

For Publication

# HECK



## What the Heck!

“Beyond a better bangers and mash”

**Category**

1.Brand

**Sub Category**

1.2 Design and implementation  
costs over £100,000

**Client**

Heck

**Design Consultancy**

Elmwood

**Date**

June 2014



elmwood

## 2. Executive summary

# HECK

↑ From zero to  
**£3.5m**  
in one year

↑ **21** staff  
added  
since launch  
(25 up from 4)



↑ **944**  
stores nationwide,  
up from 0

**ROI in  
2 weeks**

'What the heck.' A simple, courageous motto that encapsulated the uncompromising attitude the Keeble family took towards sausages. A motto that formed the foundation of a **multi-million pound business, created from scratch, through only one retailer, in less than twelve months.** HECK has captured the imagination of retailers and consumers all over the UK, setting the business on track to hit their **five-year target of £7 million turnover in less than two years.**

HECK is very much a family business, set up by the Keebles to provide a sustainable future for generations to come. They were no strangers to the market, or indeed to Elmwood, having launched Debbie & Andrew's sausages together in 2002. The success of this launch formed the basis of a strong relationship between Elmwood and the Keebles, and gave them the confidence to try something new.

HECK launched in April 2013, joining a highly competitive market, saturated with me-too, faux-farmer 'premium' brands. After securing a deal to be stocked in 500 Tesco stores **turnover in the first four months hit £600,000.** By August they were producing over half a million sausages a week from their farm in North Yorkshire, and **their 97% pork range were flying off the shelves at 24 packs per store per week on average. That's more than one per minute.**

In the space of **twelve months they've gone from selling at local farmers' markets to having ten SKUs stocked in four nationwide supermarkets.** Wherever you find them, one thing's for sure, they make one heck of a good sausage.

### Some HECK highlights:

- £3.5 million sales in the first year
- More than a million packs sold with no marketing budget
- From 0 stores nationwide to 944 stores nationwide across 4 different retailers
- Grown staff from 4 to 25
- On track to hit five-year targets in just two years
- The investment paid for itself within two weeks (based on turnover)

[299 words]

## 3. Project Overview

### The brief

Debbie and Andrew Keeble are no strangers to the world of sausages. Back in 2002 they pretty much redefined the market single-handedly with their range of premium Yorkshire sausages, resulting in a buyout in 2007. Having helped them launch their original range with such success the couple returned to Elmwood, but whilst the team was the same, the market was very different and highly competitive. Many brands had jumped onto the premium sausage bandwagon, so we needed a completely new approach to captivate consumers in a competitive market.

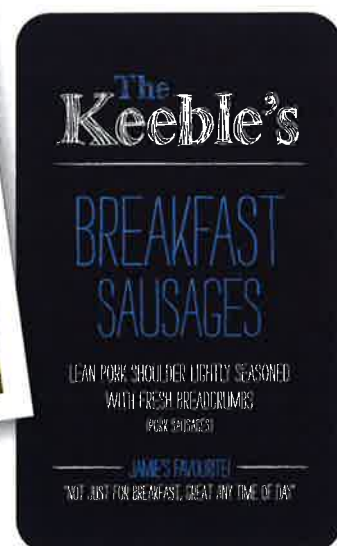
### Objectives

We had no name, no brand and no big marketing spend. What we did have was a highly experienced couple who were willing to collaborate closely with us, and some clear objectives to guide us. We needed to build a brand that would:

- Gain listings in major multiples
- Attract new consumers to the category
- Deliver a £7million turnover by 2017
- Create a sustainable business that the family could control for years to come.

### Description

The Keebles had never stopped making sausages. It was in their blood. They had built on their previous recipes to include new variants such as skinless and smoky chorizo flavours alongside the traditional pork and apple and were selling them under The Keebles name at local shows. In short, the sausages would be great. The challenge was creating a brand that did them justice.



### 3. Project Overview continued

# 85%

of the fixture in Tesco is dedicated to own label products – the sausage sector was saturated



Just some of Heck's competitors

#### Overview of the market

A lot had changed since Debbie & Andrew's launched the original authentic farmers' sausages in 2002, and its success had seen multiple 'premium' brands all vying for space and undercutting prices. Own label premium sausages had undergone several revamps and now accounted for upwards of 60% of the fixture (85% at Tesco, source: Dunhumby) and with consumers feeling the pinch, retailer brands offered great value for money through constant price promotions. The sausage sector was well and truly saturated.

But there was a glimmer of hope - research showed us all these brands looked and felt pretty much the same. Same flavours, same black trays, same attitude and tone of voice. The opportunity was there for a new iconic brand to shake things up again.

#### Overview of the audience

We knew that to make retailers take notice we'd have to do something different. The majority of purchases came from families (buying 11 times a year on average) so we looked at a younger ABC1 shopper with a real passion for food; aspirational rurbanites who were more inspired by Borough Market than Barbour jackets. If we could attract them to buy, and buy more often, then others would follow.

#### Project launch date

April 2013

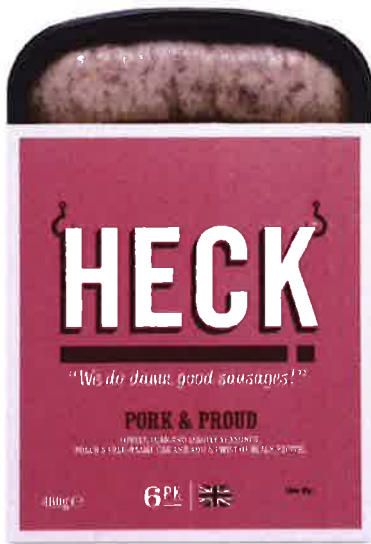
#### Size of Design Budget

£119k - including brand strategy, brand identity, strategic brand platform, packaging design, photography, social media strategy and website development.

[624 words]



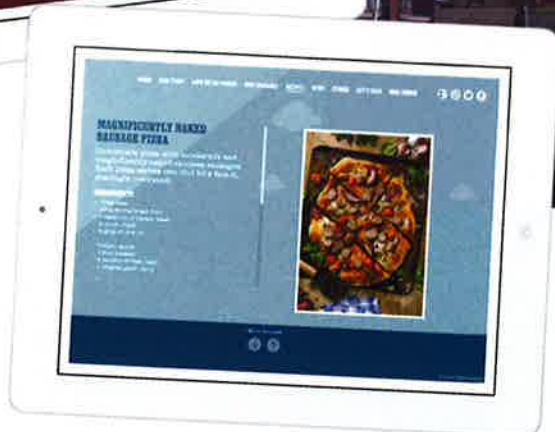
## 4. Outline of design solution



'What the Heck'. Not a question, but a statement of intent. A Keeble family motto that captured their uncompromising attitude towards food. They were determined to always use the best quality ingredients and processes, even if it cost them time and money. This single-minded attitude and passion for food was at the heart of the business, so we knew it should be at the heart of the brand. A signpost for their relentless passion and commitment to great taste, delivered in a confident, authentic tone of voice – the voice of the Keeble family. 'HECK' was born.

The no-holes-barred, nature of the name was a massive departure for the category, and was central to HECK winning over both retailers and consumers. But we needed a visual identity that matched it. HECK needed to stand out and grab people's attention on the supermarket shelves, to stand proud and confident amongst a jumble of busy packs. Everything was stripped back to allow the personality to shine through – no pictures of farmers, no muddy wellies, no grinning butchers, just a bold marquee in capital letters, with a ballsy claim: **HECK. We do damn good sausages.**

To help customers navigate the range HECK needed an equally strong and simple colour palette. In a sea of dark, back trays that had become the category standard, HECK was given modern, fresh foodie colours more commonly associated with a contemporary cookbook than a sausage fixture. Each pack used three tonally linked colours that brightened up the cold fixture and made sure they were never over designed – just as the product wasn't over processed.



## 4. Outline of design solution



The overall simplicity of the pack combined with uncoated stock helped reinforce the honesty and integrity of the product, with subtle, carefully chosen cues such as a butcher's hook used to add a little character and reflect the HECK's independence. It all added up to a pack that stood out from the big brand manufacturers and delivered an authentic farmers' market feel to the supermarket shelf.

We carried the HECK attitude through on the reverse, taking care not to undermine our credibility by turning the pack into a piece of 'wackaging'. Simple, provocative language such as "Sausages you can swear by" created a bit of a stir and encouraged busy shoppers to think twice. Each pack also featured serving suggestions to encourage shoppers to see HECK as more than just plain old bangers to go with their mash - they're a premium food ingredient that they can be creative with; something they can buy on a regular basis.

With such a bold brand we needed to get people talking about it, and make sure it came to life beyond the supermarket shelves. With no PR or advertising budget we created a social media strategy that the Keebles could manage easily themselves without disrupting their already busy lives. This suited both the cheeky nature of the brand and the youthful Keebles — all digital natives — and helped word of HECK spread far, wide and fast.

[475 words]



## 4. Outline of design solution continued



Back of pack



Serving suggestions: More than just a sausage



## 5. Summary of results

At the start of the project we identified four business objectives that were key to the success of the brand:

1. To gain listings in major multiples
2. To attract new consumers to the category
3. To deliver a £7million turnover by 2017
4. To create a sustainable business that the family could control for years to come.

### Objective 1: Gaining listings in major multiples

In an age of range rationalisation, justifying a place on the shelf was our first and biggest challenge – brands were being actively de-listed in an over-crowded fixture, so we needed to offer something new, other than just flavours. It needed a unique attitude; a story people found compelling; a voice people could relate to. HECK provided exactly that and quickly won the Keebles their first listing at Tesco.

But more was to follow as word spread. ASDA joined the HECK fanclub in April 2014, followed by Waitrose and then Booths. In the space of 12 months, HECK went from having no retail listings to being listed in 4 major multiples.

3 SKUs in Tesco (nationally)

2 SKUs in ASDA (nationally – started April 2014)

3 SKUs in Waitrose (nationally – starting May 2014)

2 SKUs in Booths (launch date tbc)

### Objective 2: Attract new consumers to the category

Getting sausage-lovers to choose HECK over its competitors was only part of the challenge – we had to introduce new customers to the sector as well. According to Dunhumby data HECK has done exactly that, attracting new high-value shoppers who aren't put off by the premium price point.

- 51% of all sales were from new buyers or buyers that were increasing their repertoire and spend.
- 14% of all sales were from entirely new to category buyers.
- 43% of all HECK shoppers classified as upmarket, compared to only 33% of Tesco Finest premium sausage buyers.
- HECK is the number one brand with upmarket shoppers.

The success of the new brand has also provided a solid platform to explore more innovative products from – such as the Chicken Italia sausage and the Fair & Square “squausage” – attracting even more new customers to the category.

 **4**   
major retailers  
up from 0

 **944**  
stores nationwide,  
up from 0

**51%** of  
sales from new  
buyers

**14%** of sales  
were from  
new-to-category  
buyers



## 5. Summary of results continued

1/3 of Tesco's  
premium  
branded sales  
from Heck

Sales of  
£14,000 per  
day

### Objective 3: Delivering a £7 million turnover by 2017

HECK started with nothing, but from this standing start they became a £3.5 million brand in just twelve months.

**£3.5 million in 12 months through one retailer with zero PR or advertising investment.**

This was made all the more remarkable by the fact that, following years of growth, the premium sausage market started to slow in 2012, with volume sales falling 1.4% and value falling by 1.1%. Round-pound promotions were also supporting mid-tier sausages, which were up 2.1% in value and 2.4% in volume respectively. (The Grocer, Focus on Bacon & Sausages, Nov 2012)

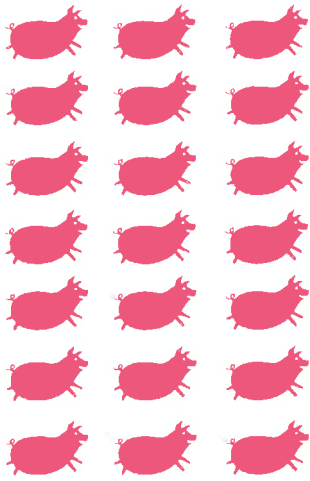
In its first 6 months alone, HECK delivered almost a third (32%) of all Tesco's premium branded sales (including venture brands), outstripping brand leaders such as Black Farmer, despite a premium price point of £2.99 RSP.

This has been achieved with an average rate of sale of **24 packs per store per week** for the lead SKU (Heck 97%) - a rate of sale that mirrors the peak rate achieved by Debbie & Andrew's brand after 12 years.

HECK exceeded everyone's expectations in year one, but year two projections are looking even more positive. Current sales volumes are at £14,000 per day on average, putting HECK on track to hit the £7 million goal more than three years before expected. And that's even before the additional retail outlets kick in.



## 5. Summary of results continued



**21** New jobs created

**75%**

of employees are under 25

### Objective 4: Creating a sustainable business for all the family

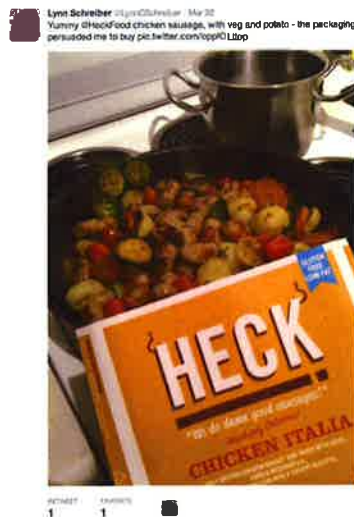
HECK was never simply a way for the Keebles to sell some sausages - the aim from the outset was to build a business that would provide a secure future for the whole family and create opportunities for generations to come. The success of the brand has created 21 new jobs, with 75% of the employees under the age of 25. It's not just the family who have filled the positions; friends have taken up roles from Head of Production to Sales Manager, creating a community of young minds with an entrepreneurial spirit. Their success has pushed them to the forefront of food producers, sharing their knowledge at The Farmers Weekly conference for young farmers called "Fertile Minds".



## 5. Summary of results continued



Tweet from Nigella Lawson



Comments on Heck packaging

### Creating a buzz

With a name like HECK the brand was always going to cause a stir and get people talking. It's bold nature and uncompromising attitude has helped it win fans far and wide, spreading the word through Facebook and Twitter. Nigella Lawson was one such follower who couldn't resist singing the praises of HECK's Fair & Square sausages as the essential ingredient for a snack (with a dollop of HP). On St. Patrick's Day they released a limited edition Guinness-flavoured sausage, and even changed the name to FECK for 24 hours. It all helped push HECK to the front of people's minds, resulting in global award-winning communications agency Engine Group offering their services for free as they loved the brand so much.

### Not just a sausage

The platform has been built for HECK to expand into wherever their ambitions take them. The ballsy personality, the confident design and the relentless quest for better quality has connected with consumers and given them license to push the brand into new territories. Burgers are on the horizon (the world's best, according to reports) and, as you might expect from a Yorkshire family, a top-notch black pudding. By targeting a younger audience they've established the credibility to engage with them in more youthful environments, and a HECK van is due to be touring the festival scene this summer.

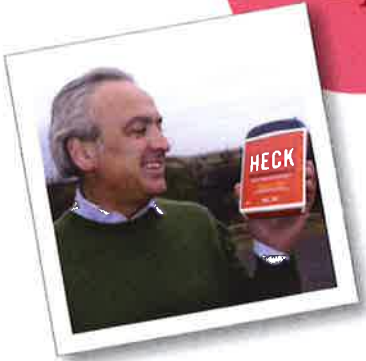


## 5. Summary of results continued

### **One heck of a team**

*“Having worked with Elmwood before, we know how effective their work can be to make sure new products truly hit the mark with retailers and consumers as well as jumping out on the shelf. We worked with them from the conception stage of the brand and their input has helped us create a unique and striking design and concept that I feel will really resonate and stand out in today’s market.”*

*— Andrew Keeble, Director*



## Other influencing factors



HECK was created from scratch, and since its launch there has been no spend on advertising or PR, so it is fair to say that the success can be largely attributed to the brand identity and packaging. Social Media has played a part, which has been managed by the family based on our guidance and strategy.

When HECK launched in April 2013, the UK was still suffering from the impact of the recession and families were looking for more affordable ways of doing their weekly shop. Consumers continue to be price-sensitive, reflected in tightened household budgets, with shoppers looking for better value for money. (Kantar World Panel on BPEX.org) There's little doubt the sausage market benefitted from this, with consumers switching away from beef and lamb in favour of cheaper options. But whilst this helped the mid-tier sausage range that were largely on multi-purchase promotions, the premium ranges were actually in decline, with volume sales falling 1.4% and value falling by 1.1%.

HECK has been on promotion approximately 35 - 40% of the time (average promotion of £2.50 from £2.99). However, in a category that is dominated by promotional activity (with premium own-label constantly on 2 for £5 offers) this performance has outstripped the category with HECK more than holding its own.

### **The horsemeat scandal**

One of the biggest scandals in the history of retail hit the headlines in the brand's first year on shelves, and Tesco were right at the heart of it. The horsemeat scandal had a huge impact on the processed meat industry with some studies showing that 67% of adults were less likely to buy processed meat products as a result. (Neilson, in The Grocer December 2013). Tesco - HECK's sole retailer at the time - saw a massive drop in consumer confidence but in many ways the scandal presented a great opportunity for HECK. Hyper-aware customers wanted reassurance about the uncompromising quality and provenance of the meat they were buying, and if there was one brand on the market who did uncompromising quality, it was HECK.

## Research Resources

Our client has provided much of this information.  
Other sources of information have been:

- The Grocer
- Dunhumby
- Kantar World Panel - BPEX.org
- Twitter

