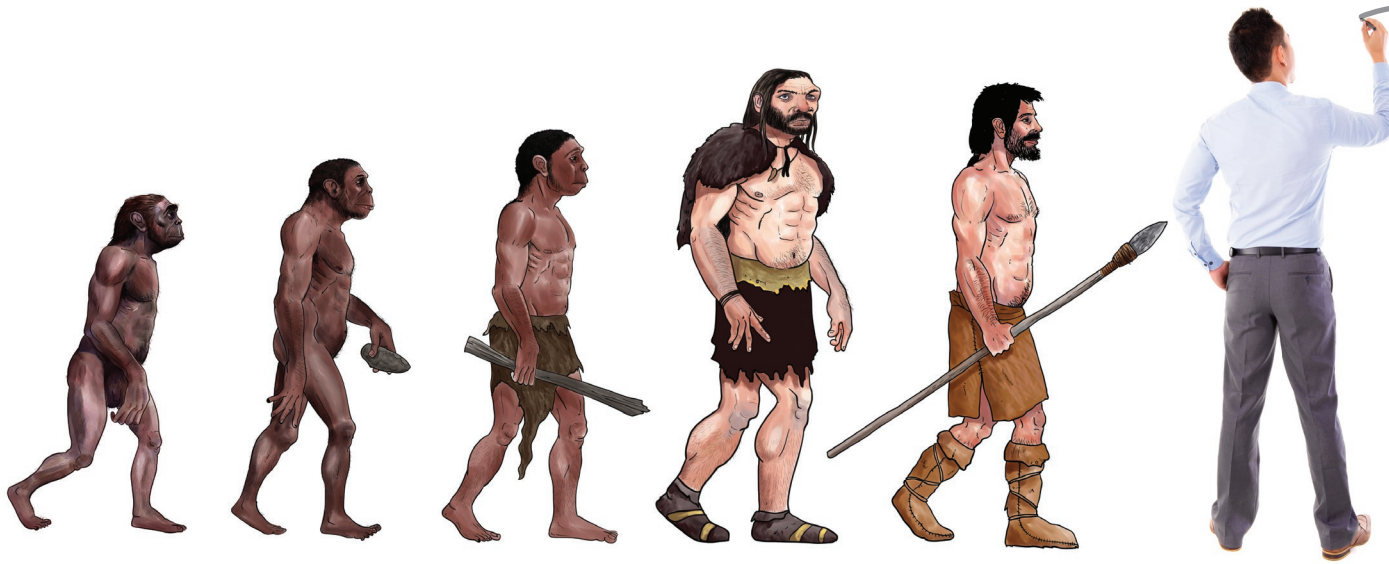


Evolution  
of a Brand,



## SQA BRAND DEVELOPMENT

Marketing Society Star Awards 2016  
2.1 – Brand Development



# Evolution at Work

*The world of qualifications is changing.*

*Today's SQA brand is lean, efficient and effective in every environment.*

*But it wasn't always so.*

We have been accrediting, assessing and awarding qualifications for over 100 years in Scotland. Most young Scots will sit SQA exams at school, and many will go on to develop their skills in order to get a job, or a better job, through SQA's range of world-class vocational qualifications.

Increasingly, however, we are looking to new opportunities in the world beyond Scotland. A world where there is no room for dinosaurs.

In order to thrive, the SQA brand has evolved in stages.





# Transforming for Success

The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is highly adapted to the educational environment in Scotland. We enjoy high levels of awareness and approval amongst all of our key audiences.

*Scotland is becoming an increasingly competitive market, however, as brands from beyond our borders seek to move in.*

*At the same time, the market in the rest of the UK has opened up, while there is a growing demand globally for internationally-recognised qualifications.*

*It is a time of opportunity.*

While we were highly thought of by our customers, our brand didn't reflect the excellent service we were providing.

We were successful within our set parameters, and staff were delivering a service intuitively based on quality, trust and best practice.

But, although powerful, the SQA brand would have to evolve to meet the challenges of life beyond our traditional horizons.

The emphasis had always been on perfecting the processes by which we delivered our qualifications rather than promoting ourselves or our services. Over time, many different products and services developed, each following its own path, each establishing its own presence.

As a result, a raft of sub-brands and tangent logos emerged, without there being any real plan or structure as to how they related to each other or to the main SQA brand.



# Adapting to the Environment



*A brand audit was carried out which identified the key issues. We then devised a two-stage strategy that would put us in shape to move into new markets while cementing our premium position amongst existing clients..*

*Our initial goal was to bring cohesion to the brand and its execution by:*

- Devising a new brand architecture
- Incorporating SQA's brand values
- Reflecting current market position and future aspirations
- Ensuring suitability for all markets
- Creating meaningful content based on deliverable SQA strengths
- Ensuring clear, consistent messaging through all channels

*Once that was in place, we would evolve by:*

- Developing a framework of messages, or pillars, to articulate the most effective propositions for each of SQA's audiences
- Implementing aspirational campaigns to build long-term customer engagement

Our sales cycle is long, an average of two years. In new markets we were just getting to know our customers, so the new brand would also need to be memorable, distinctive and resilient.

# The Ascent of Brand

The starting point was the development of a single brand which encapsulated SQA's brand values – the values that distinguish us from our competitors, define who we are, and what we need to become to achieve our goals.

That way we could build a strong awareness-building brand that only we could truly deliver on.

This process involved consulting with staff from across the organisation, whose involvement was critical in ensuring the long-term future of the brand.

Three brand values were identified:

**Trusted** – our proven record of delivering what we promise

**Progressive** – always embracing innovation with purpose

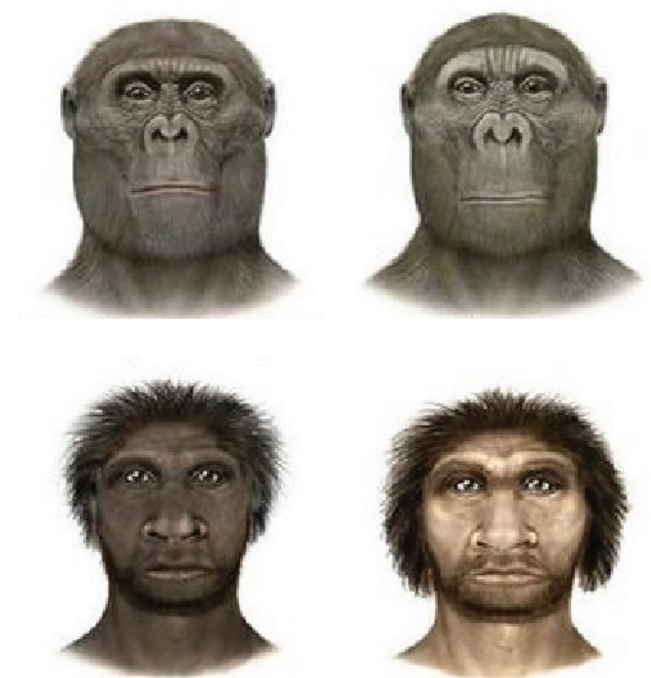
**Enabling** – working with clients to help them achieve their ambitions

Market mapping helped us find credible, ownable territory, and led to the marketing proposition 'Learning is more rewarding when you have the right support'.

This in turn was brought to life through the new brand proposition '**IT CAN BE DONE**'.

The line was tested extensively amongst staff and audiences to ensure it delivered on key requirements – it was aspirational, inclusive, flexible and distinctive. Over the following 18 months, it underpinned a wide variety of advertising and promotional activities.

*It proved itself effective in Scotland, in the UK and around the world, allowing us to reach new audiences and consolidate our dominant position with existing ones.*





# Specialising for Success

We knew all along, however, that there was scope for further development.

*Our growing experience of the different environments in which we were operating told us that if we could adapt the brand to local interests then it could be even more successful, while making the overall brand stronger wherever it was encountered.*

We found that all audiences responded to a combination of four core SQA strengths, but that the combination varied for each audience.

We held team sessions to consolidate these key strengths, or pillars:

**Service** – the key to SQA’s offering

**Community** – creating, nurturing and participating in communities

**Tradition** – over 100 years of excellence

**Catalyst** – we enable growth, personal, corporate, global

We then drilled down into each of our key audiences to identify which pillars were most important to them.

In Scotland **catalyst** is most important, while **tradition** plays well internationally.

**Community** is important in the rest of the UK, but is of limited appeal to international audiences.

This insight allowed us to refine our briefing process and tailor messages according to the intended audience, while keeping them all faithful to the main brand.



# The Power of Intelligence

*The brand values have become our corporate values, as well as being the foundation for successful new campaigns.*

## Scotland

We continue to measure how our various audiences – schools, colleges, employers and training providers – view SQA in relation to its values. The new brand messaging has accelerated performance in the last 18 months.

- 70% agreed that SQA was trustworthy in 2014 – **this rose to 91% in 2015**
- 64% saw SQA as enabling in 2014 – **by 2015 the figure was 72%**
- 61% viewed SQA as progressive in 2014 – **a year later it was 75%**

This strong performance is translating into real results for individual campaigns. Because of our long sales cycle, it is too early to gauge the full impact, but early results for the 2015 **Journeys** campaign show **2,900 web page views** while, of those who had seen the campaign, **57% had acted** as a result.

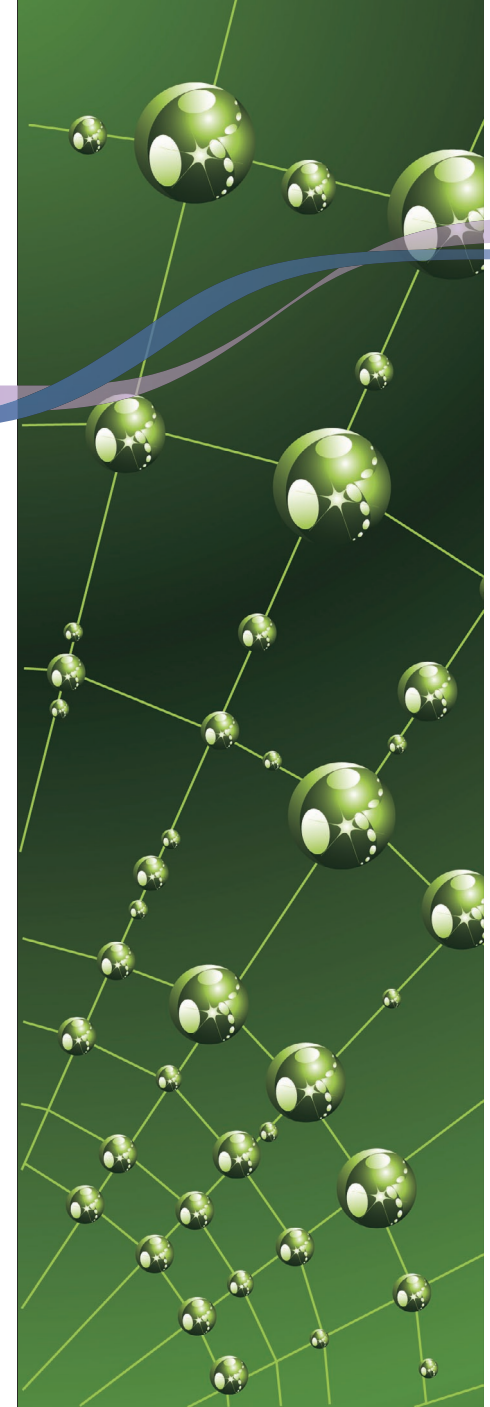
## International

The new SQA brand messaging is finding traction across a variety of countries, including Sri Lanka, Dubai and Malaysia, allowing us to forge links with local education authorities, backed by the promise of **tradition, community and service**.

The real test, however, comes in the brand-aware markets of North America.

The **Diploma to Degree** campaign, designed to build a global network of university destinations for international HND graduates, has been promoted digitally to support events in Boston and Scotland which target Canada and selected US states. They have yielded more than **5,000 engagements** with bespoke web content, and growing and successful relationships with **25% of our target universities**.

The brand was carried through the design at the events themselves, which led to **unprecedented footfall** on the stands and interest in SQA.



# The Power of Intelligence

*In the rest of the UK, the brand messaging allowed us to meet 4 clear objectives in our Employer campaign*

## OBJECTIVE 1

### *Build Relationships with opted-in audience*

- **5,700** webpage visits
- Outstanding e-mail click-through rates (above **9.2%**)
- Over **5 mins** average time on website

## OBJECTIVE 2

### *Reach new people interested in Trailblazers, capture data*

- **900 contacts** on list, less than **1%** unsubscribe
- Webpage visits from **4,511** individuals
- **Over 170** white paper downloads
- **7,747** people clicked on ads
- **Over 100%** e-mail open rates (e-mails forwarded on)

## OBJECTIVE 3

### *Increase SQA brand awareness*

- SQA brand awareness **almost doubled** since 2013 – 40% now aware of SQA
- Over **11 million ad impressions** through paid search
- **900 contacts** on list, **101** gained through Apprentice Eye

## OBJECTIVE 4

### *Build reputation as thought leaders/assessment experts*

- Best performing content relates to **assessment**
- Best performing messaging relates to **assessment expertise/100 years experience**
- **49%** of those aware of SQA have **well developed** understanding (up from 22% in 2014)

## ADDITIONAL RESULTS

- **5 enquiries** to [ukskills@sqa.org.uk](mailto:ukskills@sqa.org.uk)
- **110** new Twitter followers





# The Dominant Species

Developing a new brand for an organisation as diverse as SQA takes careful thought.

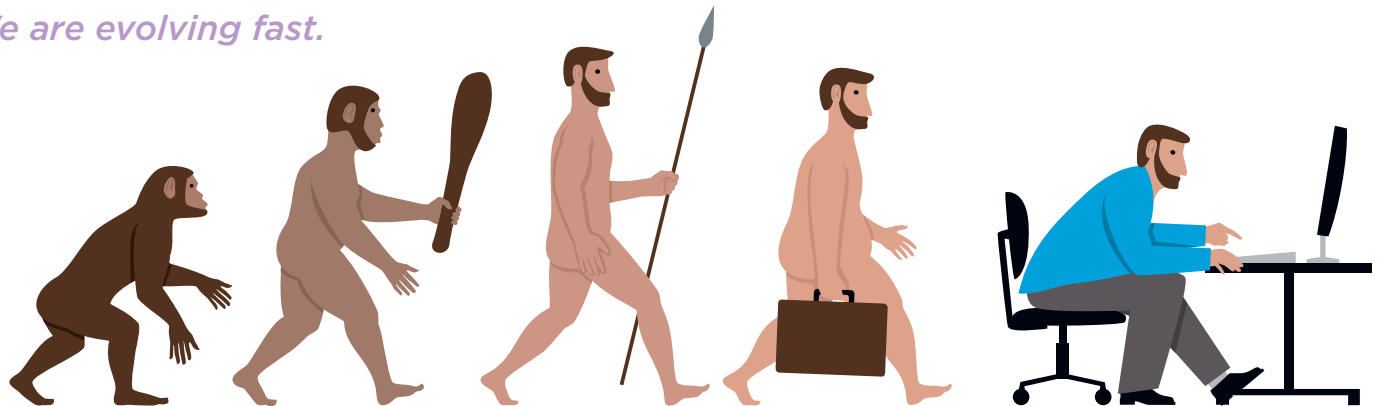
*The changing face of the qualifications market in Scotland, the UK and internationally made this the perfect time for a fundamental change in SQA's outlook.*

Time was taken to consult, to examine and to test – a process which will continue as the revitalised brand grows and develops to adapt to new environments.

We believe the brand reflects SQA's strengths as well as its aspirations, something that our various markets and our own people can really buy into.

Our campaign results are the strongest we have seen. Our digital and engagement work is hitting above industry average. We are nurturing people with increasing trust in what we say and do at every step of their journey with SQA.

***We are evolving fast.***



it can  
be done 

# Creative Strength



*Some samples of the Creative...*

Scotland's future  
is prepared for work



SQA's Vocational Qualifications enable learners to develop their knowledge and skills for the world of work. Our qualifications are developed with industry experts ensuring learners have the kind of skills employers need. SQA – providing skills for Scotland.

it can  
be done  SQA

Business Development T: 0303 333 0330 E: mycentre@sqa.org.uk W: www.sqa.org.uk/journeys

Apprenticeship Trailblazers –  
let us shed some light



SQA is a UK leader in qualifications and assessment. We can provide Trailblazer groups with support and guidance at any stage of their journey.

[www.sqa.org.uk/trailblazers](http://www.sqa.org.uk/trailblazers)

it can  
be done  SQA

Adding muscle to Scotland's economy



Scotland's economic strength relies on a highly trained and motivated workforce. SQA have a wide range of world-class qualifications to ensure that Scotland delivers.

it can  
be done  SQA

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Customised Awards –  
Suits you

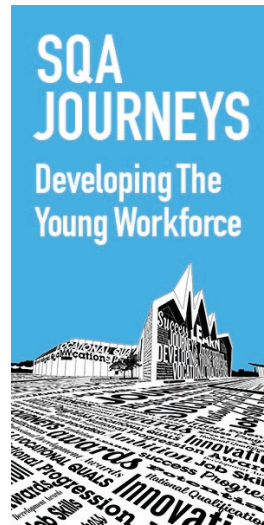
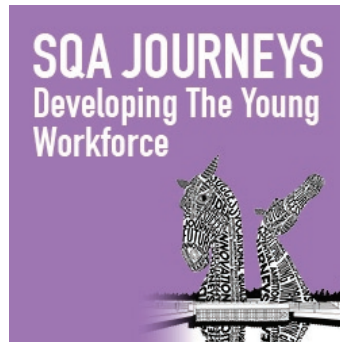


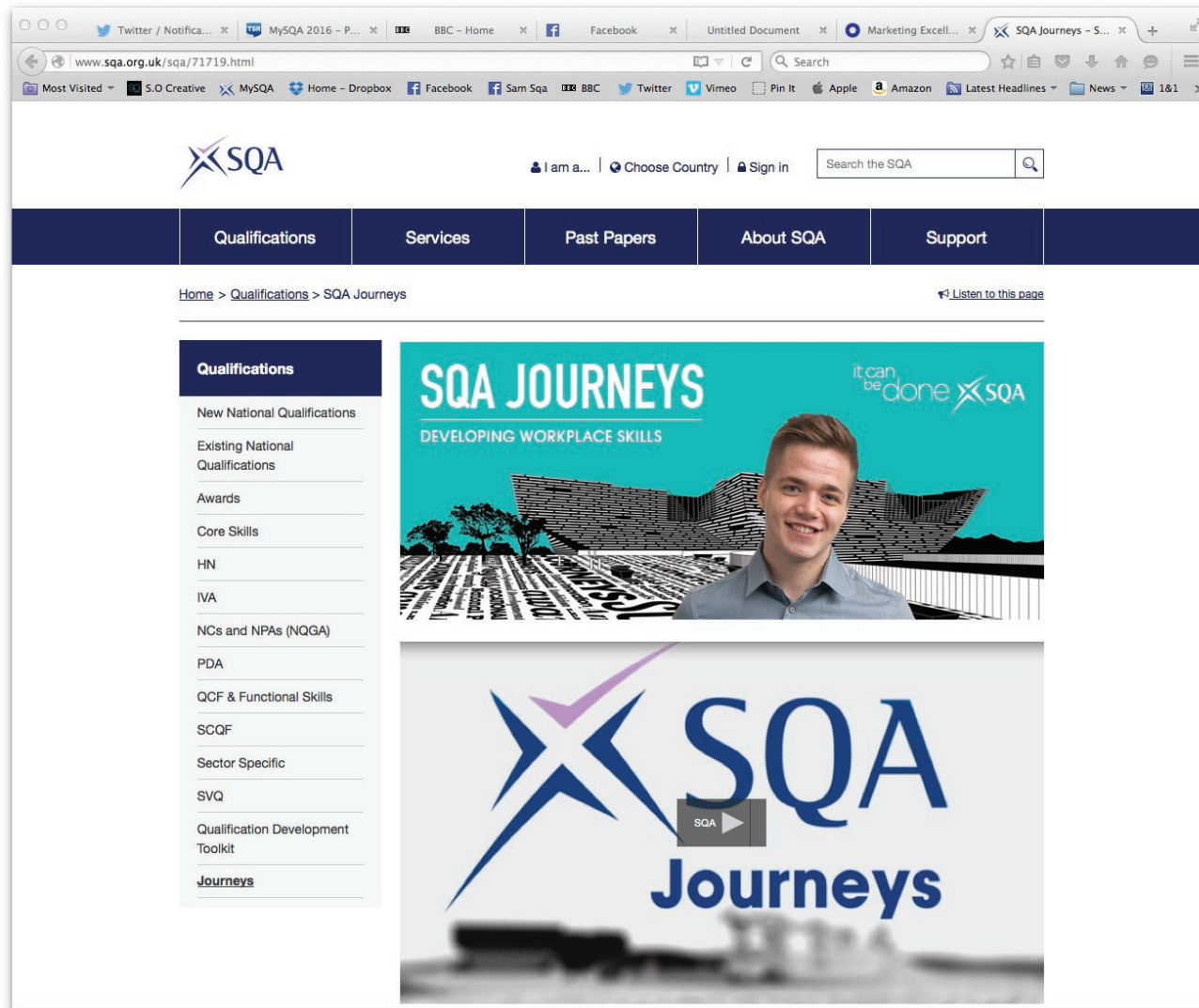
SQA Customised Awards are truly bespoke. We'll work with you to create your own unique qualification to enhance your staff learning. As a trusted accreditation and awarding body, we can help you have your qualifications universally recognised.

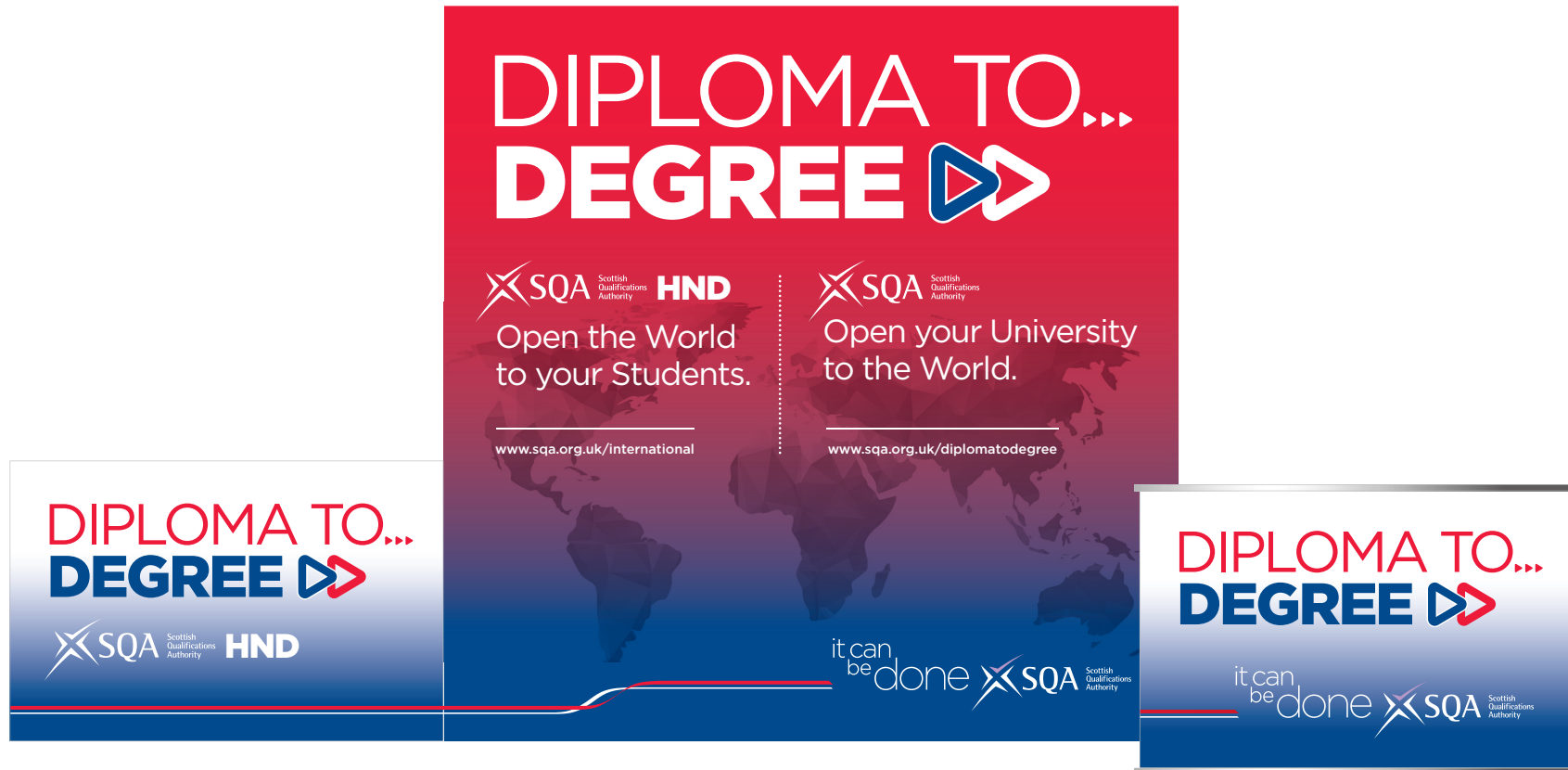
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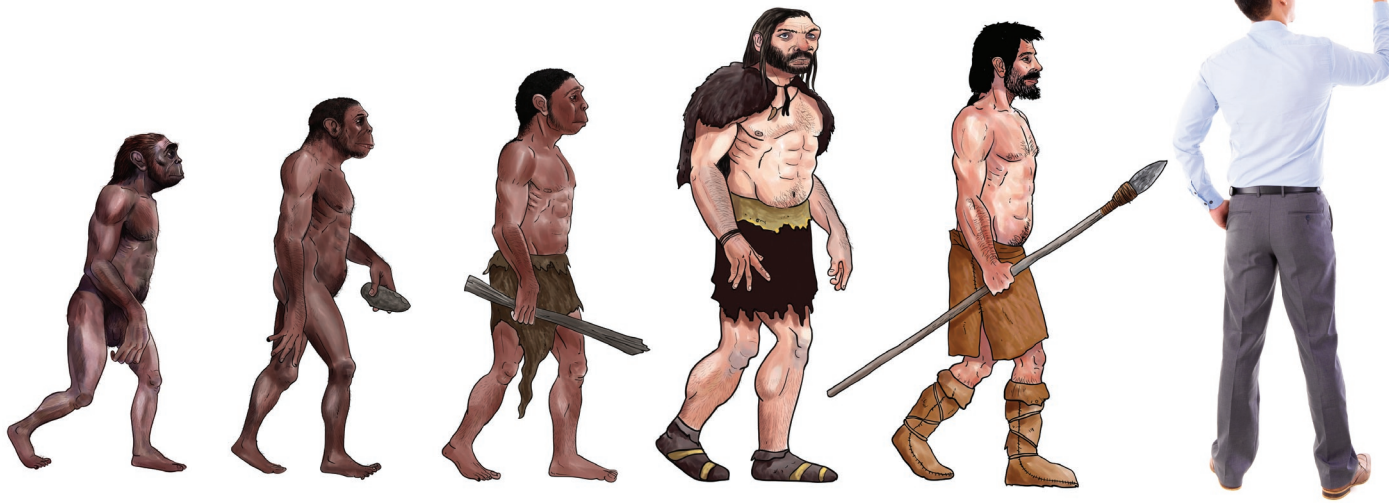








# Evolution of a Brand,



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