Michael Barry, creative director of Sci-Fi (formerly the Sci-Fi Channel), says that a clear brief is essential in farming out any graphics or design work. Therefore, when you're planning to spend a six-figure sum on channel rebranding, getting the basics right is imperative.

'I would stress that it's very important to know why you're doing this,' he says. 'Once you've done that you go to the next stage, which is the brief. Everyone pays lip service to the fact that a very good brief is very important, but if you get that right the rest of it isn't too hard.'

Six companies pitched for the Sci-Fi redesign (above), with Hobbins Sides eventually snagging the contract, partly because, in Barry's words, it 'provided us with a design system rather than a fait accompli'.

Barry emphasises collaboration as an important factor, and the need to work in tandem with design specialists to develop an idea. 'If you believe you have something to contribute, then what you want from an agency is someone who will work with you,' he explains.

He is keen to point out that elements of a large job such as rebranding can be pitched individually and, as long as consistency is maintained, that can bring invaluable fresh ideas in to the overall concept.

As for money, spending lots of it isn't always necessary. 'A good idea is a good idea, it's not necessarily an expensive one,' he emphasises.

To boldly go into Sci-Fi

Cable and satellite station the Sci-Fi Channel is relaunching with new programme initiatives as Sci-Fi. To support the repositioning, London on-screen specialist Hobbins Sides has created a new on- and off-air identity, to be used everywhere but the US.

Sci-Fi, which is owned by Universal Television & Networks Group, delivers films, dramas and fact-based programmes covering science fiction, fantasy and the paranormal. It is transmitted to more than 5.4 million cable and satellite households in the UK.

Hobbins Sides was briefed in New York and won a paid creative pitch against five other groups from the US, UK and Europe.

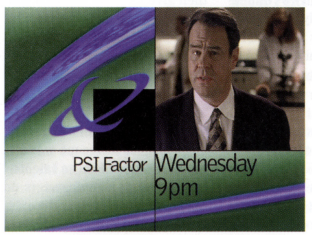
The programming breaks down into four categories: soft, such as Highlander; space; paranormal and horror. The group was asked to come up with an image which would attract viewers put off by the idea of science fiction, but who are likely to watch programmes which fall into this category anyway, says Hobbins Sides creative director Andrew Sides.

'We sold it on the basis of a three-layered concept. With spaceships you are painting a very literal picture of a specific part of science fiction,' says Sides. 'It's more about ideas and it's quite a cerebral activity. The identity should create an atmosphere without painting in the detail for the viewer.'

Real objects were shot in abstract ways 'to create a sense of the strange and sensational, and then placed within a familiar context in order to convey a message of welcome and relevance', according to a Sci-Fi spokesman.

'The logo can be interpreted as Saturn with a ring round it,' Sides adds.

The relaunch kicks off on 2 November.



Designer: Hobbins Sides
Client: Universal Television & Networks Group

Sci·Fi