

Apps from the ground up

Behind The Straits Times' new look on tablets and smartphones is technology consultancy Tigerspike, whose mandate was to build sleek new apps that users will love.

"We aim to make using them a great experience for people," said founder and executive chairman Luke Janssen. "Hopefully, people will find that they are intuitive and simple to use."

The 200-strong company has eight international offices spanning five continents. It has helped to design apps for publications such as The Economist and The Telegraph.

The keywords in The Straits Times' revamp are simplicity and elegance, said Tigerspike's head of production Sam Beeby.

"Some of the feedback we had about the previous app was that it was a bit cluttered, and it was difficult for people to find what they were looking for," he said.

The new apps, on the other hand, will be "fairly simple; not complicated and full of bells and whistles". They will be pared down with a cleaner, fresher appearance designed around a grid.

Going for the modular look will allow The Straits Times to mix and match content – videos, text and pictures – so that stories are presented in the best way possible.

"Think of it like Lego bricks," said Straits Times digital editor Eugene Leow. "They come in all shapes, sizes and colours. It's the same for content too."

Readers will be able to customise their own news feed by choosing from various categories. And in future iterations of the app, they may even be able to "follow" stories to keep abreast of the latest developments on a particular issue.

"But initially, it's all about simplicity, elegance, design and performance," Mr Beeby said.

The new apps have also been built for stability, meaning that moving between pages is faster and app crashes are less likely to happen.

Any reader feedback on the apps will be much appreciated, as The Straits Times is already working on tweaks to make the reading experience even better.

"Innovation never stops in the digital world," said Mr Leow. "We will continually release new iterations of our digital products, improving each step of the way."



WORLD: From our correspondents in Asia and around the world, we bring you the latest international news and insiders' takes on developments in the region. Look out for more special reports, displayed attractively.



FORUM: Providing a platform for you to express your views on the events and issues of the day. There will also be more prominent space for our artists to give their light-hearted take on the news and readers' views.



OPINION: Our writers and contributors go beyond the news to provide insights on the issues and trends. Adding their unique perspectives on the articles are our award-winning illustrators.



SPORT: From tie-ups with some of Europe's top football clubs for exclusive content to a more comprehensive coverage of local sport, the section offers what the Singapore sports fan has come to expect and more. A new sport business column will feature the movers and shakers in Singapore's fast-growing sports industry.

INSIDE THE NEW-LOOK STRAITS TIMES

- The revamped Straits Times comes with a new colour palette and a custom-designed typeface called Selane.
- It is applied to all ST products – print, website, mobile and tablet.
- The design is strong on visuals, giving more room for ST's talented photographers, graphic artists, designers and illustrators to showcase their skills.
- Bold layouts and impactful displays of news pictures and graphics help tell the stories in dramatic ways.



• NEW!

BIG PICTURE: At the back of the first section will be Big Picture, which aims to inspire, spark a thought or bring on a smile.

ST BRIEFING: Page Two will be our daily Briefing page. In addition to giving you summaries of the stories in the day's paper, we will alert you to what's coming up. There will also be a column called **Why It Matters**, where our correspondents will give a quick take on the significance of a news topic.

The revamped Straits Times will be in four sections:

Part A: Briefing, Top of the News, World news, Opinion, Forum and Big Picture.

Part B: An expanded Home section will devote more space to local news. This includes daily themed features on popular topics such as education, health, digital, community and science.

Part C: The Money section has been renamed Business, which now incorporates foreign business news as well. It will continue to offer analyses of listed companies and economic matters, as well as insights from business leaders. Sport fills the back of the section.

Part D: The Life pages get a bold new look, serving up the best of what's trending both locally and overseas. Whether it's fashion shows or food reviews, travel or Taylor Swift, Life has it all covered.



Q&A with Lucie Lacava

Award-winning design consultant Lucie Lacava has helped to redesign more than 80 publications around the world. She was a key contributor towards The Straits Times' new look, both in print and online. The Straits Times asks her how she got the job done.

The revamped Straits Times feels a lot more spacious and easier on the eye. What kind of look were you going for?

We were trying to modernise the look overall – making it look fresh, but still anchoring it in the newspaper tradition.

It's more airy, and we also standardised the grid so that advertisements and editorial share the same space for a more consistent look.

The pictures and graphics are a lot more striking in the revamped version of The Straits Times. Why is this so?

Before, you had pages with a few small or medium-sized pictures, so the page didn't really have a focus.

Now, we have a more dynamic-looking presentation, with one big picture and several smaller pictures, which really grabs the attention.

There's also a really keen interest in photography nowadays, so there's a real demand for great pictures as part of the design.

Given that The Straits Times has 170 years of history behind it, how did you balance between modernising the paper but keeping it true to its roots?

In this case, the mandate was more evolution than revolution.

It's not like The Straits Times is a paper that needs to reinvent itself. Rather, it's more about making a look that is consistent across all platforms.

You've worked on redesigning more than 80 publications internationally. What was different about The Straits Times?

The great thing about it was that the revamp happened across all platforms at the same time – print and online.

With some other projects, you have the print revamp first and the rest a year later, so the look ends up not being very consistent.

What is your design process like?

I usually start with the front page to get the look and feel right before I proceed to the inside. The front page is the window to the rest of the paper – it's the heart and soul.

It's about trying to add the "wow factor", the element of surprise.

So how did you get the "wow factor" in your design?

It's in the use of typography, having a news feature-type presentation, and how you package stories.

We've introduced the double-page picture spread, so we can tell stories in a more visual way.

ST NEW SITE, MORE ACCESS

These days, most people no longer go looking for news.

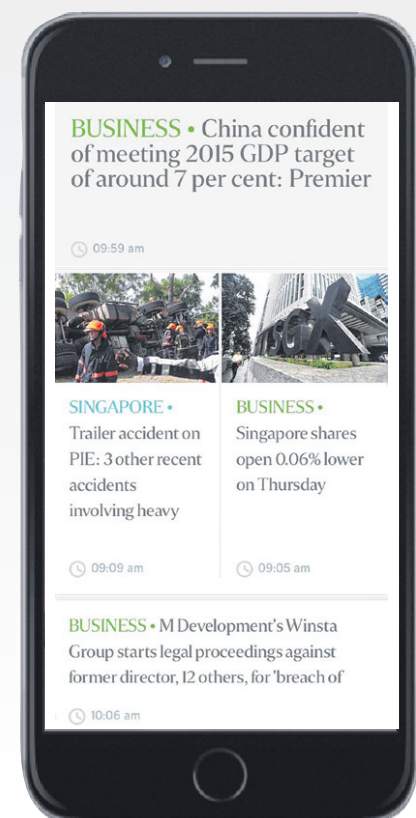
As Straits Times' digital editor Eugene Leow puts it: "The vast majority say, 'If the news is important to me, it will find me.'"

This is why The Straits Times has overhauled its website and mobile apps to serve up an experience tailored to each reader's interests. Readers will get stories relevant to them as quickly as ST can roll them out.

As part of the revamp, ST will also be launching a round-the-clock live blog that will post breaking news developments more quickly. It will incorporate comments from Facebook and Twitter, as well as photos and video clips.

ST has also done away with its old payroll, under which non-subscribers could read only a small portion of the news for free. From July 1, the payroll will be loosened to allow everyone to read all stories in full, including those from the newspaper. But there will be a quota of free stories each month.

To celebrate SG50, everyone will get 50 free stories for July. If you register, you will get unlimited access till Aug 9, 2015. A new quota will be set in August, although the exact number has not been determined. There will be separate quotas for ST's website, smartphone and tablet apps.



• **Update** your ST apps at either Apple's App Store or Google Play store for Android users.

• **A clean, breezy, modular design** that works like Lego bricks – pictures, text and graphics can be easily swopped to give a story the prominence it deserves.

• **Mobile-friendly ST website** that will load faster and display optimally on all devices.

• **A new round-the-clock live blog called ST Now** will serve up the latest breaking news as soon as it happens.

• **Content algorithms** will tell us exactly what each reader prefers, helping us push out stories tailored to your interests.

• The old payroll that stops non-subscribers from reading newspaper stories is a thing of the past. Our new system will let you read your fill of news stories, up to a quota each month. To celebrate SG50, we will be giving everyone 50 free stories for July. **If you take part in our free registration, you get unlimited access until Aug 9, 2015.**

• **Expect more** videos and picture galleries online too.

