

Fitch Redefines Retail; Distinctive New View on How Design Centres Around Putting Products, Services and Environments into Contexts that are Innovative and Convincing to Consumers

28 April 2005

New positioning marks Fitch's reinvigoration and determination, after the 2004 return of its founder Rodney Fitch, to deliver vivid experiences that enhance consumers' lives at multiple points of interaction. New identity and simplified name structure signal a simultaneous move to one, integrated entity worldwide. New website launched. Fitch, one of the world's best known and most influential design agencies, today brings a new sense of purpose and momentum to its distinctive view about the retail marketplace and why it believes the meaning of the word 'retail' needs to be redefined from its traditional sense of supply and demand to a much more fluid and dynamic means of story telling and brand communication. The world of retailing is changing dramatically and is becoming hugely more competitive and more influential, both with consumers and manufacturers. Significantly, today it is the consumer who is taking control. Empowered by a wealth of readily available knowledge and an extraordinary set of choices, consumers often have all the material possessions they need, and now seek a different way of engaging their time with brands. They are seeking products, services and environments that connect with them emotionally; that enhance their lives beyond functionality, and deliver experiences that match their aspirations.

"This has everything to do with retail, but perhaps not in the way that some people might expect," says founder, Chairman and CEO, Rodney Fitch. "We recognise how much the global retail landscape - and consumers - have changed. Retail now is about putting ideas and experiences of products, services and environments into context and circulation, in ways that are innovative and convincing to today's savvy consumers. As a result, we at Fitch, create distinct and active experiences that engage consumers emotionally rather than treating them as passive recipients. We are therefore redefining retail to embrace aspects of design that are about selling or communicating products and services or both, at retail and the wider brand landscape". Fitch unveiled its thinking and positioning about redefining retail in a global web cast to all Fitch's 450 worldwide associates yesterday, 27 April 2005. Eighteen months on from its acquisition by WPP and the return of its founder, Fitch's distinctive point of view signals the re-positioning of the company as one, integrated entity, from the network of independent brands and offices it had been in recent years. "Rodney's return has reinvigorated Fitch and in a sense, given it back its focus as a consumer-centric design company," says Todd Cameron, President and CEO of Fitch's studios in Columbus and San Francisco. "Redefining retail is a continuation of the fundamental Fitch philosophy that design should respect people's needs, wants and aspirations and in doing so, provide them with experiences that enhance their lives in many different ways. Our clients value this approach since in today's world; it also produces meaningful, enduring commercial results."

Whilst Fitch's heritage may lie in its work for the traditional retail sector, this consumer-centric approach runs through all its core disciplines: consumer environments; brand identity and communications including live, digital and packaging; product development and future insight. "The design of live brand communications provides a highly engaging point of interaction for many audiences – from consumers to brand stakeholders. It is as integral a part of our redefinition of retail as designing a store, a brand identity or a new product; the same thinking applies and the experience is just as vivid", says Richard Bamford, Managing Director of PCI Fitch. New corporate identity Signalling this move from a network of brands to one, integrated entity, Fitch has created a new corporate identity and simplified its name structure. The new identity is simple yet confident, expressed with a new, brighter colour palette. The company's eighteen studios in 11 countries will be known simply as Fitch with three exceptions: live brand communications studio Pci:Live transitions to PCI Fitch, the Asia Pacific studios will remain as Underline Fitch and specialist trend forecasting agency, Peclers Paris will retain its name. Fitch's website, www.fitch.com, and all core collateral have been completely redesigned to showcase this new identity and positioning.

Fitch film

Fitch has brought its philosophy on redefining retail to life in a new film produced and directed by PCI Fitch. Shot on location in the US and Europe, it captures the essence of redefining retail from the perspectives of Fitch associates in Seattle, Columbus, London and Paris. The Fitch film was broadcast to Fitch associates on 27 April and will be released shortly for viewing on the new website www.fitch.com and WPP intranet.

Global Studio Creative Forum

A key initiative has been to set up a global creative forum. "As designers, we have a responsibility to deliver experiences that enhance consumers' lives at every point of interaction - whether it's through a store, a website, a product or packaging." says Tim Greenhalgh, Managing Partner of the Fitch studio in London. "The Creative Forum has been set up to bring our creatives together from every discipline, culture and region with the goal of embedding the redefining retail philosophy among all Fitch associates. Our task will be to stimulate new thinking and insights about consumers that will continue to improve the quality of our creative work and encourage creative collaboration that inspires our associates for today as well as for the future".

Fitch may have a new vision and philosophy but at its heart are the same values upon which it was founded 30 years ago. "The combination of our consumer-centric approach alongside our understanding of today's brand landscape perfectly positions us to redefine retail in order to both enhance consumers' lives through design and deliver commercial results to our clients", says Sue Nixon, CEO of Fitch's Seattle studio. "Throughout our history, we have been defining and redefining design as a business and social tool. Our purpose is every bit as relevant for today's world and for the future as it was when Fitch was founded in the 1970s, perhaps even more so."