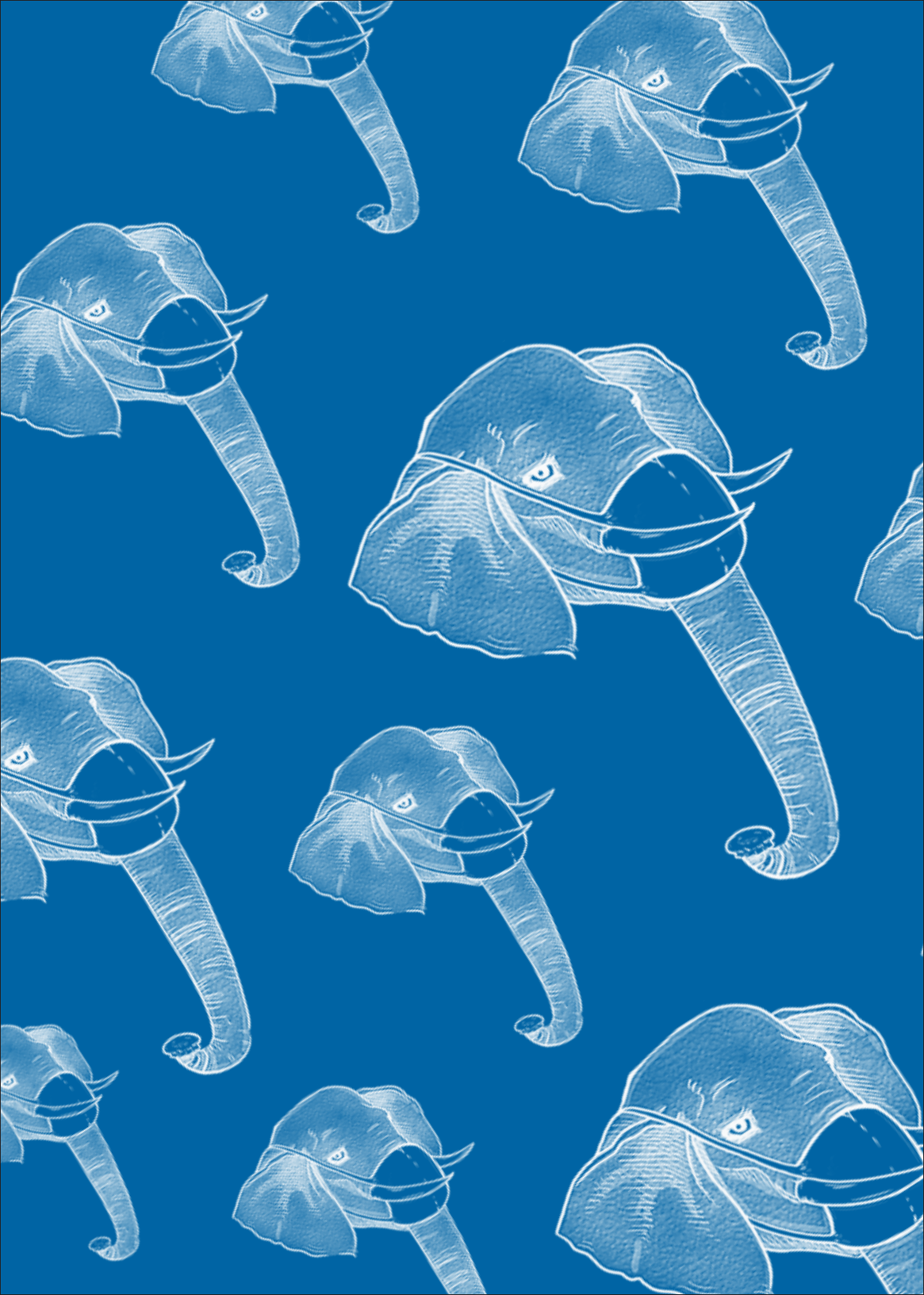


# CHOOSE YOUR HARD

*There are **no easy answers**  
**Everything is hard**  
Choose the **right hard***





*“2020 was the biggest  
pile of steaming elephant  
puke that has ever been  
or ever will be.”*

***Pretty much everyone, 2021***



# WTF just happened?!

A drive-by beating.

The print and design industry has been bashed.

Bruised and bedraggled within an inch of its life.

2020 must go down as the worst on record. Events were cancelled. Customers forced to close. Volumes down. Demand dropped. In some cases, to zero.

Yet, some businesses prospered. *And not just those with government ministers on speed dial.*

Customer behaviour has changed. Things that were *always going to happen*, have happened at a relentless pace. Changes that should have taken years, took place overnight. Client priorities are different now.

Businesses who were able to respond to what clients wanted have done better than most.

Did everything go your way? *Anything?*





# The reverse dilemma

The economy has been tough for a while. Politicians playing games. Year after year of uncertainty and flux. Businesses discarded *like soiled dolls*. Confidence shattered.

And promises broken.

Yet our industry *kept* going. *Hoping* things would get better. A return to *normal*. The *good old* days. Dreaming of sunlit uplands. *Yearning* for the sweet fragrance of fresh opportunities.

Then, the pandemic stormed in.

When the tide went out, many were swept away. Hundreds of print business insolvencies already. Many more zombies, *bleary-eyed and dazed*, enduring on support drips. Waiting for the inevitable.

There *will* be better days. Exhibitions *will* restart. Events *will* return. Print orders *will* come back.

They just won't be like they were.

Let's not pretend otherwise.

*Things will never be the same again.*





# Choose your hard

There's a famous quote you might have seen...

*Marriage is hard. Divorce is hard. Choose your hard.  
Obesity is hard. Being fit is hard. Choose your hard.  
Being in debt is hard. Being financially disciplined is hard.  
Choose your hard.  
Communication is hard. Not communicating is hard.  
Choose your hard.  
Life will never be easy. It will always be hard.  
But we can choose our hard.  
Pick wisely.*

The status quo. Doing the same you've always done. On the same treadmill, *day after day*. The path of least resistance. But that's hard. And it's getting harder.

We can't opt for solutions that don't exist. There are no easy answers. But we can choose to change.

To **choose our hard**. And set a different path.

Taking the path alone is hard. Going solo may lead to great success. You've done this before. *You can do it again*. Trying a new system is hard. Yet, starting from an established system is a shortcut. Someone else has learned from the hard. *Smoothed the bumps*. Shaved off the spikes. Sometimes it's about choosing the path which leads to a greater chance of success.



**WEBSITES  
PRINT &  
SIGNS**



# Here we are now, reinvent us

Two decades ago, we were the UK's largest network of print stores. Times changed, times got hard. We *had* to adapt. Over the past seven years, we've grown the Nettle network. Being honest, it's been hard. We own stores. And partner with hundreds of like-minded graphics businesses in ten countries. They saw their traditional market get hard. And wanted to stop the rot.

We've witnessed change, first-hand. As print volumes declined and margins were eroded, we moved into wide format and graphics. Signage and displays. *Just in time for the great exhibition extinction event.* Today though, our product mix covers everything a business needs to promote themselves.

But. And here's an inconvenient truth. Now, that marketing rarely starts with print. Sure, clients still buy print. *Of course they do.* And still will. Just, perhaps not as much as they did.

Think of all those brave souls who made the leap into entrepreneurship in 2020. *More did than in 2019.* Surely more will do the hard thing in 2021. But, when these startups begin marketing, print won't be top of their shopping list. *Or second.*

Turns out, **digital first**, isn't just sales puff.

*It's actually a thing.*



# The browser is mightier than the shoe

The pandemic was cruel and random. How badly a sector was hit, or how much it bloomed, was often down to sheer luck.

*There go I, but for the grace of covid restrictions.*

**eCommerce** was one of the clear, big winners. While physical retailers were shuttered and shackled, online retailers had a bonanza.

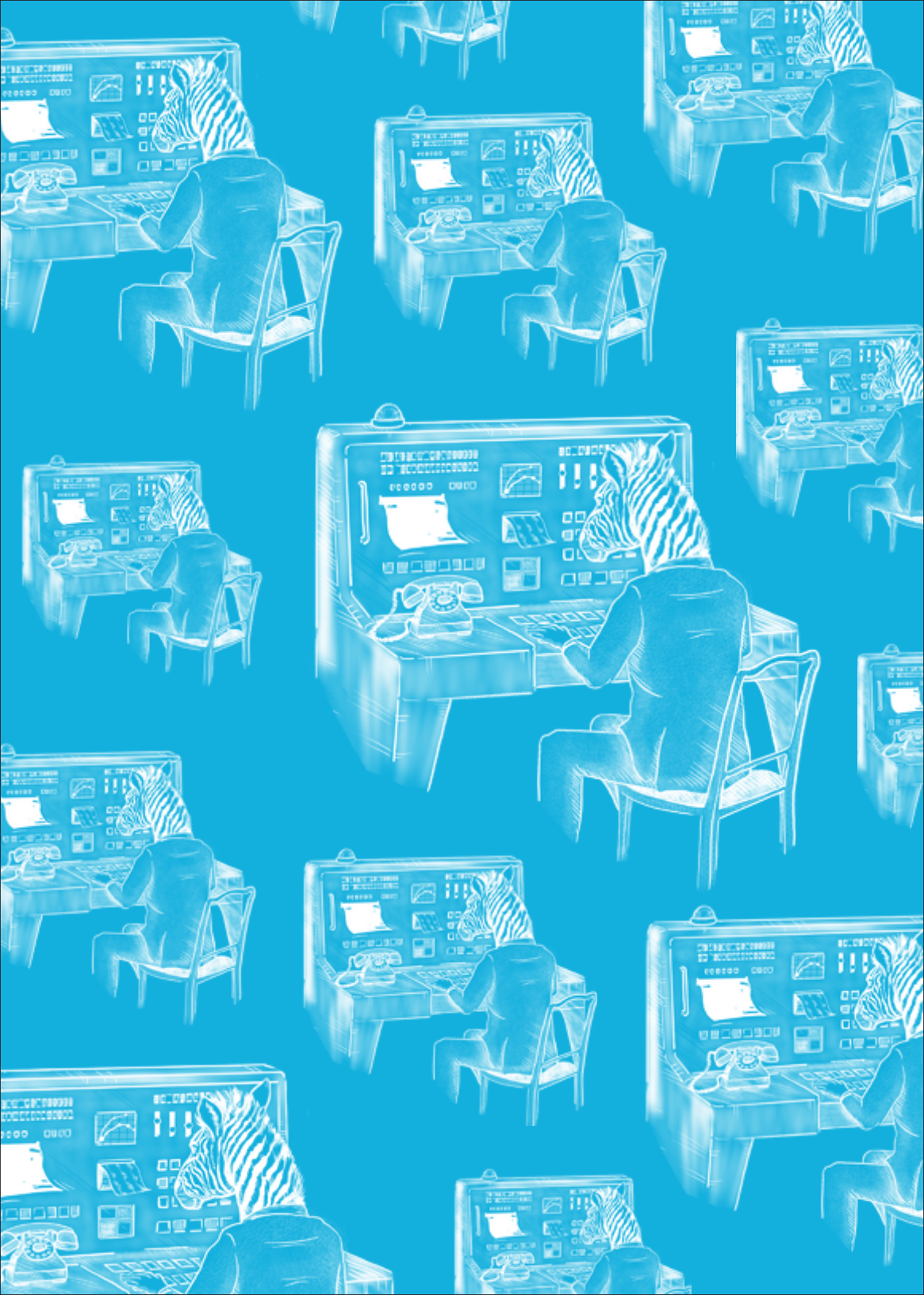
*A gold rush, wrapped in brown corrugated cardboard.*

Millions of punters fired up their browsers, added to their baskets and waited for the gentle door knock. *Instant gratification.* Without having to put on shoes. *Or bras.* Many tried it for the first time. *And liked it.*

Boffins found it takes 21 days for a habit to stick. For it to become second nature. Lockdowns *relentlessly* forged online shopping habits. The longer they went on, the *more* people succumbed.

This isn't a fad. This is here to stay.





# Selling got hard

So given the rise in ecommerce, you might expect our Nettle stores would have sold loads more **websites**.

*Well.* Yeh, they did, yeh.

Everyone was madly rushing to add click + collect. Updating opening times and responding to restrictions. Uploading menus and QR codes and contactless payment and all the things you'll have used yourself.

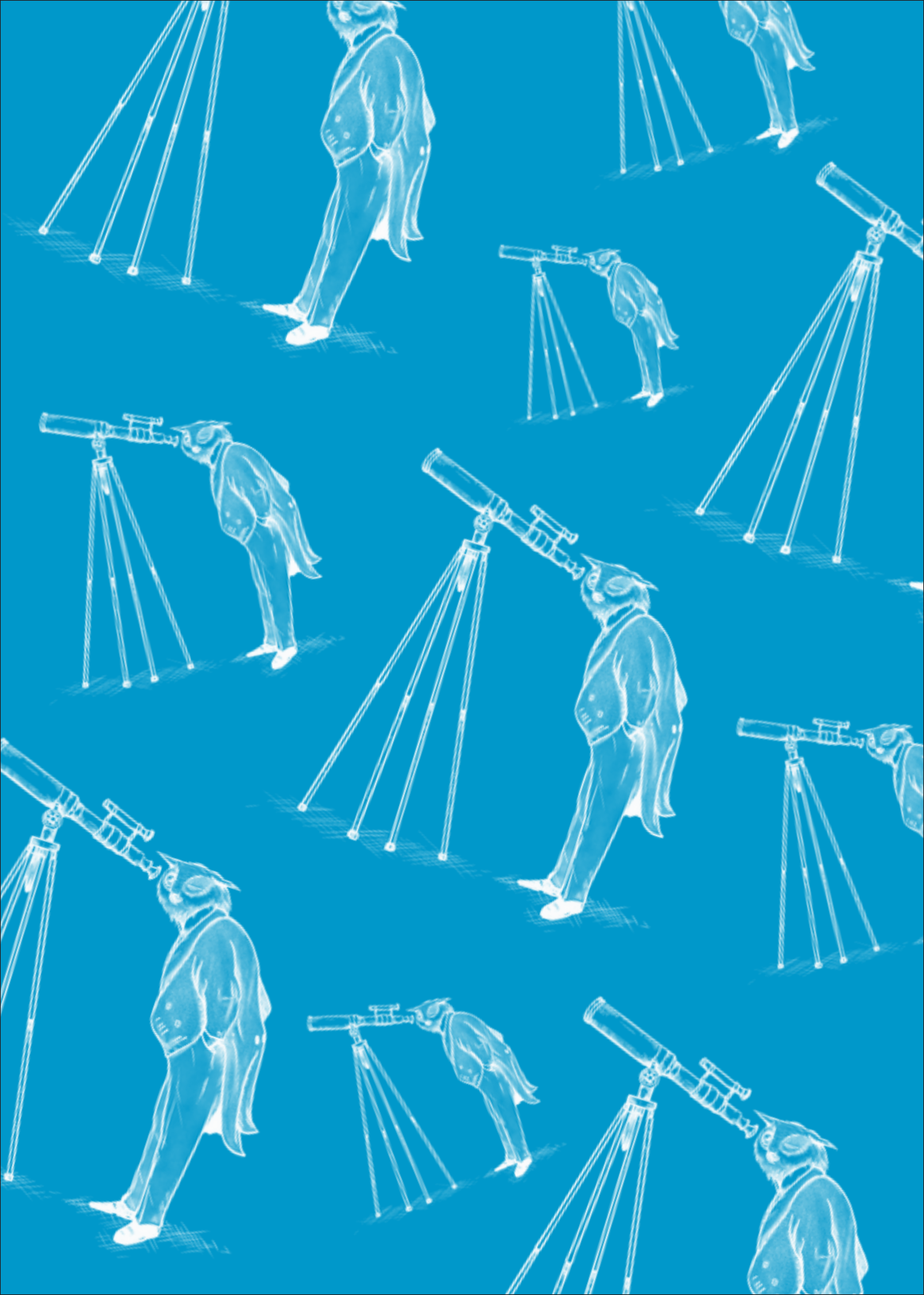
Interestingly, we saw a rise in clients wanting to drive traffic to their sites. Selling to businesses got harder, more remote.

Overnight, traditional marketing methods were obsolete. You couldn't direct mail to offices. Because nobody was home.

*They were working from their actual home.*

With exhibitions and events cancelled, getting new customers got hard. You had to go places. To the places where customers were. And that was online. Using search engines.

And so that is where our story must now go.



# Build it and they won't find it

There's an old gag in digital marketing circles:

*Where's the best place to hide a dead body?  
On page two of Google listings.*

What a crazy bunch we are. *My sides.*

Fact is, there's only one way to climb search engine rankings. And that's *elbows out*. You can't just stick up a website and hope people will find you. It takes investment, skill and effort. It's hard.

That's why there's strong demand for **search engine optimisation**. Done right, it's a powerful way to get new visitors. Done badly, it's damaging. *Like a perm.*

So our Nettl stores sell SEO to their clients. And our centralised team takes care of the geeky and time consuming, hard technical bits.

You could do all the (hard) stuff yourself. Or you could focus on selling it. Explaining. Inviting clients to attend our online events. And leave the grind to the experts.





# Can't beat 'em 'til you join 'em

*"And here's a photo of a grey machine we use for some things. And this is a beige one. It's fast. Oh! This one brings back memories of steiners in Dusseldorf!"*

If you're into litho porn, get (off) on a printer's website. So many glamour shots of machines. Guess what. *Nobody cares*. Don't flop your plant list out in a sales meeting. Clients don't care. They might be smiling on the outside. *Inside they're removing your limbs*.

*"My clients want personal service and the print quality of the Multerberg XXL40".*

Yeh, *horsepuke*. They want convenience. To browse and buy online when it suits them. To do things self-service. For clients, having to speak to someone, every time they want something, is hard.

That's why we've now made our **w3shop** ecommerce platform available to entrepreneurs. The same powerful system powering printing.com and hundreds of public and private websites. *Now with a drag 'n' drop visual page builder*. Fully loaded with print, display, sign and promo products. Someone else has done the hard graft, merchandising and photographing the range. Someone else does the hard work maintaining it.





# The march of the makers

We've always had ink under our fingernails. We own factories with some of the newest and most advanced kit in the land.

*No photos though, right.*

As the pandemic struck, we found ourselves thinking about what clients would need in an unlocked-down world. Our Nettle stores were *running hot*, helping clients make their premises covid-secure.

At the peak, we were launching new products every week, all popping up for sale on w3shops across the country.

It was hard. And we wondered if there was a *better* hard. So we decided to open our Nettle network to third party manufacturers. Building the systems and processes to connect our buyers with sellers.

We call them **Works Makers**. And now we have hundreds of new product categories and dozens of independent makers supplying clients, throughout the land. If you make a niche, printed product, we want to hear from you. It's free to join and there are no monthly fees. *See page 29.*





# Strong, this network is

And you see, this is where it gets interesting.

Some businesses are closed off to the outside world. Hostile and fiercely competitive. Manipulative, *devious* even.

Nettl is *collaborative*, by design. Default to *open*.

We're a network of creative, like-minded people. Who want to do the best for our clients. Help businesses in our communities. Learn best practice. Because being in business is hard. Nobody should go it alone. There are so many pitfalls, so many traps.

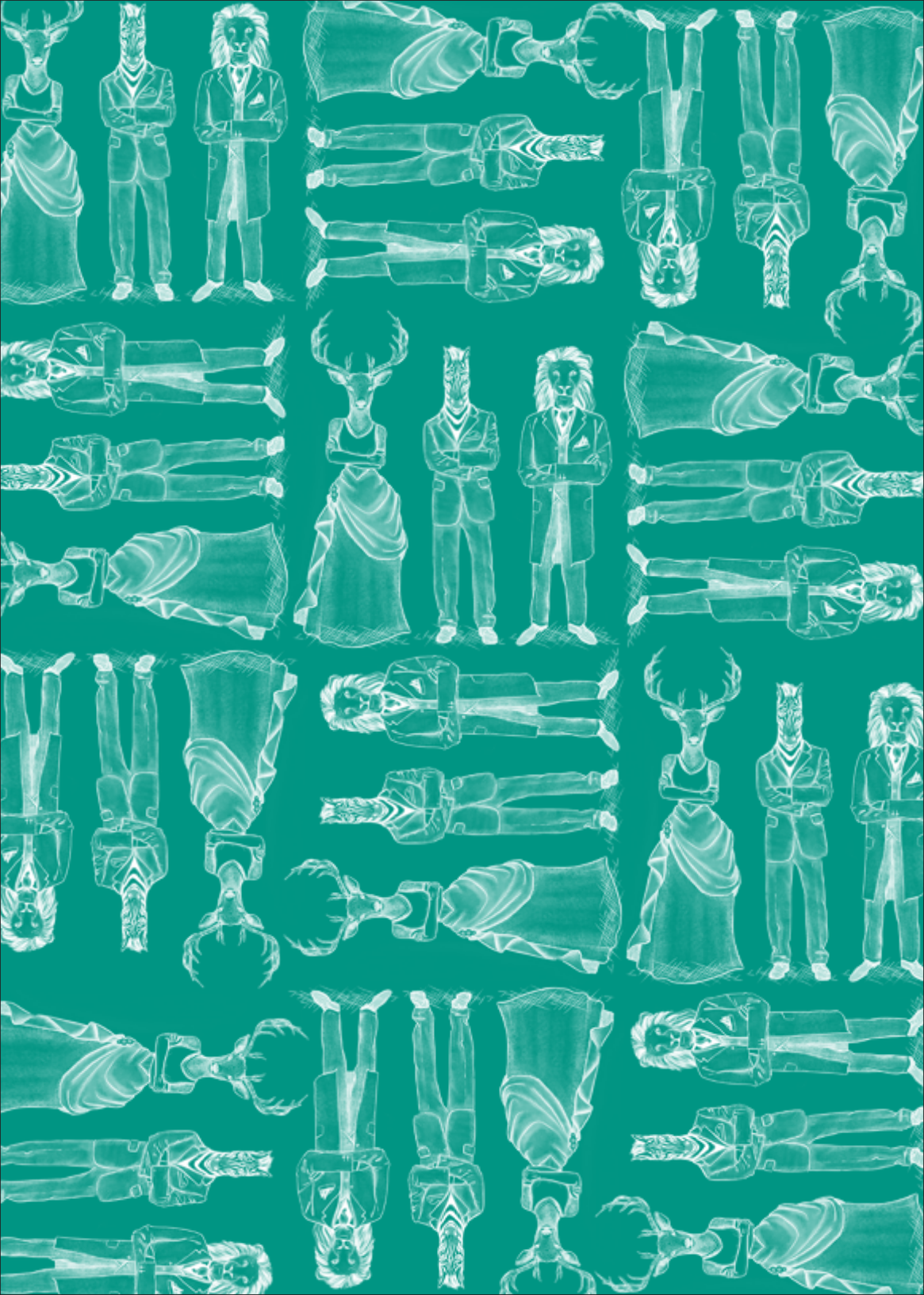
Building systems is hard. Getting your team to follow them is hard. On the other hand, scrambling to find old artwork is hard. Chasing up orders from multiple suppliers is hard. Troubleshooting problems on a custom-coded website is hard.

Being part of a proven system, shortcuts the hard. We believe in the power of community. And in building systems which learn from the network. And that's why we're launching **The Nettl Alliance**.

Because there's strength in being part of something bigger. Together.







# There is a new hope

Join the Nettl Alliance. There are many ways in.

**If you make something**, we can sell it. Become a Works Maker. List your products on our sites, get paid when we send orders. Open new markets and do what you do best, with our marketing help. *See page 29.*

**If you're a printer**, you need to go digital first, and fast. Become a Nettl partner. Upskill your team to do more. Escape the commodity trap. Grow your business and align it with the way the world is going. *See page 31.*

**If you're a creative**, service your clients at scale. We know you already design websites, maybe do SEO too. As a Nettl partner, do more, for a wider range of clients, without compromising your capacity. *See page 31.*

**If you're an entrepreneur**, start a w3shop by Nettl. Find a niche, sell our full product range, or curate a collection. Set your own prices. *See page 33.*

**If you've been made redundant** because of the pandemic, apply to become a Nettl Academy Scholar. If you can sell or design, we'll help you learn new skills and start your own business. *See page 35.*





18:55



Pop in  
and SAY HI!

nettl.com



# This is how it begins

We all know what clients want.

They want to win new customers.

When events return, they want visitors.

When exhibitions restart, they want attendees.

When restaurants open their kitchens, diners.

We can help. You can help.

We can't do this alone. We're stronger together.

*Your* local reputation. *Our* systems and software.

*Your* relationships. *Our* marketing automation.

*Your* team. *Our* team. As one.

In your town. You and us.

Together, we are Nettle.

If there isn't a Nettle in your town, expect us.

It's hard to go it alone. It's hard to invest in a new system or relationship. But if both roads are hard, choose the one that gets you to a better place.

It'll be hard. **But good hard.** You ready?

Time to choose... **[www.nettl.com/chooseyourhard](http://www.nettl.com/chooseyourhard)**





# Sell your products

Our Nettl network is buying what you're selling.

Every day, our clients are looking for novel ways to promote themselves. Every day, our Nettl stores forage for trusted suppliers within our community.

We connect buyers with makers. In an efficient way.

If you manufacture packaging, labels, apparel, fancy printing, promo giveaways, displays, branded swag, designer personalised gifts or custom furniture, *we want you*. If you make something a business might use for marketing, *we want it* on our platform.

Become a Nettl **Works Maker**. There's no up-front fees and no monthly subscription. Let us know what you *do best* and we'll onboard your range in a few easy steps.

Your products will be on hundreds of public web shops, like printing.com and Marqetspace.com. And they'll be available for selection on private client sites too.

We'll send you orders and couriers will pick-up parcels when you're ready. You'll be paid by Grafenia plc, so no need to worry about credit checking individual clients. It's the easiest way to extend your reach.

Sign up free at [www.nettl.com/chooseworks](http://www.nettl.com/chooseworks)





# Become a Nettle partner

There's a reason Nettle is the largest branded network of design, web, print and sign studios in the UK.

It's because the Nettle system helps graphics businesses do more for their clients. To get more from existing relationships and nurture new ones.

Employing people is expensive. To grow, hiring more people isn't always the answer. It's about being more productive. The Nettle system frees time by automating things your team might do manually. Our training upskills, so you can get more from your existing team.

Use our automated marketing to keep front of mind with clients. Stay fresh, say relevant things. To nudge reorders and trigger new ideas. So you can focus on growing relationships in our neighbourhood.

More than 200 independent businesses choose to be our exclusive Nettle partner in their town. We only grant one partner per location. Some have remained with us for two decades. We'd like you to be with us next.

Nettle is surprisingly affordable. Give your whole team access from just £69 per week. Contributions of 60% off your initial licence fee are available this Spring.

Visit **[www.nettl.com/choosepartner](http://www.nettl.com/choosepartner)** to learn more.





# Launch an ecommerce site

Thinking about upgrading your website, to harness the unrelenting drive online? It's never been easier. Or more affordable – from less than £4 per day.

If you sell jam or shoes or cannabis oil or scooters or trombones or fish food, an off-the-shelf ecommerce platform will work just fine. If you're selling print, signs, posters, displays or personalised promotional items, it's best to choose a specialist platform, designed with design in mind. That's **w3shop by Nettl**.

Use the same web-to-print platform powering printing.com, Nettl.com and hundreds of online print shops around the world. Create your online print shop in 5 minutes, be ready to take orders in 48 hours.

Already running an online store? Maybe you've listed products you make in-house. Takes time doesn't it? Writing sales copy, keeping specifications up-to-date, calculating prices and taking product shots. What a burden. Wouldn't it be easier if someone did all the merchandising for you? New products automatically listed, with rich marketing copy and photography.

Launch a w3shop this Spring and get an instant product catalogue, with £500 worth of product credits.

Start today at **[www.nettl.com/choosew3shop](http://www.nettl.com/choosew3shop)**







# Enroll at the Academy

Been made redundant from a sales or design role?

We've launched the Nettl Academy Scholarship to help those affected by the pandemic. That could be you, or someone you know.

The Nettl Academy is our online training and development facility. Where people upskill and learn new things. We teach people how to sell. We teach folk how to build websites and ecommerce systems. They learn how to properly design for production and manage client relationships.

Courses cover multiple disciplines from graphics, sales and marketing. All delivered online, with a mixture of live sessions and recorded content. We've delivered over 50,000 training sessions.

Have you always dreamt of running your own business? Got an eye for creative or an interest in tech? A Nettl Academy Scholarship is a pathway to owning your very own Nettl in your town. If your application is successful, your Nettl subscription fees and all training courses will be paid for six months.

Apply at **[www.nettl.com/choosescholar](http://www.nettl.com/choosescholar)**



# CHOOSE YOUR HARD

*There are **no** easy answers*  
***Everything** is hard*  
*Choose the **right** hard*

All prices exclude VAT and are subject to licence agreement or subscription.

See [www.nettl.com/chooseyourhard](http://www.nettl.com/chooseyourhard) for full terms and conditions of incentives.

Acceptance is subject to status and availability.

