

then someone would have thought about how and where to place the structures in the context of the street. This is the reverse of what we do now. For us, strategy drives the information and the information then drives the physical entity.' That entity may not be a structure at all, he adds. 'It may be integrated with the environment, or be part of a landscape or part of a building.'

CIVIC CONSISTENCY

Even if budgets and lead times allow, wayfinding projects often miss opportunities to take a holistic approach to the environment; encompassing signage structures, street furniture and street names. Most cities and towns also have a wide array of maps from the many different agencies involved in civic governance, and there's precious little organisation or consistency. Through both consultancy and frank, Crabtree's aim is 'to offer wayfinding solutions across all touchpoints, and through all media, that are a consistent extension of the place brand.' The team behind frank will always put the emphasis on

Unique and customisable: No two versions of frank will look the same – from the steel frame to the choice of plinth, the graphic style, colour, materials and finishes are customised for each project. frank also brings new products into play, for example a routemarker



map-driven solutions, as opposed to predetermined directional systems. 'The map can be a very powerful device to give people reassurance about where they are, but can also encourage them to go and discover,' says Crabtree. 'Maps enforce the fact that you're on a journey. What's in front of you on the map is what you'll go and find.' There may be other tiers of information, for example transport links, that can be embedded into the pedestrian wayfinding experience. 'But this has to be managed carefully because you can overload the situation very quickly.'

With frank, says Crabtree, we can now begin to deliver wayfinding benefits for smaller towns and cities. 'Being "small" no longer stops you having a successful information system – this is one of the key driving forces behind frank,' he adds. 'Every place has presence, and value, yet frequently even people living in an area don't know what it has to offer. But there is always good local knowledge, and making use of local expertise is key to frank at every level.'

DEFINING THE END COST

Set within the current context of localism, using products like frank can be free up local resource for sound strategy development. Stakeholder consultation remains key. Successful pedestrian wayfinding systems need to be designed to deliver local content in an accessible, legible manner. 'We feel that frank's known costs allow smaller towns and cities to get the maximum from a limited budget by ring-fencing what they need for the implementation of tangible 'product' costs, and putting the biggest possible budget into strategy and information graphics,' says Rawlings. 'We are turning traditional signage projects on their head by defining the end cost (the physical product), and allowing as much as possible to be spent on upfront strategy and information design.'

In terms of design, frank's physical family has the flexibility, scalability and versatility to carry the information identified by a local strategy. The cost of developing the physical structures can be as much as one-third of the entire value of a wayfinding scheme. 'Because we're not having to engage with the design process of the physical product, there's no cost there and there's no lead time in that process,' says Crabtree. 'More resource can be put into contextualisation, graphic content, materials and finish.'

An information system should help to make people aware of



Photo render: solar frank in sample location

Sustainability: frank offers eco-friendly illuminated mapping at an affordable price via solar power, and has been designed with 100 per cent recyclability in mind

what is there, but should also be about surprise and discovery, says Crabtree. 'Outside the entrance to our office, we have a local area map for visitors, and on that map we put our favourite places: a hidden local garden, the best cake shop in London and a great little place to eat. This process of revealing the 'hidden gems' that are associated with every local area by those that know it well informs our approach to wayfinding. Deliver that, within a system like frank that brings affordable, best practice structures to any area without the need for big budgets and long lead times, and we think you have a winning formula.'

Juliana O'Rourke spoke with Roger Crabtree and Romy Rawlings
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