorough explanation and it makes perfect sense. So now I'm curious more about the details of how the logo emerged, how it was refined over different stages, at what point did someone say "yes that's the logo that I like!" Testing and research, did at some point someone say like "no this is the wrong direction to go in..." but then the decision were like "no we're going to be bold and visionaries so we're gonna go with what people don't like". At what point did a semblance of that logo first appear? And how they would make it till the end?

EMMA First of all, I can't even begin to explain how much emphasis brands put on their logos. There's such a contentious point because I think brands in general think that a logo is there to tell entire brand story. So they put so much emphasis on this one small symbol. And I think you know, everybody tends to forget you have a wider system, a wider kit of parts. GSK as well were kind of no different. This logo had to do so much, there was so much weight that it had to carry. And we went through hundreds and hundreds of explorations of what this logo could be. We also had tested this logo, it wasn't just how we felt was this looking right? This start to emphasize the strategy, the innovation, what GSK needed to represent. Did it internally represent that for the individuals, and then externally for all the stakeholders, everyone else involved with seeing this brand?

So huge amount of testing was involved in finding the right balance. And you know what, I don't think there was any magic to how we crafted it.

It was just literal about finding the right visual balance of trying to add in the twist. So the twist that you actually see in the logo... There's kind of two points to the logo, you see these twists which come from the DNA strands and there's also this pinch, or this precision point that you also see in the wider holding shape, which is based on the idea that science and technology is all about precision. But it was just about finding the right visual balance for it. You add too many of these little details in, and it becomes illegible, you can't read it. You don't add enough and it becomes a little bit bland, and it's worth pointing out as well that we worked really closely, with Rick Banks from F37 on crafting this logo. Everybody knows Ricky, he's a legend. I wish I could say there was some science behind it but there isn't. It was like what visually looked right, and felt right, after the many rounds of testing.

DAVID I think the only other thing I'd add to that was around your question about the decision being made around kind of which kind of logo to go for and pressing "go" on it. What was good was, there was an appreciation from the client side that there are certain logos and visual devices which could very literally signal what we were trying to say with the purpose statement around uniting science, technology, and talent, to get ahead of disease together. So there's some very literal things you can do there. There's things holding hands, things combining into two, arrows, heartbeats, there's lots of very literal things you can do. Even though we actually explored lots of those things, and metaphors around those things, the type of solution we got to, I remember the client kind of saying this in a bit of a light bulb moment. They were like, "you know what I like about the direction we're going in is it's not too basic".

And I think that's not right for all companies to go for, like more sophisticated, very crafted, very thought through mark because sometimes you're trying to cut through with the ultimate simplicity and ultimate utilitarian nature. But actually for a science-led company that really should be at the forefront of technology, design, talent attraction, this should feel crafted, precise, thoughtful, slightly organic,

meets technology. It's that kind of vibe. So I was so pleased when they kind of looked at a few other runners and riders we had in the race and were like yeah this one's good cuz it's not too basic. <laugh>

ARMIN That's a good goal to have in general for a logo design. Not too basic <laugh>. Because it would have been very easy and very comfortable to just go with a lowercase geometric sans serif that says GSK, especially for a company this size where there's so much riding on the decision for a logo that to go with something much more evocative, more crafted, and in this case more precise, I think it is a bold move because it does signal something different than just taking—if not the easy way out—taking the safe route that won't alienate anyone, that won't make anyone raise their head and question, what does this mean? So I think that was a great balance with the logo that in the end it did signal, this is not just a corporation. It's a corporation doing something specific and there's a story behind all the twists and turns... and I don't know if it's reassuring, but it's nice to hear that you went through hundreds of explorations and it wasn't just like, here's one, and you know you liked it and it came out right from the first time, which is never the case but it's always nice to hear about how much work goes into it, and how in this case it was appreciated by the client that you went through this deep exploration.

EMMA Absolutely and I think that was because it had to work because there's such a big company with such a big audience and so well known globally, we had to make sure that we a) weren't infringing on any kind of trademarks globally, but also that the meaning that we were put into this new mark and really leaning into the GSK name that that was understood globally as well and that we weren't missing any nuances.

ARMIN Now moving on the other elements that you mentioned. There is always a bigger world beyond the logo. So one of the things that I really enjoyed were the medical/scientific illustrations that, they look lovely and they're really nice, but given the last two years of the world was there any concern that with their looking so scientific... a little bit like

the covid diagram that we all grew scared of in the past two years. I'm guessing that there's more to it than just these illustrations, but was there any concern of like, oh maybe this is too soon?

EMMA Is the question were we concerned that they look Covid-y <laugh>?

ARMIN Yeah. yes.

EMMA Because we were like ah! No, because our audience predominantly are scientists and people in the medical industry and GSK's job wa to find a vaccine and also help them to treat people. So absolutely no. Our biggest concern when we were doing this is that these diagrams were scientifically correct. That's really hard when you're trying to put a creative stamp on things that have to be scientifically correct. Your stakeholders are scientists and engineers, the images to point out they're not just science images, they're science and tech images. So you'll see a series of them that had this technology overlay in it—that's not just decoration, that is literally how the technology and the science are working together. That was our biggest concern, making sure that they will legit and would hold up with the professionals. We also wanted to differentiate them. If you look at that sector, if you look at any kind of science or medical imagery, it all tends to have the same quite cold sterile feel about it. And we wanted to move away from that. We wanted to add so much humanity and some warmth for those images. Hence while you'll see that they're always on white backgrounds as opposed to the darker backgrounds, which is typical of tech images. And they've always got a movement to them. Very, very subtle detail. But if you look closer at them, they're always moving, they're very rarely static as well.

ARMIN And who did you work with to develop these illustrations? It sounds a little bit like when you're doing a movie and you need to bring in an expert to make sure that the physics of something happening are real. So I'm guessing you work with an illustrator but at the same time you also had to fact check as you mentioned that this was right.

EMMA It wasn't just one illustrator, it was a series of illustrators and modelers, and scientists, um, and AI specialists. It was a whole team of people. And then a motion team behind this work. It wasn't one individual. Much bigger than that. And then people had to light it, skin it... yeah, a whole team.

ARMIN That sounds pretty exciting. Like we could have a follow-up episode just in the illustration <laugh>. Another element of the identity that was pretty interesting was the applications that you chose to include in your case study that were sort of the uniforms or apparel for people in the company, the office furniture, which you alluded to at the beginning of the podcast that that was one of the elements that you had to address but at the same time you could have just shown like signage pointing to cubicles or you know, little signs outside the conference room, but instead you showed really ambitious, almost like office of the future type furniture. How did all that stuff come about?

DAVID There's a couple of factors at play. So there's one that's just the simple desire to make sure it feels like the brand is personal, and that the brand is in people's hands first of all because it's a new company that want staff employees to feel ownership over first and foremost. Then the next thing is more the investment angle where the company as a whole is looking at moving its HQ, opening up new innovation campuses around the UK and around the world, investing in lots of collaborations and partnerships, and competing really hard for the best STEM talent around the world. Not just from the UK, far from it, all over the globe, and the best universities, and start-ups, and biotechs, and all the rest of it. So you need to make sure that that brand feels super attractive to talent and the environment that you'll come to work in and work with is really exciting.

The other thing that is, just perhaps it's obvious but it's worth saying, is the whole collaboration theme and working together idea that's inherent in the brand and is you know, key to GSK has been something that over the past couple of years has gone at warp speed to quote, you know, our US colleagues. Collaboration, the idea of creating

more collaborative spaces, and encouraging more face-to-face, and indeed better online interactions is absolutely key to the work of science being efficient and effective. So that vibe, that feeling of actually wanting to work together and it being a place that's exciting to experience is really important.

EMMA I think there's a lot of sneering in the industry about case studies and mockups when it comes to how you showcase the brand in your website. It is our job to point the way, to show the ambition of where a brand could be. And I'd love to have a follow up on this question in a few years time to see how much of that actual case study is live for GSK. There is a need, this isn't just decoration for them, there is a literal need for this brand to have these touch points and we're working with them at the moment on them.

ARMIN Yeah because it's easy to mock up a business card and yes they'll eventually make the business card but mocking up something that is more ambitious, that will take more time, energy commitment, capital investment to make... I'm always left wondering like ah, you know it looks great, will it be real? And I'm guessing in the case of GSK there's a high probability that it could be real. And yes you're right. I think in five years down the road it would be great to see how this has taken shape in the real world. Which brings me to the next question and that you alluded to Emma at the beginning that you're still involved in the project and the rolling out. But how has that part of the project been? What has been implemented? What is still in development? Or what has happened after the initial launch of the new logo and unveiling what this brand looks like?

EMMA So their brand has been launched internally and externally. And internally there was a series of workshops and series of onboarding so, it wasn't just case of Ta-da! Here's new brand! We're off now. It was like here's the new brand, here's the reasons behind why we've done it, but also more importantly here is the toolkit in order to be able to implement this brand internally. And because as we said early

on, because this is a relationship and a partnership, it was making sure that we were there to make sure the brand standards, or the master brand lived up to those standards, that the brand was being implemented well. We've now moved on to the stage, well we're not only doing that, helping them implement the master brand but also looking at the products and services and how much of the master brand reflects into those products and services as well. And that's gonna be an ongoing journey for the next six months or so. And it's not just the products and services, it's advertising, it's event launches, it's where else the brand in the future has yet to show up. And what might that be.

ARMIN And how big is their in-house team? I know that some of that stuff could be trade secret or something, but just to get a sense of like, do they have a robust team that can create all of these touch points for the company?

EMMA They do have a design team, it's small, but like most big companies, they tend to partner with smaller companies. Specific to implementation pieces.

ARMIN Lately a lot of big clients—by lately I mean the past five years—there's been more of a trend of building a large in-house design team that can handle this so that you avoid having to bring in different partners, which is a valued approach, but I think more companies are seeing the benefit of moving a lot of that stuff in-house.

DAVID Yeah on that sort of team size and team structure thing, I think it's very difficult for GSK to build a single central large team like some of our clients do, like a Google or a TickTock, where they can build a big design unit because they're dealing with so many different product brands and so many different markets, so many different medicines, that the localization is really key. So they need on the ground partners to help 'em deliver locally for them rather than everything being able to be so designed and delivered from the center.

ARMIN That's an interesting point. Was there any moment where the team at GSK was like "you guys nailed it, we had the solution, let's move

forward” or was there anything in particular that excited them at some point that remains memorable in your experience in this project? Whether it was in the strategy, in the pitch, in the implementation... where GSK went like, “yes! We got it, let’s go”.

EMMA I think it was the logo. I mean its the first time, especially when the logo moved and you saw the logo do its spin and I think it does go back to my earlier point, brands put so much emphasis on this mark, what’s gonna be our kind of mark, the identify that everybody’s gonna see. And I think once it had been through the, it was always the mark that we wanted to go ahead and it had been through the testing and it had come out as yes everything that we hoped it was gonna be is actually it was landing and testing was showing that it was right, and that we all made the decision that this was the mark that we were gonna go ahead with. I think that was the big moment it the first piece in the toolkit beyond the strategy, the first visual piece that was fixed and gave them a hint of what this new identity, or this new brand was going to look like. And to all the things that we just talked about, it didn’t look like anything else in that sector or anywhere else, come to think of it. It excited everybody what was to come.

ARMIN To sum up. How about for each of you personally, what was the most exciting aspect of working on this project?

EMMA It was the sheer scale a bit. I mean I’ve been in the industry for nearly 20 years and I don’t think I’ve touched a job that was... it was working on a job that was so big. It touched so many different touch points, you know, whether that be motion, whether that be sound, whether that be a VI system, or the strategic framework, whether that be scientific drawing, all of that is incredible. Never done anything on that scale. I feel like I should say that. But I’m gonna say it was working on a brand that my mom recognized. My mom is severely asthmatic and for once being able to say, Mom, I’ve been part of the team, we are designing GSK. For her to go, Oh yeah, I know who they are. ‘Cause she recognizes the logo. So that for the most exciting thing I didn’t have to

explain what I do for a living 'cuz my mom understood it. <laugh>

ARMIN A nice part of that story is that it's something that allows her to live her life. And so it's not just that you redesigned the logo for some consumer brand or retail store, but just something that is part of her life and that helps her. It's a reality that many designers face like, hey my mom, my parents finally understand what I do thanks to this big project that, after working on 20 years on things that are interesting and memorable, finally they get it.

EMMA Yeah and I think the reason probably why I'm so attached to that is because it was helping her. Jokes aside, there's a logo that she recognizes but because I was actually doing something for a company that literally was changing lives and my mom just happened to be one of those individuals whose life was being changed by it, that feels good.

DAVID In terms of what I was kind of proud and excited about. I think, I was actually really proud immediately after the pitch because it was that kind of pitch where we really went for it, and really went full tilt, kind of creative solution. And we were so proud of the work, and the team that worked on it. But I think it also made me proud 'cause it was one of those where the work got better from there, rather than worse. And a lot of times if you do really go for it in a pitch, the inevitability feels like, okay, that was the kind of most cool and exciting bit where we're allowed to go crazy and then it kind of tails off after that.

Whereas I think the work genuinely got better because there were so many crafts people involved in developing it. Emma's already mentioned today that was a, a really good moment. But then I think when it actually launched I was really expecting the haters to creep out because GSK had just been hammered in the financial press for so long that people want to have a pop, and people always love to hate a new identity story. Whereas the reality of it was loads of GSK people flooding their social media with awesome photos and yeah, bit of a joyous moment of like, oh wow, this is actually really cool and this

makes me feel good about my life, and my job ,and what I do for a day job. So yeah, really nice moment.

ARMIN That is a great answer too. And yeah, it's funny how usually a logo changed can sometimes serve as an excuse for haters to hate on a company. Like everything they hate about the company, they channel into the logo and they find faults that are not there.

DAVID Totally <laughter>.

ARMIN So you know, the fact the identity was able to weather that storm, it is a bit of a testament to what you're able to do, which was give shape to something that is really hard to visualize for a company that does very complex stuff. And you did it in a way that was exciting, that wasn't pretentious, that wasn't boring either, that wasn't too basic, and that you were able to create something new, and novel, and exciting, that made sense. And that is all I have to say about that. And I want to thank you both for sharing your experience and the process of this project that sounds complicated, and complex, and challenging, and that you succeeded at quite nicely. So Emma and David, thank you for joining me on The Follow-Up today.

EMMA Thank you very much.

DAVID Thanks so much. Wonderful. Love it to speak to you.

OUTRO This is the kind of project where it's nearly impossible to grasp its complexity but Emma and David hinted at it by acknowledging the scale of it and the energy required in the pitch to even be considered to tackle it. Having any kind of creative, unexpected, and challenging solution come out of something of this size is remarkable and the fact that Wolff Olins most definitely delivered something that went above and beyond it and that stands out, is a testament not just to their process and creativity but to the client's commitment to push beyond conventions and expectations to create something transformative for their business one Precision Point and DNA Twist at a time.

Today, thanks for listening. Until next time, we'll be here, we hope you'll be there.