

TDL | CREATIVE

TDL-CREATIVE

YEAR IN REVIEW 2019/20



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our first 'Year in Review' report, providing you highlights of 2019 through 2020 and opening the door to life at TDL. During the uncertain start to this year, we've been crunching the data and have some interesting insights into bid design, including trends in on-site working, and what you want your diagrams to do within bids.

The format and delivery of this Year in Review is an experiment for us. Throughout last year we've been growing our digital capabilities and knowledge, looking at how information design can be applied in the digital space and providing innovative, user-centric solutions for our clients. This review is designed to showcase our developments and potentially inspire our clients to do something similar along side their annual reports.

Our team values and journey to achieve our vision statements have both been key elements in our evolution during the past year. The feedback we get from clients reaffirms we are on the right track as we keep reading 'responsive and reliable'; and, most importantly to me, are the comments that our team are just great to work with! So please take a moment to read through, and thanks for your continued support and interest in what we do.



OLIVER TOMLINSON
CEO & FOUNDER

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OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

10,942

DIAGRAMS COMPLETED

3

NEW SECTORS



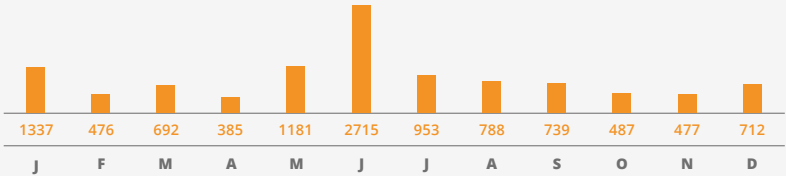
AVIATION



HOUSING



HOSPITALITY



10,861

HOURS BILLED

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

678

DIAGRAMS IN OUR
BIGGEST PROJECT

17

NEW
CLIENTS

277

DAYS IN
CLIENT OFFICES

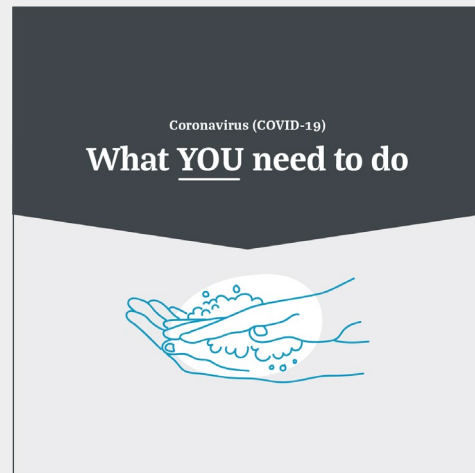


BUSINESS AS UNUSUAL

Things at the start of 2020 have been different to say the least! As a company we were able to adapt to the 'new normal', making use of systems we already had in place. Our whole team were equipped to work at home, partly due to our remote working service. Everyone had a laptop, remote access to files and most importantly software so we could all communicate (even managing to squeeze in a couple of Friday drinks!).

Being responsive and reliable is a key value of ours, and during these months we have made sure we live up to that more than ever. We are grateful to have had a steady flow of work coming in, but our thoughts go out to those companies that have not been so lucky.

When we've had a spare moment we have been working on a range of things to continually improve - from online talks and learning new skills to the infographic on what to do during the start of the pandemic. Hopefully things are on the up now, and we can look forward to better times knowing that this experience has made us stronger.



FULFILLING OUR VALUES



CREATIVE & INNOVATIVE

To provide creative solutions, we look for new and improved ways to solve problems.

We're continuing to push the boundaries of our work, whether it's through theory, technique or medium. This year we've been exploring the use of isometric projections in bid diagrams, design systems (a collection of rules and principles for implementing a design), and we have been working on a project with the University of Reading.



ENTHUSIASTIC TEAM

Colleagues and clients enjoy working with us; we are an inspiration to others.

Throughout the year the team has continued to show why we're one of the best agencies in the field of bid design; our work ethic and personality. We welcomed [Jake](#) who continues to show he's a great addition through great work and terrible jokes.



RESPONSIVE & RELIABLE

People know and trust we will do the things we promise; to a high quality and with punctual delivery.

Being responsive and reliable is probably one of the things we're most known for, and this year that has never been more important. The start to 2020 has been unique, but we're pretty used to dealing with last minute requests and tight deadlines! This year Dave was kept busy with bid diagrams right up until Christmas - even missing a bit of our party to help a client get their bid over the line!

TOWARDS OUR VISION



A WORLD LEADER IN DESIGN FOR UNDERSTANDING

Over the past year we've continued to drive ourselves forward in the field of information design. We focussed on two key initiatives; instructional design and digital design. Through projects and research in these two areas we expanded our services and skills, whilst also using them to support our core offering of bid design. The rest of this year continues to be exciting with the release of something we've been working on over the past couple of years; The Diagram Library is here at last!

Three of our projects were also recognised by the [International Institute of Information Design \(IIID\)](#) as outstanding examples of work. You can read more about those [here](#).



A HUB FOR LEARNING & SHARING DESIGN KNOWLEDGE

We've always been advocates of learning at TDL and sharing our knowledge whenever we can. One of the biggest highlights for this vision was attending the first [Encode Conference](#). The event was full of inspiring and interesting speakers from a variety of fields all linked by Data - we'd recommend going to their next one!

We also topped up our learning throughout the year with smaller events put on by the teams at [Glug](#) and [It's Nicer Tuesdays](#).



POSITIVELY IMPACTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

Our studio is pretty small (there are only 10 of us!) but we still try and do our bit for the environment. This year we started with the little things, switching our cleaning products to those that are more environmentally friendly. We also did a bit of experimenting with some left over coffee grounds, which you can read more about [here](#). Thinking ahead to 2020 we are looking for ways to offset our carbon footprint - potentially by planting some trees!

TOWARDS OUR VISION



THE BEST PLACE TO WORK & INSPIRE CREATIVITY

This year we've made several strides forward in making TDL the best place to work. Earlier in the year we did a staff survey to help identify where we could improve and as a bit of self reflection.

We also had a big focus on wellbeing with the introduction of a weekly Pilates class and helping the team with the Cycle to Work Scheme. To contrast with the healthy changes in the studio we also had a great time at our annual parties. At our Summer Party we found out that Amber was our resident Robin Hood during an archery class and at the Christmas Party Tom came through on his bowling claims, taking an overall victory (although later losing to Sammi on Dance Dance Revolution). Top of the list for later this year is studio improvements - watch this space!



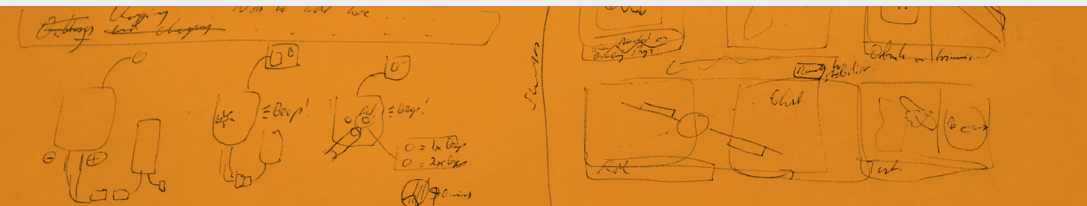
ENABLING POSITIVE CHANGE THROUGH GOOD DESIGN

Doing design for good causes is definitely a passion of the team at TDL. It's just about finding exactly the right project where we can maximise our information design experience to really make a difference.

This year we worked with one of our international development clients, DAI, on a [report](#) on campaigning and promoting better working conditions for women in North Africa and the Middle East.

Throughout the year we have also supported community and cultural projects through our pro bono scheme. This included work on the Herefordshire Cultural Strategy document which you can have a more in-depth look at [here](#).

LAST YEAR'S INITIATIVES



INSTRUCTION MANUALS

Some of the purest forms of information design that we see everyday are instruction manuals and user guides. They are such a commonly utilised format of communicating; but they aren't always done as well as they could be (we've all had that confused face trying to put together some furniture).

We have done instruction projects in the past ([Syria Leaflet](#)) but decided to actively seek out work in this area. To get instruction manuals right takes time, testing and patience – client collaboration is required to understand projects from the user perspective. We successfully completed a few projects over the year which we are really proud of, including one that was shortlisted for an award. You can find out more on them and the process we went through by clicking the buttons to the right.

LAST YEAR'S INITIATIVES



DIGITAL

Over the past year we have committed to strengthening our digital capabilities. As the range of our projects grow, we want to continue to build our services and apply our way of thinking to a new medium.

[Craig](#) became our Head of Digital Design and was tasked with identifying how we could implement our information-led approach in our new service.

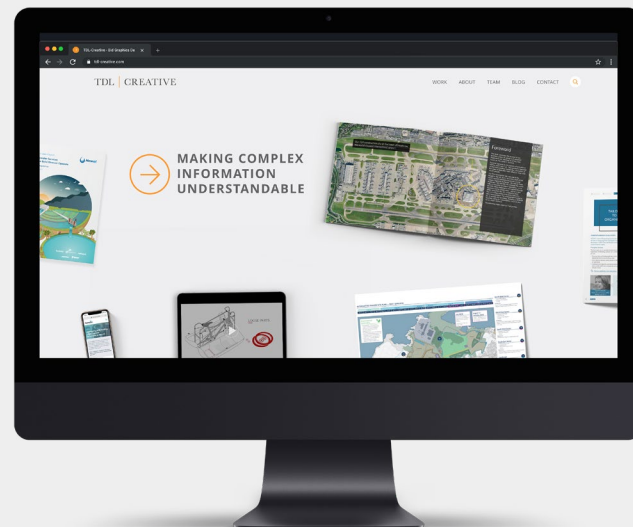
Throughout the past year we have been trying to balance taking on new projects and some of our own experiments, but it has proven tough to do the latter! With a whole host of new Digital client projects coming in, it's been a busy start to this new venture. If you want to check out some of the things we've been working on, click the buttons to the right.

OUR NEW WEBSITE

LAUNCHING OUR NEW DIGITAL IMAGE

Part of what spurred our digital initiative has been the development of our own site. It's taken a lot of refinement, but in 2019 we finally launched our new site. We've taken a new approach and made it easier to understand the range of services we now offer, along with a much more visual way of showing our work.

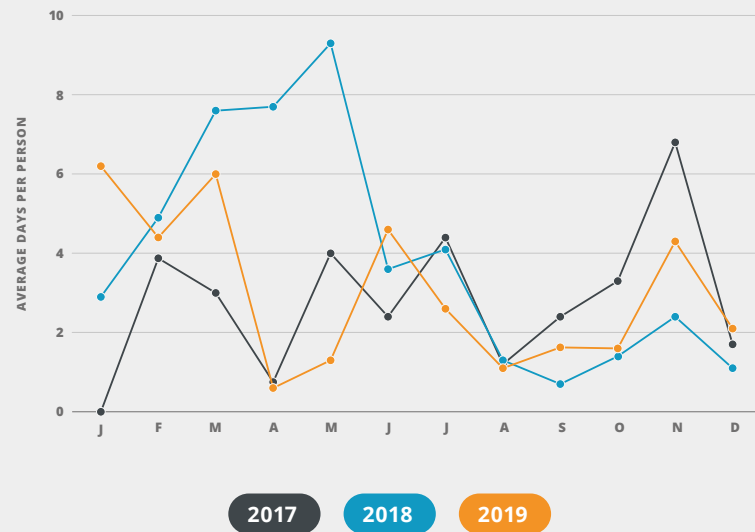
If you haven't had a chance to take a look yet, why not click the link below and find out a bit more about us.



TDL WORKING ON SITE

In our opinion, working as part of a project team is the most efficient way to work, especially when on a tender. Our designers often go out to work on site at client offices, sometimes for weeks at a time to help get bids submitted. Being based on site allows us to ask questions quickly, sketch ideas with subject experts and writers and workshop concepts in meetings. Over the past 3 years we've recorded the number of days that the team spends out of the studio in client offices to try and understand if there is a pattern or cycle. Our team has grown and changed over time, so we've created an average number of days out per person each month so we can compare the data over the three years.

Looking at the chart as a whole you can see the waves of work that we associate with bidding. Throughout the year there are peaks and troughs as we work towards submission dates. One time period in particular stands out – May 2018. This was the HS2 Stations submission, where at one point we had four designers working on the tender diagrams to make sure that everything was completed at the highest quality.

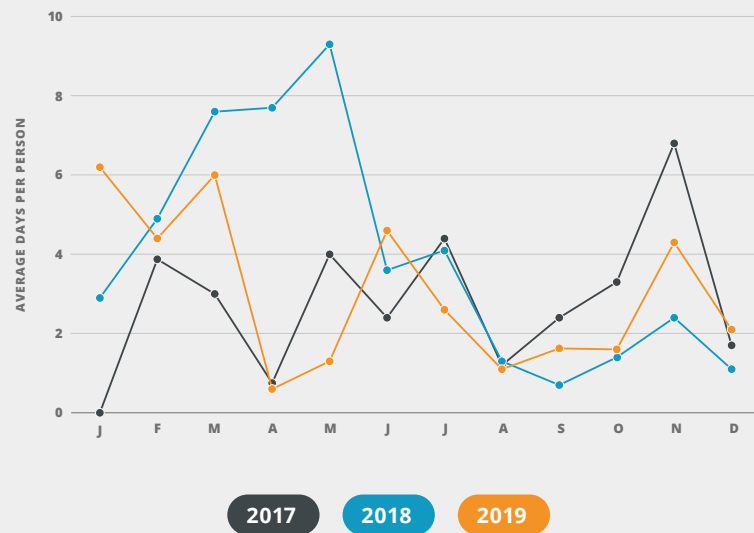


INSIGHTS

Our experience working on these [mega bids](#) and finding the ways to be efficient allow us to work under these pressured circumstances and resource appropriately. One identifiable trend is the clear slow down towards Christmas; from November to December every year you can see a downwards slope. Although our workload doesn't necessarily lessen, we go out to client offices less. It's only when we get to February where the workload starts to properly scale up across each year as everyone gets back into gear after the break.

The graph shows that our workload and time in and out of client offices can be quite erratic, changing throughout the year, and as a company we pride ourselves on being adaptable to those circumstances. Our ability to accommodate and be responsive to these changing circumstances is one of the reasons we are so reliable.

If you'd like to explore the data a little more the best way to view this graph is on our [website](#).

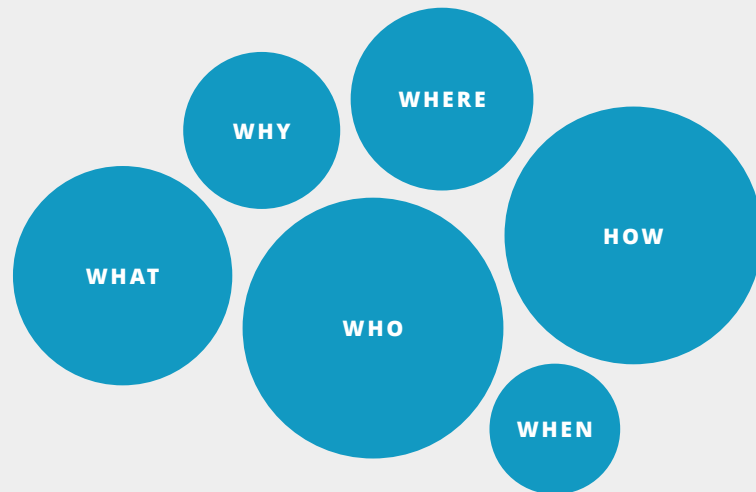


Please note we have excluded 2020 from this data set due to the pandemic.

WHICH DIAGRAMS DO YOU USE THE MOST

One of the key questions we always ask our clients when we are designing diagrams is 'What are you trying to show?'. Identifying the core reasoning behind a design concept helps to ensure a clearer result and can help us decide on which solution might be best suited to answering that particular question. We design lots of diagrams (thousands!), and often intentionally, and perhaps unintentionally, create patterns in the ways that we solve challenges. These are often based on successful understanding of those finished diagrams based on both our experience, research and sometimes specification.

To further understand these patterns and the frequency in which certain diagrams are used we did a data collection exercise on our diagrams from the past year across a range of different types of projects, from bids and tenders to marketing materials and websites. Each type of diagram serves a key question function; for example, organisation charts are focused on showing 'who' even though they may contain additional information which alludes to where

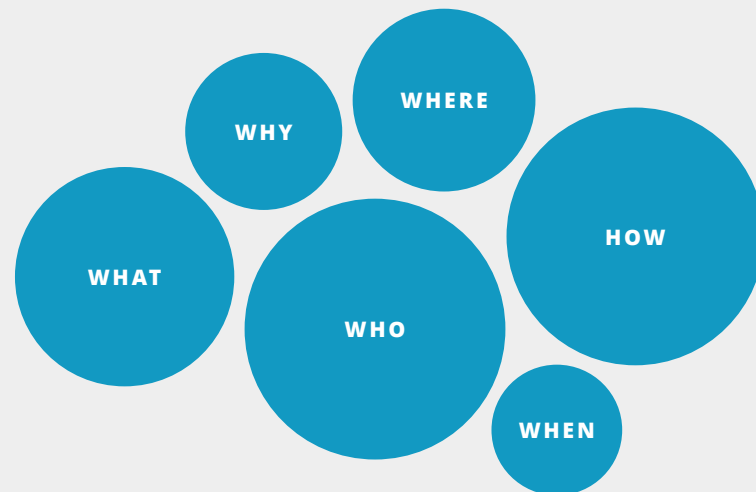


INSIGHTS

or what those people might be doing. Diagram types are therefore sorted into those categories to give an overall impression of which questions diagrams answer most frequently.

You can see that the most prevalent categories are 'Who' (26.4%) and 'How' (25.7%). Considering our core delivery service is [Bids and Tenders](#), this is unsurprising. Organisation charts and processes are key elements in tender submissions, helping to communicate to the client about who will be delivering the project and how it will be delivered. The largest diagram type that we use is process charts, which form part of the how category. The versatility of process makes them a consistent asset that we use, often distilling and clarifying what would be a chunky block of text.

If you would like to explore more of the information in the chart view it on our [website](#).





WELCOME TO OUR NEW STARTER **JAKE POLLOCK**

Jake joined us in August straight from the University of Reading. He's got a passion for user-centric design, approaching projects with a creative and inquisitive mindset.

Working on several projects already, Jake's got a good understanding of what it takes to create informative diagrams and how to work closely with clients to truly understand what they are trying to convey.

Outside of the office he's proven himself as a winning quiz team member and an impressive pool player.

If you want to learn more about Jake you can check out his team profile [here](#) and his Q&A session [here](#).



THIS YEARS ADVENTURES



THIS YEARS ADVENTURES



AWARDS

WE ARE AWARD WINNERS!

Since 2014, we've been members of [International Institute of Information Design \(IIID\)](#), a passionate group of fellow information designers. Every three years IIID offer the opportunity to take part in their awards, selecting and promoting outstanding work in information design.

This year we entered six projects and we were delighted to find out three of our projects received recognition!

Our recognised projects were:

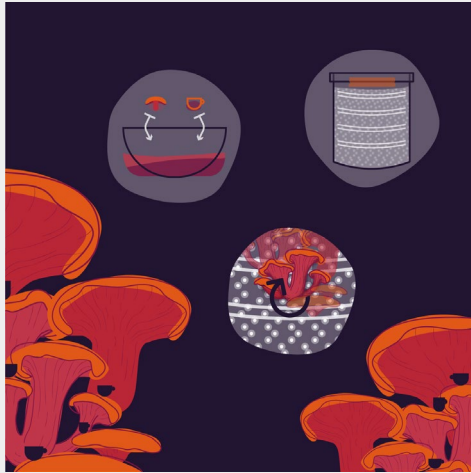
- [Bike Bag User Instructions](#): **Shortlisted** in the Products and Services Category
An informative illustrated guide on how to use Douchebags Savage Bike Bag.
- Sea Wall Construction Methods: **Bronze Award** in the Corporate Design and Communication Category
Helping to visualise construction methods through the use of isometric diagrams.
- [ForwardThinking Visual Summaries](#): **Gold Award** in the Future Concepts Category
Transforming meeting notes into innovative infographic summaries.

We're very proud to have been recognised in this way, and look forward to submitting more projects in the future.

You can read more about all of our submissions in our [blog post](#).



THE EXTRA BITS WE WORK ON



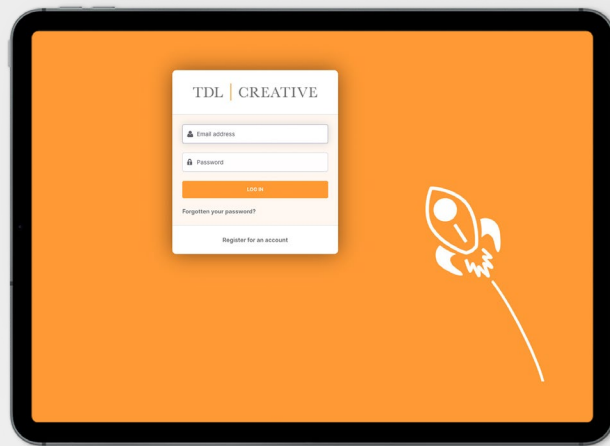
THE FUTURE

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO

Well 2020 has already got off to a challenging start, with everything going on around the world and now more locally at home, whether it be climate, peculiar weather or viruses. It will be interesting to see how we spend our pro-bono pot to enable positive change through good design.

We will continue to grow our digital offering, using the latest innovative approaches to produce information design that breaks down complexity, informing so we can understand, enabling us to make decisions, instructing how to carry out tasks, and exciting readers to promote engagement.

To grow our offerings and continue to deliver the service our clients expect, we are excited about expanding our team in 2020. Watch out for some recruitment adverts published soon, and hopefully you'll see some new faces on the team page this time next year.



MAKING INFORMATION UNDERSTANDABLE

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CORPORATE MEMBERS OF:

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for Information Design

IDA International Design
Association

