

# Ten out of ten

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Designers are by nature disruptors. One of the hallmarks of the profession is its willingness to challenge existing practice. Is it an irony therefore that the agency model of doing business seemingly holds sway in the design world?

Matt Pattison believes so. He is the CEO of TEN, a young company that is hoping to offer a fresh, even disruptive approach to the process of buying design. TEN is essentially a cherry picked group of innovative companies in the design industry and associated disciplines such as animation, copywriting and architecture. Whilst the traditional model of design consultancy might involve a client company speaking to a handful of agencies before opting for the one that felt the best fit, TEN represents a different innovation support structure. Through its 'hive mind' of carefully selected leading professionals, TEN is able to connect clients with the right people and companies to de-risk innovation and guide projects in the most appropriate direction. "Our mantra is anything we do, we do differently," claims Pattison. "We are challenging conventions in innovation."

"TENS" as the company calls them, tend to be leaders of boutique companies, in partnerships or even independents, typically with ex-senior leadership heritage in design. "We offer the luxury of one hundred plus boutiques available in a

one-stop shop for our clients," explains Pattison. "These smaller companies are much bigger than the sum of their parts when they come together through our network."

Pattison founded TEN in 2017 after 15 years of working in design and innovation both within agencies and those agencies that he founded himself. From launch the company's focus has been health. Pattison has a clinical background: working in healthcare in the NHS as well as in Australia and Africa before transferring his skills to the design industry. As a senior human factors researcher at the renowned consultancy PDD, he specialised in medical device design and the healthcare sector.

Companies are invited to join TEN based on a proven track record of talent and success as well as a willingness to collaborate with professionals in adjacent disciplines. "We are not for those industrial designers who intend purely to do great industrial design, or service designers who are purely service designers," adds Pattison. "We recruit those happy working with, for example, documentary makers on a film output to make an impact for a big medical pharma company. It's the attitude, the ability, the experience and the connection that enable us to bring the best together."

TEN's understanding of 'health' is very broad, certainly extending beyond the industrial design of

drug delivery systems. "We don't do healthcare, we do health," explains Pattison. "We will always have a health angle on a project but that might relate to, say, safer driving to reduce accidents and thus the pressure on A&E departments."

Furthermore, Pattison asserts that the focus on health recognises the field as one of the most pressing global issues. "We simply cannot afford healthcare with the world as it is today," he says. "The ageing population, increasing disease management, expectations of outcomes based in different locations away from clinics and hospitals: and those are just the issues in developed markets. In major markets such as China, for example, we've done work looking at how you can deliver traditional Chinese medicine coming together to deliver new products and services."

So, what does working with TEN look like from a client's perspective? Pattison stresses that fundamental to the TEN approach is a separation of discovery and development. A motivating factor is to help companies ensure they have confidence in a concept, even that they are asking the right questions, before committing the time and money to move further down the design path. "We aim to disrupt the usual model of how people access design teams. Rather than clients having to go on the road to do tours of agencies and see numerous table football tables, we do the opposite," he continues. "First off, we enable companies to

access a 'power hour', typically with me, to listen to their challenge. From there, the next step is a couple of hour-long sessions where we'll get the insight of the TEN hive mind. This enables clients to get evidence on their brief very quickly and very efficiently without going through the quite tedious and complex process of business procurement."

Having made those connections between the client company and the best providers within the TEN network, the next steps are the 'design sprint', a one-week process by which the providers map and concept ideas around the client's design challenge, and subsequently the 'design summit', a more extensive vehicle to explore discovery.

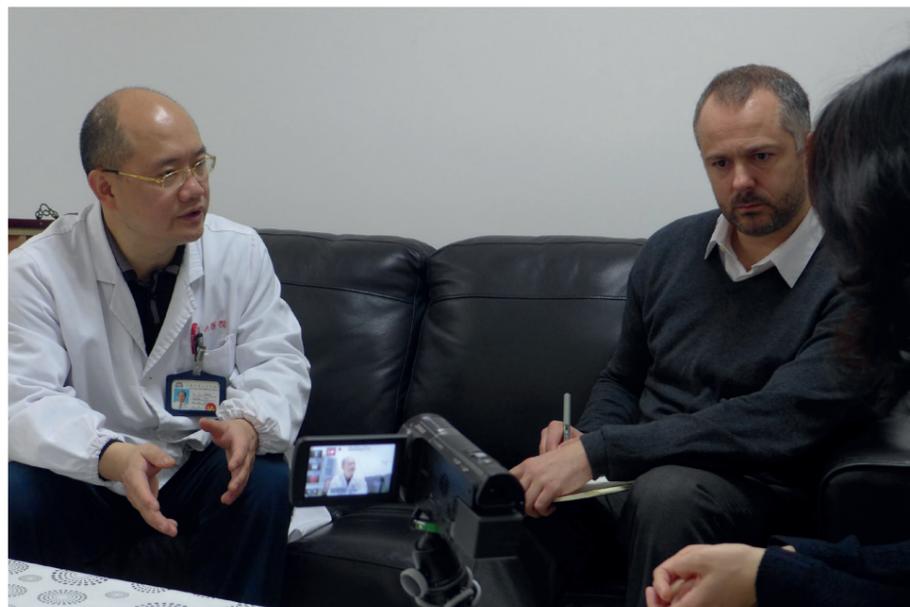
Such an emphasis on discovery addresses a client's confidence in the road ahead before committing to the development aspect. "This is the critical piece," reasons Pattison. "To deliver a medical device with pre-determined answers is myopic. You might need a service design proposition but have chosen the wrong professionals to do that. When we connect to over one hundred experts and their teams it will be at the right time where they know what they need to deliver."

He continues: "We have potentially saved our clients millions in reputational damage by saying I'd advise you to 'stop this'. It's hard to get a design agency to do this when they are excited about building a project and have a whole team in the organisation to do that. Or, we get clients to a level where they are good to go themselves and they are not tied to a full service contract or a multi-phase process. We are totally agnostic because we split discovery and development."

Indeed, in moving from the discovery to



Below | Matt Pattison, CEO of TEN



the development phase, a client has three pathways. Firstly, having found direction through discovery, a connection with a TEN partner can be facilitated so that the client can enter into a direct relationship with them. Alternatively, a client can purchase services through TEN to smooth the procurement process. Finally, clients may want TEN to remain with the job and stay involved in a consultancy capacity. "We have done and can do all those things," reflects Pattison. "Critically, it is not about us. It's about what works for the client to allow them to have a smooth and seamless, and as de-risked as possible, proposition in relation to finding the right people to do the right stuff, answer the right questions in the right way, to deliver when they have confidence and not to commit before that's the case."

Pattison admits that the practice of bringing in specialists to work on particular aspects of a project has been occurring within the design industry for years. However, in establishing TEN he wanted to maximize the benefit of such cross fertilization of skillsets to deliver successful solutions. Yes, there is a familiarity that can accompany working with a full service agency, but Pattison suggests that his professional experience has convinced him of the problems within that model. He argues that one of the frustrations clients encounter with the conventional agency model is that whilst the consultancy's most senior designers might make their presence felt in the pitch, it will often fall to the more junior ranks to deliver the project itself. The TEN model, he claims, ensures that not only is it the industry's most experienced professionals with whom the client works, but there is a in-built flexibility that

allows the client to access innovation support when, where and in what form it is most required. "Our reputation is totally dependent on getting you the right fit. It's very different to a traditional model; it works for a sophisticated buyer who has bought a lot of design before and can see the weaknesses of the traditional model and can see the benefits of doing things differently," he adds.

As an organisation TEN is question hungry. "Health is challenging, but we are working towards outcomes that are based on different strategic insights responding to changes in the sector," says Pattison. "It's so important you get the questions right at the front end to ensure you are moving in the right direction before your commit to a pre-determined path. We see health very differently and we see agency life very differently."

Asked whether established design consultancies are likely to feel threatened by TEN's model of innovation support, Pattison responds: "That's what great disruption should do. I would expect that at some level we are quite threatening to others who do things the usual way. We're not the only solution, but we are an option for those that have tried things before and maybe not quite got what they wanted. We are there for those who see health being something much more than just a product, or a service, or a digital company."

Finally Pattison says, 'if you think its time to do things differently, and perhaps have a question on the table that you feel might benefit from a free 'power hour' with me, then just get in touch. It just might be the start of delivering health differently'.

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