



Word↑ree

Got something important to say?

This is how you make people listen - even when your subject matter is complex...

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01

GETTING YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS

You've got an important message to get across. Maybe you need clients and customers to buy into your ideas and be motivated to buy your products and services. Or you might need your colleagues to be aware of new processes or regulations.

If you could just make people understand as much as you do, your business would benefit hugely.

But getting people to understand and be convinced and excited by your proposition can be especially difficult if your subject matter is complex.

At Wordtree, we help organisations all over the world get outstanding results by turning their communications around.

This guide shares some of the things we've learned over decades of helping B2B and B2C organisations get their audiences excited by complex subject matter. It shows you how to make a real difference and get results by making your communications clear, interesting and game-changing.

01

DO ANY OF THESE DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANISATION?

- You operate in a regulated environment and you *have* to say certain things in certain ways
- There is a high level of legal input into the information you're trying to convey
- You and your team understand your proposition, and you've lost sight of what people without your specialism understand
- A lot of people are involved in creating your information and you feel you have to keep them all happy
- No-one in your organisation fully understands exactly how your thing works, so all you can do is keep using the descriptions you've inherited
- Your offer is just complex - with many moving parts. It does so many things in so many ways... and the technology it's based on is really, really complex
- You just can't switch off speaking like a consultant/lawyer/IT specialist...

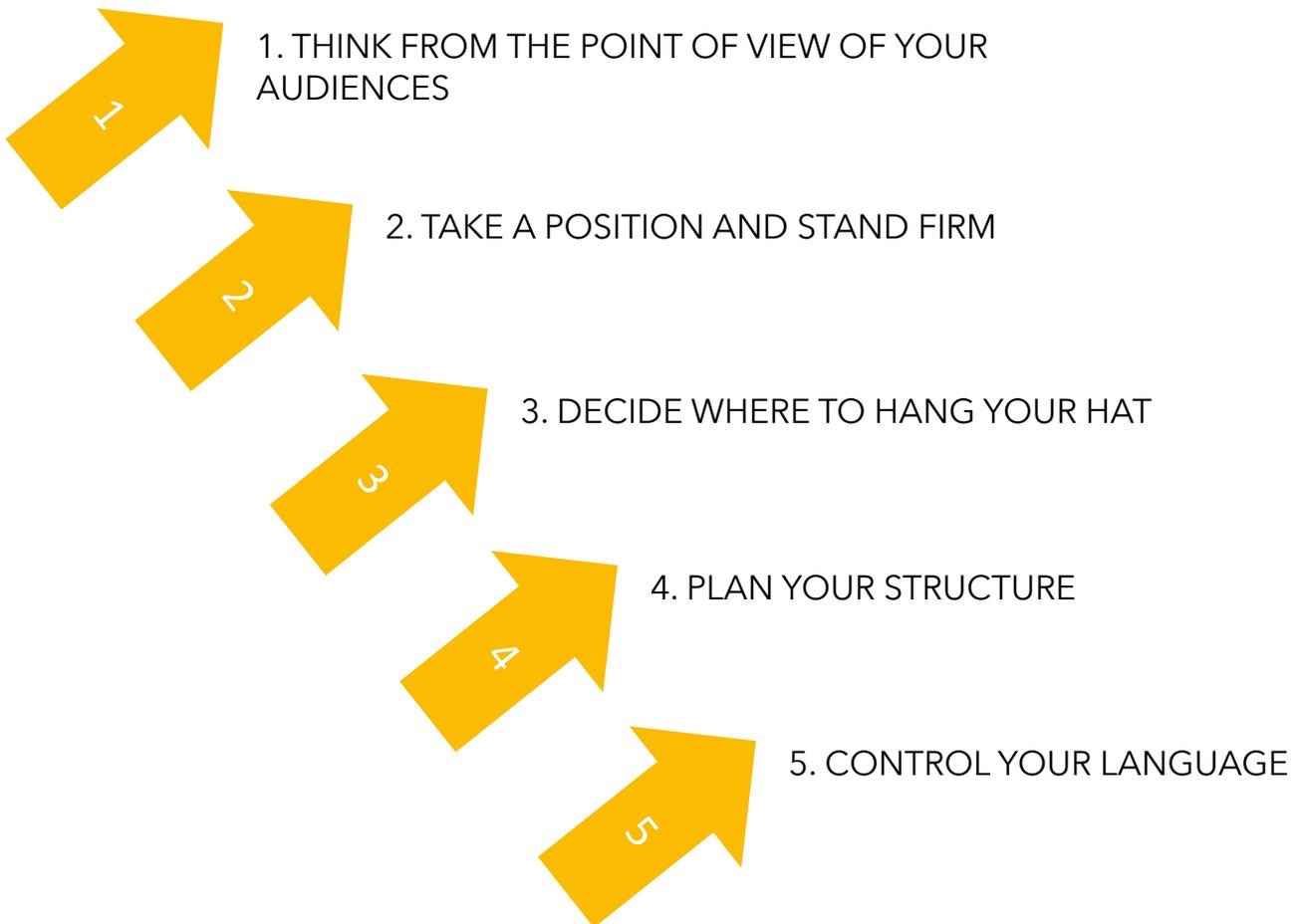
**IF THEY DO, HERE'S
THE GOOD NEWS:
YOU CAN
OVERCOME ALL
THESE CHALLENGES**



**HOW TO TURN
COMPLEX
COMMUNICATIONS
INTO BUSINESS-
TRANSFORMING
ASSETS**



HOW TO TURN COMPLEX COMMUNICATIONS INTO BUSINESS-TRANSFORMING ASSETS



1. THINK FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF YOUR AUDIENCES

You have information you need to get other people interested in and motivated by.

Congratulations! You're a commercial communicator. Which means you have to start thinking about what you write and the way you write it in a slightly different way.

Who are your audiences?

What do they need? What challenges are they facing? How will your offer solve these challenges and make their lives simpler, better or more exciting? If you know this from the outset, your communication will instantly be more interesting and relevant.

So before you start, think about your audiences and make a list of what they need and the challenges they're facing. It will help you craft a communication that cuts through and makes them listen.

Check out the case studies section on page 14.

REMEMBER...

You're a commercial communicator

So stop trying to write university essays. Instead, get to the point, from the point of view of your audiences.

So it's not about you

Or what you know or how you like to see things presented.

It's about your audiences

And what they want and need.



2. TAKE A POSITION AND STAND FIRM

Before you start writing, you need to think about how you can stand out from your competitors.

You're not the only player vying for your audience's attention. So you need to stake out your territory.

Even if you're the only people doing the thing you do right now, that won't always be the case. In fact, if your offer is brilliant, you can be sure people will copy it.

If your audiences are your colleagues, the same applies.

So you need to make sure your audience knows there are benefits in reading your information.

Think about your relationship to your audiences

Are you an enabler? Are you going to be their partner in innovation? Are you going to be a strategic annex for your customers?

Knowing what your relationship to your readers is will help you stand out.

Make sure they know what's in it for them

Just because you've sent someone information, it doesn't mean they'll read it or remember it.

You stand a far better chance of people reading and acting on your information if you've spelled out what the benefits of having a relationship with you are.

If you're selling anti-dandruff shampoo, the benefits of making a commitment to your brand rather than anyone else's might include a position of, *Giving you confidence.*

If you're an HR or risk management team trying to get your colleagues to

understand and abide by workplace policies, the same principle applies.

Don't just give the information. Instead make it clear that your team is your colleagues' partner in (for example) *getting things right first time.*

Stick to your position in all your communications.

3. DECIDE WHERE TO HANG YOUR HAT

There are often dozens of things to say about new products and services.

Even something like an anti-dandruff shampoo will have many things to say:

- Eliminates dandruff
- Soothes your scalp
- Makes hair shiny and manageable
- Developed in a Swiss laboratory
- Used by fashion models and rock stars

And in fact, there is probably a sub-set of things to say under each of these bullet points. If you're launching a new tech offer, your list of bullet points may be much longer still.

You can't say everything at once

If you try to, you're just going to confuse your audience and make them switch off. Instead of wowing them with your amazing new product, you've made yourself instantly forgettable.

So as difficult as it can be, you have to decide on your main message – and stick with it.

How do you decide which message to hang your hat on?

This is a lot easier if you've already decided what your position is. In the shampoo example, if you're going for a young, celebrity-aware audience, your position might be: *Star quality, every day*. This means your last bullet point is your main message.

What about B2B?

Let's say you're launching smart technology for industrial greenhouses that regulates humidity and temperature.

You've decided your position is: *Helping you nurture, whatever nature throws at you*.

You will most likely have scores of messages, but let's imagine they include:

- Advanced machine learning technology
- Linked to weather satellites
- Soil temperature control
- Ambient temperature control
- Humidity control
- Plant health image recognition

Your positioning should tell you that your most important messages are about "control". Because your customer can only nurture if they have control.

Similarly, if you're a risk team that needs colleagues to incorporate workplace policy into everyday working practice, it's much easier to choose which messages come first if you've chosen a position like *getting things right first time*.

You can then start each document with a benefit: why this policy helps you get it right first time.

4. PLAN YOUR STRUCTURE

If you've followed steps 1-3, planning your structure should be straightforward. For example, if you're the smart greenhouse tech company, your communication will:

1. Start with a message about *taking control so that you can nurture*
2. Go on to explain all the ways in which customers can take control
3. Then, and only then, explain the technology and why it's better than what competitors offer

If you're the risk manager who needs to get all her colleagues on board with a workplace policy, it will start with a message about *helping you increase efficiencies and meet your targets*. Then you can follow with sub-sections that describe what your colleagues must and must not do in certain situations.

Never stop thinking about what your audiences need

The key to structuring a document - however long or short - is to order your information according to what your audiences will find most useful to know. Greenhouse tech customers are most interested in control. Colleagues are most interested in what will help them hit targets and get things right first time.



5. CONTROL YOUR LANGUAGE

Remember, human brains are simply not hardwired to engage with complexity – not unless they have an incredibly good reason to do so.

So don't make your language difficult to engage with. This doesn't mean "dumbing down". It means being smart and enhancing your chances of making what you've got to say lodge firmly in your audiences' brains.

Here are some tips from the professional communicators at Wordtree:

1. Short words pack a punch

Don't say "expedient" instead of "quick" or "utilise" instead of "use". You've got something complex to say – so don't use up your audience's bandwidth with unnecessarily long words.

2. Short sentences give your messages wings

If you can't say a sentence out loud in one breath, it's too long.

3. Try not to say more than two things in one sentence

If you feed information one piece at a time, it will flow. If you try to say everything at once, you'll get a log jam of information that will confuse your readers.

4. Avoid repetition

It takes a lot of energy to think – and our brains are designed to go onto autopilot when things become predictable. So try not to switch your audiences' brains onto autopilot by using the same words over and over.

5. Would your mother understand?

Unless she works in exactly the same industry as you, your mum may not understand the jargon you use every day. So before you write anything down, think about how to phrase it in a way your mum would understand.

5. Signpost

Use clear, unambiguous titles and sub-headings so that even someone skimming your document gets broadly the right information from it. They may then commit to reading it properly.

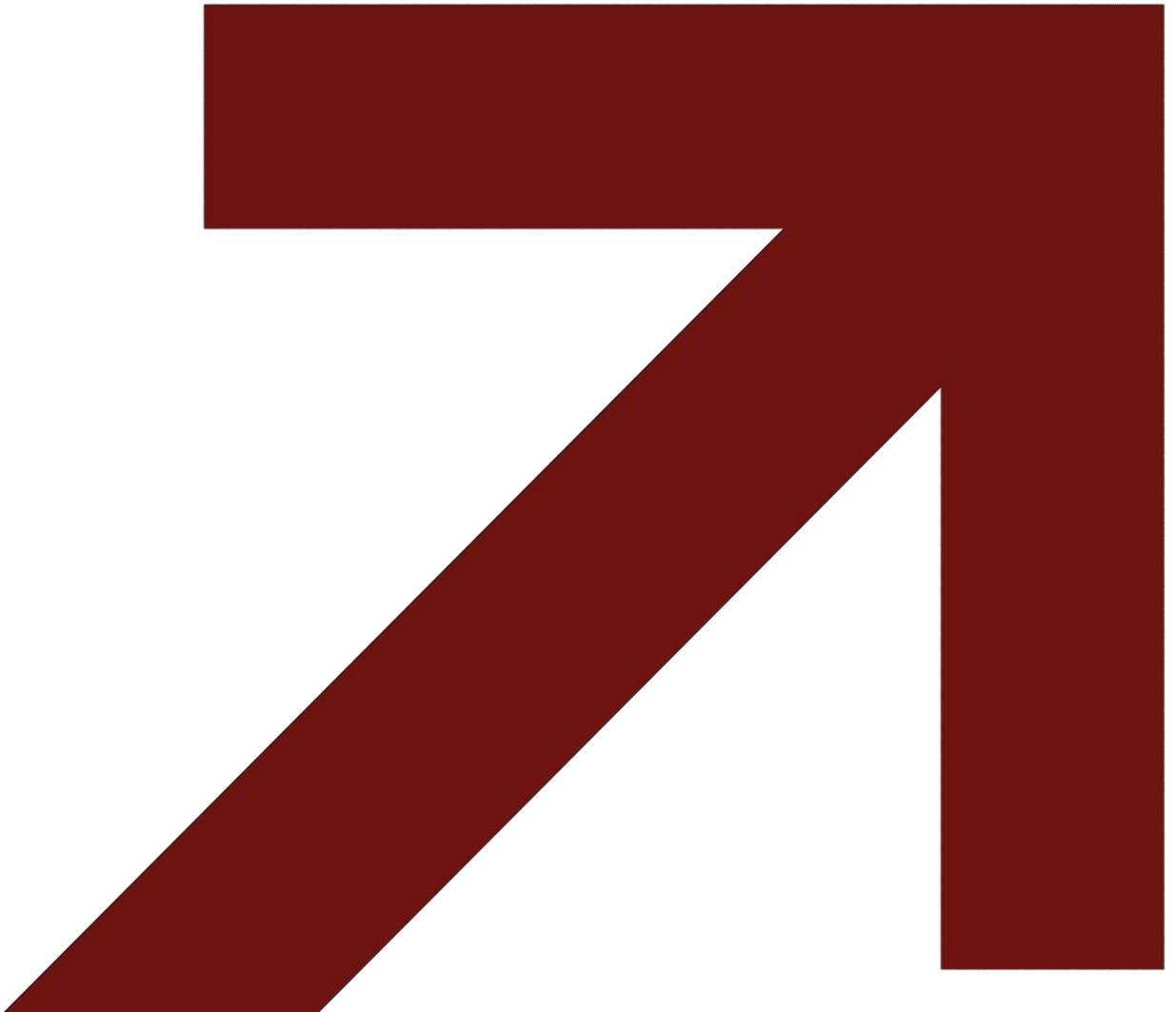
6. When you've finished, read it out loud to yourself

If you stumble over certain words, that's a clear sign your audiences will stumble over them too. So stop and rewrite. Reading out loud is a good way to spot repetition too.

7. Don't be precious

The point of a commercial communication isn't to impress a teacher or show how clever you are. It's all about getting people to know and do the things you want them to. So be prepared to hack away sentences that don't really need to be there. Be prepared to change to the simpler word. Don't let yourself stand in the way of getting results.

THE WORDTREE APPROACH



03

THE WORDTREE APPROACH: CREATIVE AND METHODOICAL

It's unusual to find individuals who are both creative and methodical. The ability to join ideas together and create something new and exciting rarely goes hand-in-hand with the ability to categorise, prioritise, segment and order.

Yet you'll find both of those abilities co-existing in every Wordtree person.

It's what allows us to take even the most complex subject matter and turn it into fascinating communications that transform the way your clients think about your organisation - and the way they use it.

We work with clients across the world who deal with tricky subject matter. The sectors we work in include professional services, energy, financial services and fintech and technology. Often, our clients work in industries where regulation is a consideration.

Our approach is collaborative and consultative. We share ideas and we work with you to get the best results from a brief - making the suggestions we think will get the best results.

A team of very smart creative thinkers and doers who approached the problem from angles we'd never even considered. Such depth of thought and creativity just instils confidence. I felt able to take ideas and concepts further internally, knowing they were watertight and right for the business.

Nick Van Noorden
Group Head of Marketing, Tellermate



EXAMPLES OF OUR WORK



04 CASE STUDY

ASH PROJECTS

ASH has been in operation since the early 2000s, installing software and systems into mass multiple retail environments. When they launched, they were installing EPOS systems at checkouts, electronic doors and VOIP.

But as technology has progressed, so has ASH. They now also install sophisticated software that allows store managers to see how customers are moving through their stores. This helps organisations to better understand display effectiveness - and with facial recognition software, even identify customer emotion as they browse.

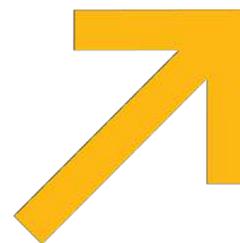
This meant that when the organisation first contacted us in 2013, their client base had changed. They were no longer dealing with the IT team. Instead, they needed to make their offer understandable and compelling to marketers and customer experience professionals, who were keen to develop as deep an understanding as possible of their consumers.

ASH were proud that their customer service was second-to-none. But we suspected there was a better story to tell their new clients.

**MAKING A
TECHNICAL OFFER
TANGIBLE FOR A
NEW TYPE OF
CLIENT**



04 ASH PROJECTS CONTINUED



WHAT WE DID

We held brand workshops with the ASH team to dig down into the organisation's story.

It became clear that they were more than competent technicians. They are strategic partners who can take their retail clients' needs and ambitions and translate them into workable, scalable systems to help them get results.

They're interested in what their clients want to achieve - and because they are so passionate about retail, they can offer solutions their clients often don't know are possible.

We took all this information and distilled it down into a differentiating story based on the line: ***Closer to your customer***

It works as a promise to their retail clients - who get the technology to give them a joined-up view of their customers' preferences, behaviors and purchasing in store. It also gives a strong nod to ASH's excellent customer service.

TONE OF VOICE

We created a distinctive tone of voice that allowed ASH to tell its story to wider audiences. The guidelines were straightforward and allowed agencies and their own team to communicate with a single voice.

MESSAGING

We encouraged ASH to move from a technical, features-focused style of communication towards a more benefits-driven approach.

So rather than launching into specific technologies, ASH now describes its activities more tangibly, with clear signposting like:

- At head office
- Through the store
- At the checkout

This makes their offer relevant and tangible to a much wider audience.

We restructured and rewrote the company's website in this way.

INFORMING DESIGN

We worked closely with ASH's preferred design partners to help them interpret the brand story visually.

ASH didn't want to radically change its visual identity, so we helped to make sure that it evolved to convey connectedness and closeness to customers. We also wanted to be sure that navigating ASH's new website was as easy as working with them.

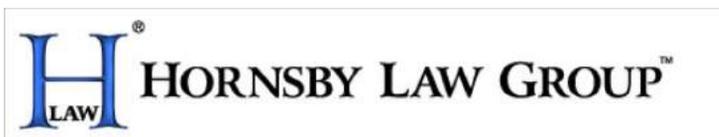
RESULTS

Since the new brand identity and website have launched, ASH has opened offices in the USA, Australia and Vietnam. They've been able to tell their story easily at events including the National Retail Forum in New York. Their business goes from strength to strength.

"Wordtree has enabled us to harness a base of clients and use the platform to get them "closer to their customers". You nailed it - it's amazing how accurate your insight was. I'm looking forward to our next campaign together!" **Alison Ashurst, MD, ASH Projects**

04 CASE STUDY

HORNSBY LAW GROUP



THE CHALLENGE

If you were to discover that your employer - or an organisation you were working closely with - was committing fraud against the government, what would you do?

In the USA, whistleblower law can be fragmented and difficult to understand - at both state and federal level.

Atlanta-based law firm Hornsby Law Group (HLG) asked us to help them communicate this complex area of law when they set up a whistleblower practice. For this particular project, they wanted us to write several hundred pages of content for their website.

The brief was this: The content should feel clear and reassuring to people facing a very difficult dilemma in their lives. The pages also had to be fully SEO optimised.

WHAT WE DID

We'd already established a brand and tone of voice for HLG - and we used this to inform the narrative of the web copy.

We took complex legal information and translated it into language that's easily accessible to ordinary citizens - while maintaining its integrity. We wrote more than 200 pages of copy explaining every element of whistleblower law - and how HLG helps its clients navigate the complex world of whistleblowing.

Of course, before potential clients can read this information they need to be able to find it. We created a comprehensive SEO strategy, incorporating key words and phrases into each page to make them fully optimised. We also developed an editorial schedule of blog pieces and case studies to keep the web content fresh and relevant.

Even though we completed most of this work remotely, we developed a very close working relationship with the partners at HLG throughout this project, successfully accommodating time and cultural differences.

04 HORNSBY LAW GROUP CONTINUED

RESULTS

The whistleblower website is under development and will launch later this year. We hope to see immediate results.

The website will show potential whistleblowers how the law is relevant to them - and makes sure they fully understand what the ramifications of blowing the whistle might be for them and their families.

“Simply the best! If you’re looking for a team that can translate complex information into interesting and understandable copy, look no further. Liz and the Wordtree team not only know how to deliver great copy - they’re a pleasure to work with and make the entire process approachable and enjoyable.”

Brandon Hornsby
President, Hornsby Law Group

04

**CASE
STUDY**

SOVEREIGN WEALTH FUND

THE CHALLENGE

How many people working in corporate environments truly know and understand their organisation's policies? How many would be able to easily refer to policy documentation to help them make decisions? This challenge faces compliance and risk teams the world over. How do you get everyone in your organisation to engage with policy and make it a part of the way they do business? Our client - a sovereign wealth fund - was facing this exact situation.



**GETTING TEAMS
TO ENGAGE -
AND CONFORM
WITH - POLICY**

04

**CASE
STUDY****SOVEREIGN WEALTH
FUND CONTINUED**

As a financial institution, it was imperative that its teams adhere to the letter of its policies – on everything from bribery and corruption, through to sanctions and cyber security. Yet the documents were heavy, legalistic, repetitive and often lacking structure.

Another challenge was that many of the Fund’s employees and suppliers come from international backgrounds and do not have English as a first language.

A further challenge was the tight turnaround time required.

WHAT WE DID***Immersion***

To start any project, we get up on our client’s organisation – because we believe successful pieces of work can only be created in context. We familiarised ourselves with the aims, activities and culture of the Fund.

Editorial overview

We then read through all of the documents, highlighting areas of overlap and repetition and getting a feel for the steps that would need to be taken to make them more navigable and useable.

Establishing a common structure

The policies had all been authored separately – sometimes by one individual and sometimes by many teams. This led to a lack of narrative structure – in other words, to text that sometimes meandered and looped back on itself, and that often

did not flow.

From one document to the next – and sometimes from one paragraph to the next – structure, formatting, language and tone differed. This was making reading the documents and finding what you needed in them difficult.

We established a common structure for the documents, and a clear hierarchy for the information they contain. This was to make it super-easy for teams to get directly to the information they needed.

Rewriting

The organisation had no established or documented tone of voice. We decided the best approach was to convey conservative authority with the language – but to keep the sentences and paragraphs relatively short and easy to read.

Our client wanted the documents to be written in American English. In addition to this, we adopted an “International English” approach. This involves writing without idiom or anything even approaching vernacular. The challenging of doing this is that without really careful attention and crafting, text can become flat and boring. So we called on our huge experience in writing communications in International English to make the documents engaging and interesting.

04

**CASE
STUDY****SOVEREIGN WEALTH
FUND CONTINUED**

Liaising with our client

Despite working in different time zones, we liaised regularly and productively with our client – and forged close relationships with their external consultants. This meant we could get answers to questions quickly and efficiently. It also meant we could accommodate last-minute changes easily.

Effective project management

With almost 20 documents – totalling almost 100,000 words – being written closely together, tight project management was essential. Our PM worked closely with our writers to ensure we met – or got ahead of – all deadlines. We sent regular updates to our clients, reminding them of feedback cycles and adjusting timescales whenever they needed to.

WERE THERE ANY SNAGS?

Midway through the project, the USA updated its laws on sanctions. We helped our client to identify the areas of the policies affected and suggested updated wording. This was then cleared with their legal counsel – and still made the deadline.

RESULTS

The suite of 17 policy documents is now easy to access – and enjoyable, interesting and informative to read. Their tone is authoritative, yet approachable. Critically, they are understood, referred to and used on a daily basis to keep the organisation compliant in all the areas of the world where it operates and invests.

The organisation's policy documents no longer just sit on a shelf. Their contents are known to everyone and are used as part of everyday working life.

**TALK TO
US**



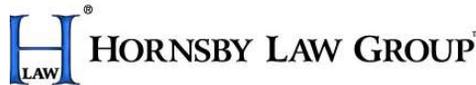
05 TALK TO US

If you'd like to talk to us about your complex subject matter, we'd love to help.

Here are some of the other organisations we've worked with to turn their complex communications into game-changing business assets...

05

SOME OF OUR OTHER CLIENTS





Word↑ree

EMAIL AND WEBSITE

wordtree.com
info@wordtree.com

PHONE

+ 44 (0)2920 494307
0800 1223 770

POSTAL ADDRESS

The Old Joinery
Cardiff
CF14 5EA
UK