

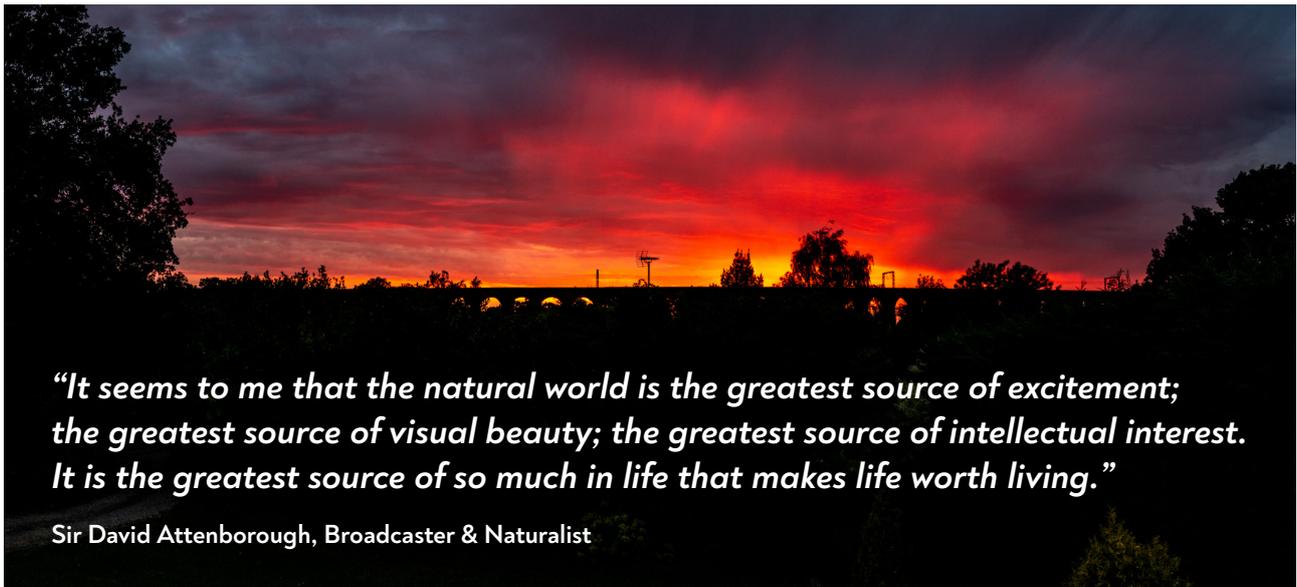
*Why?*

# KNOWING.EARTH



LittleBigFish

In 2017, LittleBigFish created a brand for a geology consultancy that wanted to take a new direction. The oil industry was waking up to its own systemic transformation or ‘transition’ and this new consultancy recognised that a ‘more-of-the-same’ approach simply wasn’t going to be enough. This is the story of how and why Knowing.Earth was created.



Over the years, I’ve learned that you can split branding projects into two broad categories.

Some organisations use branding to pull many strands of organisation development together, integrating and making sense of business strategy, corporate vision / mission / purpose, marketing activities, HR policies and practice as well as identity and personality. These balance style and substance and reap the benefits long-term, but invest more in the process.

Others don’t see the connection with day-to-day operations and simply look for a different presentation to their audiences. The various metaphors of lipstick on gorillas or pigs have been well applied to this over the years.

Brands and branding projects can be Purpose-led, Play-led or even sadly sometimes Ploy-led.

I’ve often told clients that it’s important to approach their own brand projects with a healthy cynicism. If you can’t overcome your own skepticism when explaining the company story, then how can you possibly expect anyone else to believe in it?

Brand creation and reinvention are complex, difficult projects at the best of times. And this is amplified when they are in the context of industry wide upheaval. There’s a reason why we talk about how hard it is to change the direction of a super-tanker.

Against this, there are always pockets of optimism and healthy ambition that encourage us to find the positives – hence the quote by Sir David Attenborough. A little optimism goes a long way when supported by appropriate action.

This is the starting point for the Knowing.Earth story.





At the start of 2017, every aspect of the oil and gas industry was undergoing transformation at a fundamental level. It still is.

Some roots of the most prominent changes were seen back at the start of this millennium, when BP started a programme and campaign to take British Petroleum ‘beyond petroleum’ in recognition of the fact that our sources and uses of energy had to change.

And although the original ambition of Lord Brown stalled along the way for a variety of reasons, ‘beyond petroleum’ was a clear indication of the direction the oil and gas industry needed to go in.

More recently, we have seen many oil and gas companies revisit this question of what happens next. BP now positions itself as *advancing the energy transition*; Statoil renamed itself Equinor and talks about ‘*shaping the future of energy*’; and DONG (Danish Oil & Natural Gas) renamed itself Orsted and positions itself as *a renewable energy company that takes tangible action to create a world that runs entirely on green energy*.

Just three of the many companies looking for a new identity and purpose amidst increasing public concerns over climate change, the need for energy security, rapid advances in battery and sensor technologies, data capture and analytics, cloud, AI and machine learning and process automation.

As the major players in the industry re-position themselves, the myriad of service companies also need to adjust.

The products of oil and gas are everywhere. When it comes to the oil industry, we as the general public, have mostly become so complacent that we forget that we don’t just put fuel in our cars and power our homes and workplaces with energy generated from oil and gas. Petrochemicals are in everything from agriculture, to paints, to fabrics, plastics, medicines, cosmetics, furniture, and electronics – in fact, it’s hard to find anything that doesn’t have some connection.

Finding alternative sources across the whole board is not going to be easy.





So when creating new brand stories for businesses looking to take a lead during this transition, we have to look for broader bases on which to build.

We also need to make sure that we don't lose what this industry has taught us. Oil and gas exploration and production have been a driving force in the development of the understanding of how our planet works. It is an industry that has driven technological advances associated with drilling kilometres into the Earth from rigs 100's kms out to sea in 1000's metres of water, or from refining or from transportation. Learnings and knowledge that can now be applied beyond petroleum.

Oil isn't dead. It's evolving.

I should declare a familial interest from the outset – the CEO of this new consultancy is my brother, Dr Paul Markwick – the surname gives it away.

It adds an extra dimension to brand creation and development when you and your main client know each other extremely well. It highlights a key point that creating transformative brands always has to be a close collaboration. Any engagement based on a distant, purchaser / supplier approach, will struggle to deliver results.

These days it's impossible to discuss the future of any industry without talking about Covid.

Although this paper won't go into the details, it's important to point out that there were significant changes already

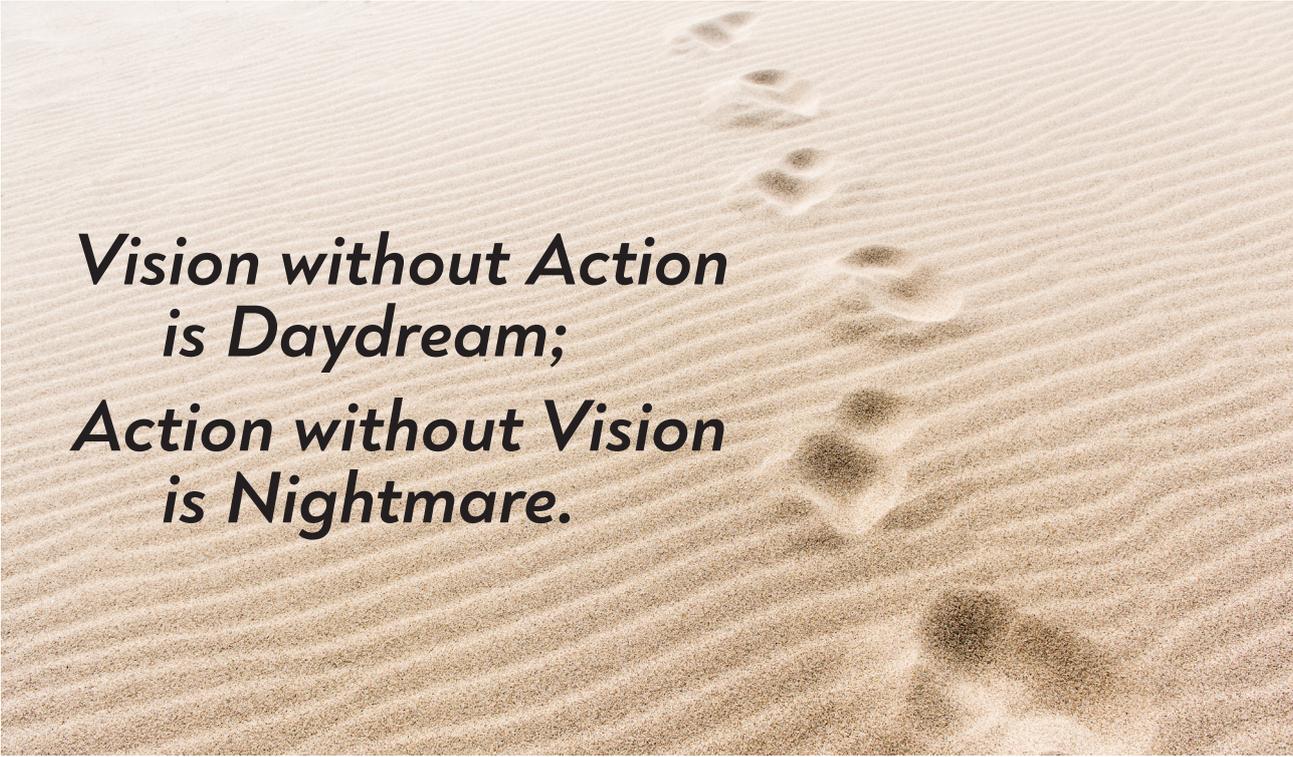
happening in the industry and Covid has accelerated them.

Firstly, Covid has demonstrated beyond question how joined up our world is and how everything connects to everything else.

Secondly, pre-Covid there was still some debate about whether all organisations should move to digital business models in the short-term. Since then, we've all made that one-way leap now and recognised how essential the move to digital operations has become. We're now all used to everyday business meetings and personal conversations being carried out over Zoom or Teams or Meet.

And finally, Covid has shown that discussion alone is simply not enough. The right sort of action is needed if we want to progress.





***Vision without Action  
is Daydream;  
Action without Vision  
is Nightmare.***

Many years ago, I came across a wonderful Japanese proverb that serves as a great stimulus when creating brands that work hard.

*Vision without Action is Daydream; Action without Vision is Nightmare.*

It has become something of a mantra in all of the brands we create. I've also always loved the fact that Gartner uses an articulation of this idea in its excellent magic quadrant analysis of competitive landscapes. It's used primarily for tech companies, but personally I think there is far broader value in exploring its two core dimensions – an organisations' completeness of vision and its ability to execute.

<https://www.gartner.com/en/research/methodologies/magic-quadrants-research>

We also recently saw a similar expression of this looking at the relative positioning of oil industry players positioning them in a landscape of promises and actions.

**And this emphasis on brands that 'do', as much as 'say', brings us back to the core issue of why we created a brand called **Knowing.Earth****

Brands are most powerful when a simple, compelling idea permeates everything an organisation says and does and believes.

Some organisations treat their corporate communications separately from their corporate strategy or their culture. In our experience, this is a mistake for many reasons.

When creating a new brand, it's difficult enough finding a new name that helps tell a story, let alone a name that conveys a lot of intricate, interwoven layers of meaning.

People only really have time and patience for complex stories when watching movies like 'Inception' when the interwoven complexity adds to the experience.

In real life, if a brand story is too complicated, people just switch off. They won't invest time in finding out the details beneath the surface. They don't engage. It's one of the key challenges in creating new brands today.



## So how do you create a brand and choose a name that helps you tell a new story without over-promising, trivialising or complying with established conventions?

When it comes to names, some brands link to their origin story – often their founders. And many of these origin stories get lost over time – how many remember for example Clarence Birdseye, or William Edward Boeing, Adi Dassler or Edwin Booz?

Names become brands over time and audiences' original associations change – Amazon, Caterpillar, Uber and Virgin are good examples of names that have become strongly associated with a company and their original meanings subsumed.

Other companies keep origin names and simply accumulate into a list – for example professional services firms who combine names during mergers and acquisitions such as PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and of course ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips.

Some companies simply say what they do – British Petroleum, Danish Oil and Natural Gas (Now Orsted), Petrobras, Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi, or where they're from – Broken Hill Proprietary.

Often these long names get abbreviated eg PWC, HSBC, ENI, BP, BHP, HP, BT, IBM.



**Instead of choosing a name that described what the organisation does, using fragments of 'tech', 'tec', 'paleo', 'geo', 'geology', etc and constructing a composite, generic name, we wanted to capture some of the purpose and spirit of what drives this organisation and make that explicit from the outset.**

Some companies make up names that have little or no direct meaning – Nike, Apple, Blackberry, Shell.

In short, there are many ways of naming a company and it was important to build a brand for this new consultancy taking all of this into consideration.

As organisations develop and transform, their capabilities and offers often become increasingly complex and far less tangible – again making it harder for organisations to explain what they do. The key is to build a brand that is simple and clearly understood, without

dumbing down or becoming trivial, based on a story that works at both an aspirational and day-to-day level.

One of the things that first attracted me to the discipline of branding, several decades ago, was the fact that a few practitioners and academics in the field used these concepts to integrate strategy and communication. Amongst my earliest and strongest influencers was Wally Olins – one of the original gurus of identity and branding. He talked about branding and identity as 'strategy made visible'.



In my experience, it's now possible, and in fact, necessary to take things a step further. If branding is approached properly, then it's possible to build **brands that make purpose visible**, not just strategy. That thought lies at the heart of the approach taken with Knowing.Earth.

The intention was to change the core brand foundation from one based just on activity, to one that shows how technical capability, expertise and experience fit into a bigger story and purpose.

'Purpose' is currently a much-discussed topic. It has become the next 'vision' or 'mission'. Some organisations take it as seriously as re-structuring or implementing global tech platforms, and others simply go through the motions and put posters up in the boardroom.

One of the driving forces behind the creation of Knowing.Earth was making sure that the organisation could operate in new ways.

When done well, brands built on genuine purpose, can be a powerful motivator for individuals and organisations alike. However, for every organisation that truly wears its heart on its sleeves, there are dozens who say the 'right' things, but whose actions are a different story.

## **The Knowing.Earth brand brings purpose, expertise and experience all together into a single name and url. The pieces of the brand fit together, rather than compete for attention.**

The name is Knowing.Earth. It's also the url website address. Using one of the new top level domain extensions available [www.Knowing.Earth](http://www.Knowing.Earth) makes the company name the url without having to add .com or anything else.

The corporate purpose is to create a 'Knowing Earth' – one where the world's population understand how our planet works and the impact and consequences of how our use of natural resources affects a complex set of super-systems.

In this way, the name Knowing Earth, becomes both purpose and long-term vision. Something to aim for and shape culture, behaviour, attitude and action.

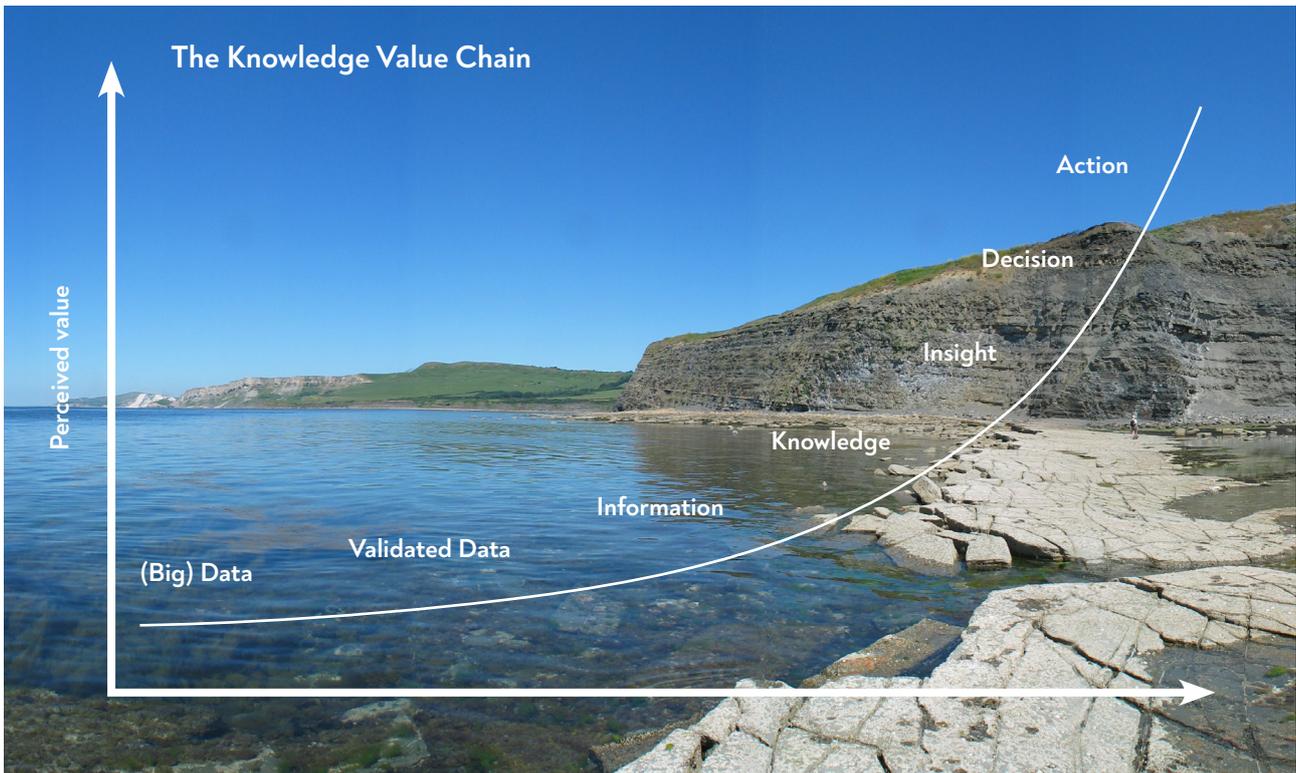
Knowing Earth is also a call to action – a movement that brings like-minded experts and interested parties together.

There is so much data and information available now – much of it for free – about the world and how it works, that we don't believe that any single individual or organisation can own it all. Collaboration is an essential part of the business model for Knowing.Earth.

No-one can really dispute the need that action is needed to ensure that the impact our global society has is understood and managed. Knowing.Earth is an organisation driven to understand how our planet works and share that with as many as possible.

It's also a statement about the expertise, experience and capabilities within the organisation. 'Knowing' is a continuous form of the verb 'to know' – a constant reminder that this is a never-ending process that is never 'done'.





## There's always more to learn.

Curiosity is as fundamental a human trait, skill and attitude as creativity is. There's always more to find out and thinking about facts adds value. This links in to what we have referred to over the years as the Knowledge Value Chain.

When data was the province solely of IT departments, it was understood that data on its own had little intrinsic value. It was only when it was processed into information that people started to recognise value in it.

Today, this value chain can be expanded with data building into 'big data' sets that represent enormous oceans of records.

Managing and maintaining this mass of data is complex and critical, as is validating that the data is correct, accurate, properly organised and referenced. Validation increases the value of data sets – large or small.

Only when validated, can data be processed into information which can then be accumulated into a knowledge base which can be mined for key insights.

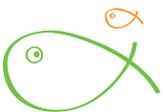
And these insights can lead to good decision-making which ultimately leads to the right actions that make a tangible difference.

In recent years the process of adding value to the chain has been reinvented through machine learning and AI operating on enormous oceans of data.

The choice of Knowing.Earth as the brand name allows this organisation to talk about a deep-seated, over-arching purpose, a foundational core of expertise, experience and capability and a day-to-day guide to product and service development.

All of this leads to building a knowing earth where experts, policy makers, explorers, corporations, academics, students all come together to solve the world's current and future earth-resource issues.

Knowing.Earth has been building its capabilities based on its own proprietary data sets, commercial data, freely available data sets (of which there are a surprisingly large number) and collaborative agreements.





Through education, innovation and collaboration it's possible to build a knowing earth that helps people understand our planet and use its resources in a better way. Ultimately this benefits communities, commercials and the environment – delivering for people, profit and planet.

Some organisations use a re-branding project as an alternative to re-thinking and transforming their businesses. This never works. Nowadays people see through this sort of ploy very quickly.

The lessons from Covid and the changes in the oil and gas industry in particular, should force people to ensure that branding is never an exercise in 'smoke and mirrors'.

The oil industry, like many others, is going through significant transformation. Done well, a re-branding project can demonstrate a deep-rooted change in attitude, capability and offer.

Something we all benefit from.





**Reconstructing** *the past*  
**Understanding** *the present*  
**Revealing** *the future*

We're committed to establishing a knowing earth – encouraging people to understand our planet, how it works and how our actions affect it.

We pursue every opportunity to learn more about the world and its complex, inter-connected super-systems.

Working with individuals and organisations to accumulate and share knowledge so we can all better understand and use our global resources.

We are Knowing.Earth

**KNOWING.EARTH**



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