



Case Study - The Santander Group, Abbey

Using a global publication to engage a UK audience

Santander was founded in 1857 and, with over 10,800 branches in more than 40 countries, has grown to be one of the largest financial groups in Europe. The Group's core businesses throughout Europe and Latin America are retail and wholesale banking, asset management and insurance.

In November 2004, Santander acquired Abbey, the 6th largest bank in the UK and the second largest provider of mortgages and savings. Abbey has over 17,000 employees and more than 700 branches across the UK.

Santander publishes a corporate magazine, *Carácter*, for its worldwide employee audience. Following an online survey about the magazine in 2006, Santander asked HarknessKennett to undertake qualitative research to add more detail to the UK audience findings. Increasing the appeal of *Carácter* to Abbey people is seen as an opportunity to improve their knowledge of, and engagement with, the Santander Group and its culture.

HarknessKennett ran a series of focus groups with employees from different business divisions across the UK. In the groups, people were invited to suggest changes and improvements to heighten *Carácter's* appeal and were given the opportunity to compare *Carácter* to other organisations' publications. They were also shown proposed new designs for the magazine, displaying a fresh, more modern style.

Following the research, HarknessKennett put forward recommendations for improvement, including making the magazine more people-focussed and less formal in tone. Overall, the feedback from the focus groups supported the concepts behind the magazine content and revealed a genuine appetite for a Group publication striking the right balance between global and local interests.

"HarknessKennett has provided us with very valuable input to the re-design of Carácter; the feedback has clarified the direction to take and given us some great new ideas both from our own people and from the HarknessKennett team. In addition, their support in arranging and facilitating the focus groups ensured that we received a good cross-section of opinion so we know that the direction we're taking is the right one."

Ana Rodriguez Moreira
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