

Need / Opportunity

There is an escalating need for individuals to take a greater responsibility for their retirement. While Canada's aging population grows, government pension benefits are diminishing. NCR, a global technology company with 32,800 employees worldwide, provides its Canadian employees with a voluntary, non-contributory, Pension Plan and voluntary Savings Plans as part of their retirement benefit program. In order to financially justify these plans, NCR requires a certain level of participation. In addition, NCR's benefits objectives (the business intent of the benefit plan) also state that NCR benefits must be communicated **simply** to promote employee understanding and in a way which **encourages personal responsibility**. To accomplish this, NCR created the quarterly financial planning newsletter *future≈focus* - a fresh, unconventional approach for a complex, conventional topic so that employees would:

1. read about financial planning;
2. understand it; and
3. do their part to save for retirement.

Why does *future≈focus* demonstrate Excellence?

Future≈focus **editorial content** and **design** reflects NCR's original vision: to create a fresh, unconventional approach for a complex, conventional topic – and to provide objective information to employees so that they can plan for their future. The development process was collaborative and quite smooth – a true team effort!

Editorial Content: Editorial was developed by first agreeing on **themes** for each issue and then the topics of the main features. K&A then researched the content based on the theme and wrote drafts based on the results. For **efficiency**, comments were submitted via email. Care was taken to ensure the content was objective, action oriented, appealed to a diverse audience and built on the content of previous issues. For this reason, the **Summer 1999** issue covered the first steps in a financial assessment: calculating one's assets and liabilities, reducing debt and understanding one's own risk tolerance. **Fall 1999** focused on planning: relating financial decisions to personal goals. And **Winter 2000** went one step further to measure investment performance, choosing a financial advisor and making other financial decisions. Flexible sections, like the callout *What are Segregated Funds?* in *Summer 1999*, are tailored for new investors, while the main story (in this case, tax rules of seg funds) are tailored for more sophisticated investors. Another example is the *Did You Know?* section in *Winter 2000*, which reminds new investors about RRSP contribution limits, while the main story gave more advanced tips on how to determine whether we should top up our RRSP or pay down our mortgage. Further, issues 'build' on each other. In *Winter 2000*, in *Are your Investments on Track?*, the article refers to *Fall 1999* which describes how to develop investment objectives. This is because we need to determine investment objectives *before* we can measure performance.

Design: **Good design** should support newsletter content and enhance understandability. Since financial planning is complex, NCR wanted *future≈focus* to look eye-catching, exciting, progressive and unconventional. The challenge was to support content and satisfy design objectives while pleasing the design aesthetic of all NCR team members. To do this, K&A and NCR collected a number of publications with progressive **design**. Then we conducted critique sessions to gather NCR's feedback on design elements such as colour, shape, layout styles and fonts. From this, we created mockups and NCR's preferences were narrowed until the team felt comfortable with the *future≈focus* look:

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- * Glossy, high quality, full colour, 4 page newsletter, the finished size measuring 8.5”x11” (to fit Canada Post guidelines).
- * Flexible layout technique to accommodate French translation. This design system also reinforced the “bite” style organization of the editorial and the objective that the publication be easy to read.
- * High quality artwork (illustration and photography) supports each issue’s editorial “theme.” Elements of the main artwork are used throughout as supporting motifs.
- * The **online version** was designed to reflect the look and feel of the newsletter and to take advantage of the interactive medium using hyperlinks, rollover buttons, email, and an archive of past issues.

The cover art for **Summer 1999** was selected for its high quality, composition and its association to the editorial. The artwork visually illustrates the feature *What’s Your Money Personality?* with an expressive portrait of a man with financial motifs floating above his forehead. The interior photograph of a women rock climbing, captures the feature, *Steps to Improve Your Financial Health*, as the climber clings to the cracks on the rock face which resemble a graph representing savings increasing over time. The use of “graphic organizers”, such as the *Trends* box and the colourful “lozenges” used for *BookShelf*, *WebWatch*, and *TaxTips* help segment and organize the editorial. For the accompanying **email teasers** and **trinkets**, we selected a magnifier for its visual simplicity and play on the publication’s title. For **Fall 1999**, we chose a “highway” theme, beginning with the cover, a grainy, black and white photograph of a highway.

The interior artwork was created by layering different photographs in Adobe Photoshop and was designed to describe, tongue-in-cheek, an investor’s possible destinations, to “Millionaire Drive” or “Dogtown”. As in the previous issue, “graphic organizers” were used, playing off the “highway” motif. For **Winter 2000**, we used the dragon concept as we wanted to create a sense of culture, celebration and excitement. The cover art, a dragon in the shape of a “yin-yang” sign, clutching two equally tempting pearls, RRSP and Mortgage (commissioned from a Canadian artist) refers to the feature, *Millennium Dilemma: Top Up Your RRSP? Or Pay Down Your Mortgage?*.

Stated Goals / Objectives

Content Objectives: Easy-to-understand, useful, fun-to-read, diverse enough to appeal to new and experienced investor, short, ‘digestible’ bits of information, culturally diverse, action oriented, building knowledge over time, accessible, responsive; and objective - not focusing exclusively on NCR Plans. **Design**

Objectives: Support content, enhance clarity, provide enjoyable format, be fun-to-read, colourful, modern, surprising, “stand out” from other communications they receive as well as fit within the Canada Post guidelines for standard postage within Canada. **Other measurable objectives include:**

10% response to the enclosed survey which will measure many of the content and design objectives and whether:	The following actions and results:
1. 10% will use Personal Financial Statement and 30% will take Money Personality test (Summer 1999 issue).	1. 20% will attend NCR sponsored fall ‘99 financial planning seminars.
2. 30% will keep newsletters for reference.	2. 10% will participate in contests and 10% will provide feedback.
3. 25% will take action to learn more about personal savings.	3. 5% increase in Pension and Savings Plan participation.

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Measuring / Evaluating Project Success

Our overall **budget** was \$6,000 for initial development and \$15,000 for quarterly production (4 pages). This includes writing, design layout and printing, but not illustrations, web fees or promotional items. K&A's fees run from \$150 - \$180 per hour.

The **survey** enclosed in the *Winter 2000* issue allowed us to measure quality 'gaps' (the difference between reader expectations and satisfaction) and many of the **design and content objectives**. As of February 25, we received 6% response. 51% reported that they used the Personal Financial Statement and 46% said they used the Money Personality Test. 70% said they keep future focus for reference and 68% said they had taken action to learn more about personal savings.

Other success measures: NCR Waterloo received **comments** from approximately 10% of their staff and NCR Canada received 15% feedback, meeting their objectives of 10%. For NCR Canada, 15% entered the **contests** and for NCR Waterloo, 10% entered, meeting and exceeding the 10% goal. Both NCR Canada and NCR Waterloo were on target with their **financial planning seminar attendance** goals: Waterloo had 20% turnout (more than previous years), with a number of comments that *future~focus* directly impacted their decision to attend. NCR Canada had 18% attendance, more than ever before.

NCR Waterloo experienced no increase in **participation in their Pension and Savings Plans** for 1999 (95% and 90% respectively) and NCR Canada experienced no increase in Pension participation (99%) and a 3% increase in Savings Plan participation (now 80%). These results are acceptable, as NCR continues to enjoy majority participation in these retirement programs and chose not actively 'sell' the NCR plans.

NCR is committed to continually evolving and improving future focus in line with its Associates' requirements, a changing marketplace and external competitive benchmarks. NCR feels that if future focus readers are successful, then NCR has been successful!