

Submission Title

Bulwark

Industry sector

Beverages

Client Company

Bulwark

Design Consultancy

WPA Pinfold

Date

30.06.17

For publication

The New World Cider



BULWARK™

ORIGINAL CIDER

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+62%

62% increase across
on-trade and off-trade
sale in Nova Scotia



+50%

50% increase
in staff



New accounts won
in the USA, UK, Hong
Kong and China

Bulwark Cider is Nova Scotia's most famous cider brand and its fame is now spreading across North America and the Far East. It is a hand-crafted traditional cider that uses freshly pressed apple juice from the rich and fertile Annapolis Valley. The cider market has become highly competitive and WPA Pinfold was commissioned to rebrand Bulwark to focus on its value proposition and reposition it in the added-value craft cider sector. A key requirement of the brief was to also help it achieve export growth, especially in the highly competitive UK market. In recent years the craft cider market has become significantly more competitive in Canada, with an influx of imports. WPA Pinfold were briefed to rebrand the original craft cider to help grow the Canadian market and prepare the brand for launch in the UK and European markets.

Mulwin Estate is a small winery and cider producer in Nova Scotia, Canada, with big ambitions. Bulwark is its flagship cider, and has always enjoyed a local following, although it has struggled to gain distribution further afield.

As part of a new sales initiative, we were commissioned to rebrand Bulwark and redesign the packaging to position the brand for launch across the global cider market, particularly the UK.

It was critical for Bulwark to punch above its weight in the craft beverage sector and with a very limited marketing budget, the rebrand was the critical success factor – this was its single biggest investment. It had to position the cider on shelf and on bar alongside the major players (Bulmers and Magners) and build on its provenance and craft credentials, as a single differentiating and premiumising factor.

“The new brand has won orders in the UK (one of the biggest markets for cider), USA, Hong Kong and China. Since the rebrand, Bulwark has seen a +62% increase across on-trade and off-trade sales in Nova Scotia, making it the best-selling cider in the province”
– Bulwark, Director.

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Outline of project brief

Bulwark is a craft-produced cider, using freshly pressed apples from local orchards on Nova Scotia (many cider producers use concentrate and imported apple juice). The range of ciders had won many awards and rave reviews, however it had failed to gain real traction with the market, beyond its local area.

The company needed to expand into new markets both across Canada and globally, but previous branding attempts had failed to deliver any sales penetration. The client wanted a craft drinks specialist and we came highly recommended – so they took the plunge. Whilst Bulwark know a lot about producing exquisite and well-rounded cider, it was struggling to understand the highly competitive craft beverage market. They entrusted us with their brand and reputation and relied on us to guide them through the process of creating winning brands.

Key deliverables

- Reposition the brand to compete in the cider category in Nova Scotia and the rest of Canada – as an alternative to the mainstream ciders.
- Communicate the artisan credentials and provenance of Bulwark Cider.
- Ensure the brand is also aligned with the craft beer category to help it capitalise on this fast-growing sector – cider is a complementary offer in a lot of craft bars.
- Premiumise the range to ensure it was positioned as added value and supports a premium price point.
- Clearly communicate the value proposition to the consumer.
- Ensure it has appeal for export markets – especially USA and UK.
- Future-proof the brand and allow for range extensions.
- Grow sales and territorial reach by creating a credible brand that punches above its weight and competes against the big global brands such as Magners and Bulmers.
- Establish Bulwark as a premium cider against competitors.



Bulwark Cider - before rebrand

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Challenge

There was a general lack of understanding by the client of the power of branding and the market opportunities of the fast-growing craft beverage category. The existing brand and packaging design totally missed its market and was inappropriate and not fit for market – it also had no added value.

The initial challenge was to educate the client about the market opportunities and what the real equities and potential of the Bulwark brand were. The client had to make a leap of faith that was only fully appreciated once the rebrand started to succeed.

Overview of market:

Market drivers -

Growing demand for low alcohol beverages, greater innovation in mash-up and hybrid flavours, health benefits of fresh-pressed apple cider, increasing number of women moving from wine category to cider.

Market challenges -

Threat of new entrant (imminent), product differentiation/saturation, challenging economic climate and absence of tax breaks. Strong competitors/major players make breakthrough and market acquisition difficult. (Global Industry Analysis, 2017)

In recent years the craft cider market has become significantly more competitive in Canada, with an influx of imports.

In the face of overcrowding and an explosion of new beer/cider designs, it was necessary to create a design that would make Bulwark accessible to all markets. Finding the right balance that communicated Bulwark's unique selling point against all other cider brands (big/small) was pivotal.

Project launch date:

June 2015.

Size of design budget and production costs:

£15,000, excluding production.



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Scope

Insights -

Market review for cider and beer (Canada, USA and UK), benchmarking, consumer profiles.

Strategy -

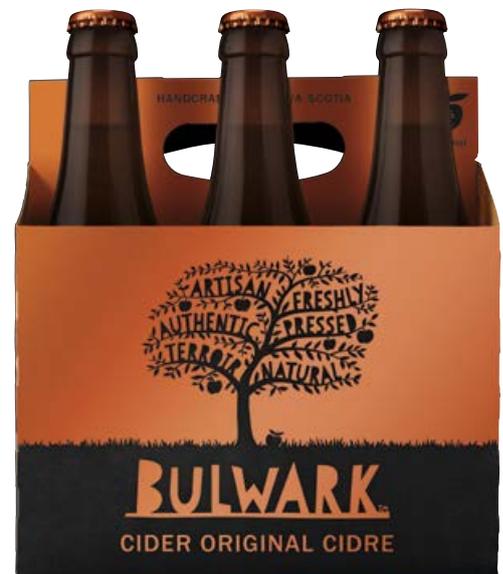
Brand mapping, value proposition, positioning, visual territories, big thought.

Articulation and activation -

Brand creation, visual and verbal assets, new brand ID, new brand packaging design, design templates for packaging range and POS.

Strategic thinking

The Bulwark brand was not performing in its local market and there was also a lack of understanding by the client of the national markets (especially USA and UK). The existing design ignored the brand's craft and artisan credentials and had no appeal for the cider drinker. In addition, there has been a revolution in the beer market, with the introduction of 'craft' beer, and we identified an opportunity for the client to capitalise on this – craft bars are seeking out craft ciders to complement the beers. We reviewed the craft beer market alongside the cider sector and used our craft beverage experience to educate the client about the opportunities to build on its obvious craft credentials. This was key to the success of the rebrand, however it was a major challenge to convince the client – they did not understand the phenomenal change in consumer trends happening in this sector. We also developed a brand strategy built around a compelling value proposition. Coming from a region with over 400 years of apple growing tradition, the whole strategy and concept for Bulwark was to build on its unique 5-apple signature blend, focusing on the provenance of its ingredients and reflecting its classic Nova Scotia heritage and tradition through iconic illustration – a true original new world cider.



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Outline of design solution

The new brand and packaging range totally transforms Bulwark, by using hand-drawn lettering and an organic design to deliver the core provenance messages in a way that is engaging and on market. The natural look both premiumises the packaging whilst also focusing on the artisan and natural qualities of the cider and its production. The design is compelling in its visual messaging and has great shelf and bar stand-out.



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Bulwark was shortlisted for a brand impact award in 2016

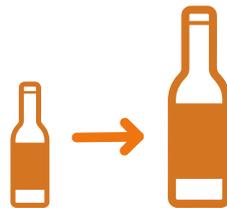
Summary of results:

The rebrand has totally repositioned Bulwark and delivered fantastic return on investment. The new packaging has received rave reviews from consumers and the trade alike. The new premium look has accelerated Bulwark's position in Nova Scotia, making it one of the **biggest cider brands** in the province (currently 250 cider brands operating here).

Increase of 62% after new brand

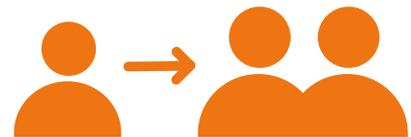


- New accounts created in the **USA, UK, Hong Kong and China.**
- Achieved **premium pricing** in UK and USA.
- **Increase** in staff numbers.
- On target to **double sales.** Is looking to further expand into the UK market.
- Response from consumers/public/cider fans has been incredible. Recognisable brand that gives a fresh premium feel.



+100%

On target to double sales and expand into the UK market



+50%

50% increase in staff members

“The new branding has had a tremendous impact on the community as we can use it to sell not only our craft ciders but the province of Nova Scotia as a whole”

- Bulwark, Director.

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Other influencing factors

The cider industry itself has experienced a major shift globally, with more consumers opening up their cider palate to that beyond the traditional big named brands.

The success of Bulwark has been particularly recognised within its home city, winning several awards for both its great flavours and its branding appeal.

Some of the awards won are:

- / Gold in the 2017 Great Lakes International Cider & Perry Competition in 'Modern Cider' category
- / Gold in the 2017 Canadian Brewing Awards
- / Gold – 2016 Drink Outside the Grapes Award
- / Silver in the 2016 Canadian Brewing Awards in New World Cider Category.



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- **Good Beer Guide**
- **Global Industry Analysis 2017**
- **Office for National Statistics**