



# JUST THE TONIC

---

FOR PUBLICATION ENTRY  
DBA Design Effectiveness  
Awards 2019

SUBMISSION TITLE  
Just the Tonic: Warner Edwards Gin

CLIENT COMPANY  
Warner Edwards Distillery

SUBMISSION DATE  
November 2018

Biles Hendry





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the inventor of the original Rhubarb Gin and three other flavour variants, Warner Edwards' vision was to become the world's artisan gin brand of choice. Facing an onslaught of competition and the threat of a category slow down, its brand design was letting it down.

In order to cut through the competition and justify its super premium price point, the redesign needed to move the bottle away from simple functionality and towards something that's iconic – a design that would sit proudly on the back bar, in store, and in the home.

Warner Edwards' success in the two years since the redesign was nothing short of exceptional. With very little in the way of additional marketing spend, no discounting or special offers, and against the start of a contracting market, the brand design captured the imagination of consumers in both the on and off trade.

- **On trade sales value: +76% vs objective and +1,500% growth vs pre-redesign**
- **Off trade sales value: +46% vs target and +1,183% increase vs pre-redesign**
- **On trade sales volume: +100% vs objective and +3,000% upsurge vs pre-redesign**
- **Off trade sales volume: +50% vs goal and +2,477% growth vs pre-redesign**
- **+115% listings growth more than doubles objective**
- **#1 branded gin at M&S**

And finally... (redacted confidential data) million bottles of gin were sold in the UK in 2017, which means that **Warner Edwards produced and sold almost 1% of the UK's gin consumption that year** – a truly magnificent achievement considering there were hundreds of players in the market!



## CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

### Outline of project brief

As the inventor of the original Rhubarb Gin as well as three other flavour variants, Warner Edwards' vision was to become the world's artisan gin brand of choice. However, it was facing an onslaught of competition from all points of the pricing spectrum, all wanting to capitalise on the fertile UK market. Armed with the knowledge that the category would eventually reach saturation and start to slow down, it was a race to the top – and Warner Edwards' brand design simply didn't reflect the company's vision.

With limited marketing budget, new branding and packaging design would be key to long-term success. Biles Hendry's brief was to refine Warner Edwards' brand proposition, then articulate that through artfully executed brand look & feel, tone of voice, packaging design and brand guidelines.

In order to cut through the competition and justify its super premium price point, the redesign needed to move the bottle away from simple functionality and towards something that's iconic – a design that would sit proudly on the back bar, in store, and in the home. In order to drive brand growth, success was measured against the following:

- Achieve sales value and volume targets
- Grow on and off-trade listings
- Outpace market growth
- Maintain premium pricing – no discounts or special offers

## Description

### About Warner Edwards Gin

Warner Edwards had a dream to save the world from mediocre gin. So they decided to become gin farmers. Located on a beautiful 200-year old family farm in Northamptonshire, they draw water from their own spring, grow their own botanicals where possible, and collect fresh honey from their own beehives.

After years of planning and months of experimentation, they launched their first, award-winning London Dry Gin in 2012, well before the massive gin sector explosion over the last 2-3 years. Then they pushed further, forging a whole new gin sub-segment with their sweet, tangy rhubarb gin. Making gin in small batches in two gorgeous bespoke copper stills named Curiosity and Satisfaction, their gut was their guide, and nature their inspiration.

Warner Edwards was the first brand to produce gin with the addition of natural botanicals after distillation. In fact, the head of Diageo's future gin trends division credited Warner Edwards as the driving force behind hundreds of pink gin imitators.

With four flavour variants before the rebrand, Warner Edwards retailed at around £38 per bottle and cost around £6 per shot in a bar – making it one of the most expensive independent craft gins. Its two nearest competitors were Sipsmiths and Williams Chase.





### Consumers

Heartland off trade consumers were aged 55+ ABs – they drank gin at home as a relaxing pre-meal treat on a daily/weekly basis. Emerging on trade consumers were ABC1 20-35 year olds – socially active and image-led, they wanted to be seen as 'in the know'.

### Brand positioning

As a super premium craft gin from a genuinely independent distiller and still owner, the brand was built on a celebration of excellence and craft – the finest liquid derived from vast knowledge, care and attention to the ingredients and the distilling process.

The brand proposition that 'every drop of our passion goes into every drop of our gin for an exceptional experience' was devised to underpin everything that Warner Edwards would say and do across all customer touch points.

The brand's visual and verbal story was told through proof points for the proposition, such as the provenance of the beautiful farm in Harrington served by its own spring and the construction of the bespoke copper still named Curiosity (and the farm cat who gave rise to the still's name by leaving a paw print in its newly poured cement foundation).

### Design solution

Every detail of the branding and packaging was carefully handcrafted to reflect the quality and luxury of the product itself – capturing the craft, character, eccentricities and passion of what went into the bottle, on the bottle. All visual assets positively ooze with the same passion and attention to detail that went into making the gin – from the logo, fonts, and colours, through to etchings, bottle shape, finishes and ingredient illustrations.

The new design hit the sweet spot in terms of appeal for both consumer groups. With the new visual equities, all brand touch points could be delivered consistently to provide exceptional experiences and communications that reflected the brand's values and personality.



## OVERVIEW OF MARKET

To say the UK gin market has become huge in recent years is an understatement. Worth £800m in 2012 when Warner Edwards originally hit the market, by 2016 it was worth £1.3bn, growing at roughly 25% per annum.

With market growth also came increased competition. By the end of 2017, Britain was home to 315 distilleries – more than double the number operating in the previous five years. And those 315 distilleries manufactured more than 1,500 gin brands – albeit the vast majority of these were effectively ‘mum and pop’ shops with little credibility compared to the true craftsmanship of Warner Edwards Gin.

At the time of the rebrand, super premium gin was around 10% of the overall gin market. 80% of this was in the on trade – driven by competitors such as Sipsmith and Williams Chase.

By the end of 2017, the market had started to contract, as predicted. Gin sales were still growing, but by 20%, down 5% on the previous four years. Indications were that growth in 2018 and beyond may slow down to 10%. Eventually there won't be hundreds of craft gins, there will probably be a dozen or so – and a big part of Biles Hendry's job was to make sure that Warner Edwards Gin is one of those.

**Project launch date:** October 2015

**Design fees:** Redacted confidential data



## RESULTS

Warner Edwards' success in the two years since the redesign was nothing short of exceptional. With very little in the way of additional marketing spend and against a contracting market, the brand design captured the imagination of consumers in both the on and off trade.

### **On trade sales value:**

**+76% vs objective**

**+1,500% growth vs pre-redesign**

On trade sales value reached (redacted confidential data) against the (redacted confidential data) objective. Not only was this (redacted confidential data) the rate of market growth, but it was also +1,500% versus (redacted confidential data) on trade sales value in the year before the redesign.

### **Off trade sales value:**

**+46% vs target**

**+1,183% increase vs pre-redesign**

Off trade sales value was (redacted confidential data) against the target of (redacted confidential data) – this +46% was double the rate of market growth. And it was +1,183% versus the (redacted confidential data) sales value in the year before the redesign.

### **On trade sales volume:**

**+100% vs objective**

**+3,000% upsurge vs pre-redesign**

On trade sales volume was (redacted confidential data) against the (redacted confidential data) objective – and this was also +3,000% vs the year before the redesign.

### **Off trade sales volume:**

**+50% vs goal**

**+2,477% growth vs pre-redesign**

Off trade sales volume was (redacted confidential data) versus the (redacted confidential data) objective – and a +2,477% increase vs the year before the redesign.

### **Listings: +115% growth more than doubles objective**

Total listings grew from (redacted confidential data) before the redesign to (redacted confidential data) two years later – that was +115% growth and it was more than double the (redacted confidential data) listings target.

### **Top seller at multiple on trade retailers**

Multiple retailers count as one trade listing, despite the fact that each one has hundreds of sites. Warner Edwards proved so popular that it took pride of place as a top selling gin at the following new on trade listings:

- Fastest selling spirit: Everards Pub Co (<redacted confidential data> sites)
- #1 selling craft gin: Greene King (<redacted confidential data> sites)
- #1 selling gin: Robinsons Brewery (<redacted confidential data> sites)
- #1 selling flavoured gin: Matthew Clark Wholesalers
- #5 gin: Mitchells & Butlers, one of the UK's biggest on trade retail groups – (redacted confidential data) sites at their Vintage Inns and Nicholson's Pubs

### **#1 branded gin at M&S**

New off trade retailer listings included the brand's first big supermarket accounts with Marks & Spencer, John Lewis/Waitrose, and Booths.

- #1 branded gin at M&S (distribution for two variants across <redacted confidential data> sites)
- Fastest selling spirit at Majestic (national distribution)
- Waitrose's most successful craft gin launch ever (and became Warner Edwards' biggest customer)

And finally... (redacted confidential data) million bottles of gin were sold in the UK in 2017, which means that Warner Edwards produced and sold almost 1% of the UK's gin consumption that year – a truly magnificent achievement considering the number of players in the market!



## Other influencing factors

### Can success be attributed to gin sector growth?

We can't ignore the growing market, and it's likely that some of Warner Edwards' success is due to this. However, the market began to slow, plus Warner Edwards' sales value and volumes outstripped market growth by such a great extent that the brand redesign clearly played a huge role in consideration of the brand amongst consumers, retailers and on trade.

### What about marketing communications/PR/social media?

There was no investment in any other marketing communications beyond press relations and social media. However, neither of these could account for the brand's massive growth over the past two years on their own. Warner Edwards was active on social media, but its biggest competitors Sipsmith and Williams Chase had two and four times more Facebook likes respectively than Warner Edwards, and significantly more Twitter and Instagram followers. Plus all PR/social media activities had the design front and centre, so that prospective customers were attracted to the brand through the packaging design.

### Was it sampling?

Sampling at shows like the BBC Good Food Shows and food and drink festivals around the UK was always a key marketing element. However, since the rebrand they more than halved the number of shows attended, and yet still achieved incredible results.

### Was it pricing/special offers?

One of the main objectives for the redesign was to retain Warner Edwards' premium pricing. There was no discounting or special offers for this brand, although the same cannot be said for many competitors.

## Research/data sources

Warner Edwards internal data

Spirits Market Report: Wine and Spirit Trade Association Q1 2017

Annual Spirits Report: Wine and Spirit Trade Association 2016

Luxury Alcoholic Drinks – The Spirit of Premiumisation: Euromonitor 2016-2017

UK White Spirits & RTDs: Mintel, Dec 2016

William Reed Business Media, Jun 2018