

# morrama

## DBA Design Effectiveness Awards

Project title: Wild Refillable Deodorant  
Client name: Wild Cosmetics  
For publication





Wild refills in large letter packaging.

## Executive Summary

Wild Cosmetics Ltd (Wild) approached us in 2019 to design the world's first refillable deodorant with plastic free refills. Nine months later, in the spring of 2020, the Wild deodorant launched in the UK. Five years on and Wild is the UK's leading refillable deodorant brand and has recently been acquired by Unilever for a reported £100 million.

This submission outlines the role design has played in creating the deodorant packaging that has remained the core product of the Wild range and has completely redefined the deodorant market in the UK. From deodorant sales alone, the company hit an annual turnover of £45.8 million in 2023, just three years after launch, and posted its first annual pre-tax profit of £509,000<sup>1</sup>.

That same year, we were tasked with updating the design to improve user experience, reduce cost, and ensure the product was robust enough for international retail expansion. The design improvements reduced material usage by 18.4%, improved usability and eliminated waste, whilst maintaining compatibility with existing refills. The updated design resulted in a cost reduction of 12.5%, saving the company over \$2 million in the subsequent 18 months. Customer satisfaction improved, complaints about the case were down, and Wild had the confidence to rapidly expand into over 4,000 stores across the UK, doubling grocery sales within the first nine months of 2024.



The original Wild deodorant case with the lid and base remove.

## Context and Overview

In 2019, consumers were demanding more sustainable products<sup>2</sup>, particularly in FMCG. Recognising this opportunity Freddy Ward and Charlie Bowes-Lyon set up Wild with the goal of bringing a refillable deodorant to market. They approached us in July of that year to design the case and refill. The objectives:

- the refill must be a plastic free
- the case must feel premium
- the refills must fit within UK large letter postage limits (max 2.5cm)
- the user experience should mirror single use stick deodorants
- the product should be on the market by spring 2020

Whilst there were refillable deodorants on the market in the U.S. (Myro, Humankind) none had achieved a plastic-free refill, so this was no small challenge.

Starting with the refill we removed the need for any plastic components by moving the twist mechanism - typically in the refill - into the case. This allowed us to explore fully-paper solutions that could be composted or recycled. Considering initially to make it from paper that was shaped using a low-cost rolling process - like a toilet roll - we chose instead to design for pulp moulding for stability and consistency at scale, plus one additional user experience benefit - it meant we could design the product so that you could wind the refill back down - an important user experience factor.

We chose to work with aluminium for the case despite the higher cost and embodied carbon compared to most plastics due to the desirability. Wild's refillable deodorant was going to be more expensive than most single-use deodorants on the market; resulting in an RRP of £12 for a customer's case and first refill. A big difference from the £2.50 price tag of the typical single use stick deodorant on the market at the time. To compete Wild had to offer something unique to customers - we had to make deodorant desirable.

With the pressure to launch quickly, we managed to get the first 10,000 units through production and onto the market in the target nine months, launching in the UK as the world went into the first pandemic lockdown. By 2022, selling only one product, Wild had grown to a £26 million turnover business<sup>3</sup> with 2.5 million customers<sup>4</sup>.

By this time, the UK deodorant market was worth £396.4 million with 14.5% year-on-year growth<sup>5</sup>. Despite it still being dominated by global FMCG players, Wild was leading a new refillable segment. But, with challengers Fussy and Make Waves entering the market, maintaining their lead depended on improving the user experience, cost price and retail readiness of the product.

The product wasn't perfect. Getting to market so quickly had left little opportunity for extensive testing on the packaging and by 2022 Wild had a wealth of customer feedback making it clear updates were needed. There was another significant driving factor; cost. In order for them to scale and ensure repeat refill, they needed to be more widely available in retail. However, to make this work as a business they needed to reduce the packaging cost and improve the reliability and customer satisfaction. They returned to us in September 2022 with new objectives:

- reduce the case cost by 10%
- address customer complaints around leftover deodorant
- improve accessibility
- ensure new cases are compatible with old refills and visa versa

We added one more consideration to the brief; sustainability.

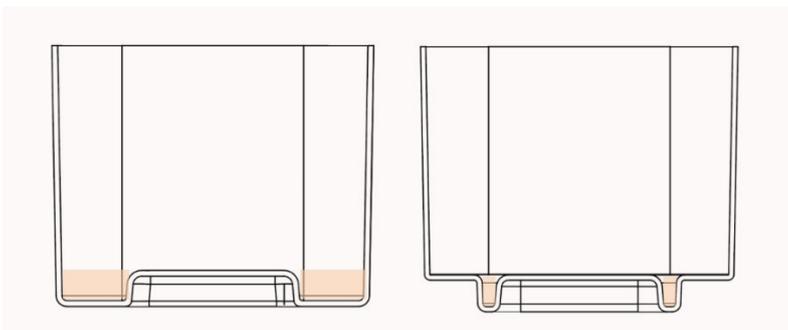
Analysing thousands of reviews and watching ethnographic research footage of people using their deodorant, guided the design process. In order to make the case more intuitive and easier to use, particularly for older users, we removed the side buttons. These had been designed to press in and open the case for refill. They also acted as a locking feature so that the case was secured close when it was twisted up. This was particularly important when loading a new refill as the challenge with using paper is that the deodorant can stick to the material, requiring some force to initially release it. Instead, we engineered an internal locking mechanism, allowing the base to be simply pulled out once wound down.



The updated Wild deodorant case (2.0) with the pull out base.

Customer complaints about leftover deodorant were, in part due to a small, but necessary change to the original case after launch that meant that customers couldn't wind it up the final 1.5mm to use up every bit of the deodorant. A redesign of the case would solve this for new customers, but to address existing customers we reworked the refill itself; changing the shape, whilst maintaining compatibility with all cases - old and new. Implementing this change required close collaboration with the supplier and months of iteration to ensure consistency in the paper moulding. When the new case and refill launched, customer complaints dropped straight away.

Users were also calling for the case to be more compact. By reworking the mechanism, we were able to reduce the overall height from 111.7mm to 106.4mm (a total height reduction of 5.3 mm), and by softening the edges of both the lid and base, the case became more comfortable in the hand and has a noticeably more compact appearance.



Cross section drawing of the refill. Original design (left) and update (right) with leftover deodorant highlighted orange.

We used this as an opportunity to lightweight the case, reducing the plastic content by 20% and aluminium 16.5%, with an overall weight saving of 18.4%.<sup>6</sup> Finally we removed the need for glues and brought in a snap fixing that could be disassembled by the customer with a teaspoon or pair of tweezers (picture above), and meant the plastic and aluminium parts could be separated for recycling. These features are deliberately visible, designed to be proudly seen, not hidden, reinforcing our commitment



Original and updated (right) Wild deodorant design

to transparency and circular design. These sustainability improvements also supported the cost reduction. The updated design saved a significant 12.5% reduction.

Because Wild was making sales the focus this time was getting it right, not getting it out. We took the design from concept to production in 12 months and the revised case and refill were launched online in December 2023 and into retail in January 2024.

## Design fees

Product design and engineering fees: REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA



The updated Wild deodorant case being disassembled.

“Morrama are a very dynamic team who really helped us push the boundaries of what we thought was possible on this project with very tight deadlines and limited budgets. To create the first refill solution globally without plastic is an achievement we are incredibly proud of, and working with Morrama was the key to our success.”

- Freddy Ward, Co-Founder of Wild7.

## Result and other influencing factors

### Business success

Both founders Freddy and Charlie are open in sharing how important design has been to the success of Wild. They built a startup with the intention of creating something never seen before in the market, scaling fast and selling, and they did exactly what they set out to do.

One of the requirements of getting the business off the ground was funding. One factor in the time pressure in the original scope objectives was to ensure the founders had prototypes to show to investors. Renders are one thing, but nothing is as powerful as a physical prototype and this helped them secure their first £500k investment in January 2020. They went on to raise a total of £7.5 million in funding between 2020 and 2022.

In 2023, just three years in, revenue grew 77% to £46.9 million and Wild had its first profitable year, posting pre-tax profits of £509,000. In 2024 with the launch of the updated deodorant case design, they doubled their deodorant sales in UK grocery within nine months to £14.9 million<sup>8</sup>. It was this rapid expansion that earned them a place as the fastest growing personal care brand in the Sunday Times top 100 list in July 2024. (Although Wild launched a second personal care product in late 2023 the figures posted are based on the deodorant alone).

The updated design brought the case cost price down by 12.5%. Factoring in both the tooling investment and our design and engineering fees this saved the brand over £200,000 in 2024 alone<sup>9</sup> and £1.54 million based on total orders of the updated case. This cost saving to the business has meant that the product has remained the same price today, more than five years after launch, as it was in 2020 with a starter pack (deodorant case and refill) costing £12.

Beyond the impact that the Wild deodorant design had on Wild's own business, the impact on the industry is also worth noting. The Wild deodorant paved the way for other personal

care brands to enter the refill space. These brands include Fussy, Sol de Janiero and Estrid (deodorant) Life Supplies and Ordo (oral care) and La Roche-Posay, L'Occitane and Kiehls (skin care). Within the design industry, most industrial design teams now have a refillable personal care product in their portfolio. Something unimaginable five years ago.

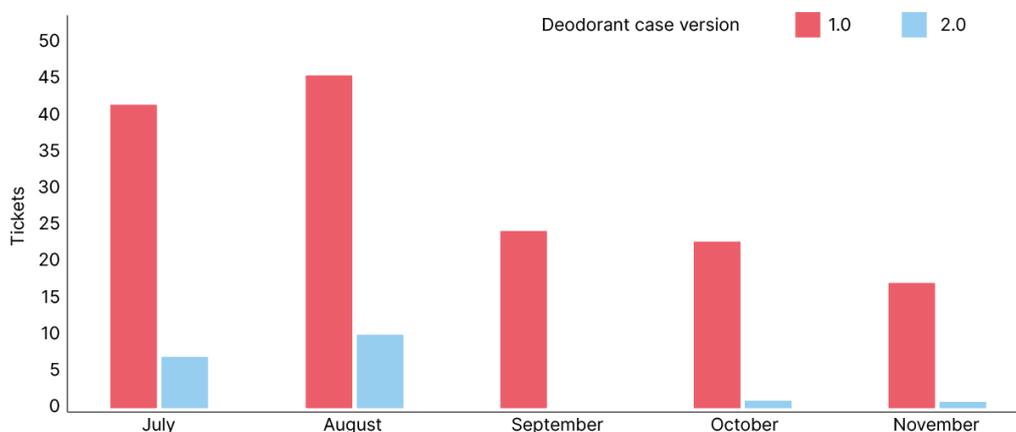
Anecdotally many people will agree that Wild opened up the refill market in the UK. Naturally this is difficult to substantiate. From our perspective within the design industry, many industrial design teams now have a refillable personal care product in their portfolio; something unimaginable five years ago. Brands that have subsequently launched refillable products include Fussy, Sol de Janiero and Estrid (deodorant), La Roche-Posay, L'Occitane and Kiehls (skincare) and we receive a design brief a week from another young brand keen to piggy-back on the success of Wild.

However, perhaps the greatest testament to the success of Wild, particularly the Wild deodorant is the acquisition by Unilever this year for a reported figure of £100 million. That marks a significant return on the original £7.5 million investment.

## Customer satisfaction

Five years after launch, the brand has over 50,000 5-star reviews on Trust Pilot. They no longer sell solely deodorant - we went on to design packaging for body wash and lip balm for the brand that launched in August 2023 and March 2024 respectively, but even in March 2023, before these launched, they had a Trust Pilot score of 4.7/5.

A key driver for the rework of the design in 2023 was to act on user feedback, particularly the customer tickets logged in regards to leftover deodorant. Whilst Wild was managing these customer 'tickets', they were concerned that they would increase as sales increased. After the updated case launched in January 2024 and was fully rolled out by July of that year, these calls dropped significantly and when a new case was used in conjunction with the reworked refill, they were less than one a month, freeing up time and resources within the Wild team.



A graph displaying the number of customer tickets (complaints) made in regards to the leftover deodorant in 2024.

In addition to reducing deodorant wastage, the updated case design is more accessible. It can be used one handed and doesn't require a pinch grip to press the buttons either side. This opens the product up to more customers, particularly those with age-related hand weakness or limited dexterity.

Of course, you could argue that, had more extensive testing been done in the first place, some of these issues may have been picked up in the original design process. However, no product launch is perfect. The Dove refillable deodorant launched in Canada and the U.S. in 2021 by Unilever themselves, who are known for doing extensive testing, had multiple issues and had to be phased out completely within three years. The trust we have with Wild and the factories we've sourced to produce the deodorant packaging is key to our agility. We are continually reviewing the design, optimising it for cost, quality and sustainability.

## Sustainability

There is an inevitable planetary impact with putting any product into production. This comes from the materials, water and energy required to manufacture the product, the waste produced and the impact of the product at its end-of-life. However we believe that we have a responsibility to continually seek ways to reduce that impact. Both during the design phase and once a product has launched onto the market.

The Wild deodorant is, by its refillable nature, designed as an alternative to the single use offerings that dominate the market. Whilst Myro and Humankind had achieved some level of traction in the U.S., at the time Wild launched there were no refillable options on the market in the UK, let alone any that were single-use plastic free.

Since then, Wild have shipped 40 million deodorant refills, to roughly 10 million customers. Factoring that everyone has to first purchase a case, this works out at a refill rate of four per customer, saving 720 tonnes of disposable deodorants to date<sup>10</sup>.

As for the case itself, the improvements to the design made in 2023 led to a material saving per case that resulted in a CO<sub>2</sub>e saving that year of approximately 180 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e<sup>11</sup>, when compared to the previous design, in the material alone.

In order to offset the impact of the case, Wild put a percentage of each sale towards planting trees. To date they have planted 445,994 trees through ON A MISSION. They also have a partnership with First Mile who will recycle old cases, made significantly easier with the introduction of the reverse snap fixings in the updated design.

## Other influencing factors.

It could be argued that an element of Wild's initial success was due, in part, to the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021. During this time people were more receptive to D2C offerings,

many had more disposable income and were more open minded to testing out new brands. However, the fact that Wild continued to grow so rapidly even after people returned to 'life as normal' is testament to the fact that this early success was not a fluke.

Another aspect of their success in gaining early traction with customers must be attributed, to some extent, to their marketing budgets. They assigned a significant amount of their initial £7.5 million investment to marketing. However, in 2021 both Unilever and P&G followed Wild in launching sustainability-driven refillable deodorants in Canada and the U.S. respectively, yet, despite their brand recognition and reach they both ceased sales within three years. Both products were launched with existing brands (Dove and Old Spice) and a tried and tested formula, and the U.S. market was already open to refillable deodorant with brands like Myro selling in Target.

It is evident that our design and continued commitment to iterative improvement and cost-reduction is a significant factor in the brand's success. The desirability factor of the aluminium case, designed to easily be printed with unique patterns, produced in a range of playful colours, and engraved with customers name, set Wild apart in the market, challenging existing packaging norms and elevating deodorant from simply a low-cost commodity.



The Wild deodorant 2.0 in hand

# Credits

## Design and engineering:

Lucy Williams, Jo Barnard, Juliette Bouilly, Harry Mason, Léa Berger, Ben Polhill, Dan Lloyd, Andy Trewin Hutt, Arlen Smart, Jazzy Kular

## Wild team:

Jocelyn Charman, Anna Williamson, Freddy Ward, Charlie Bowes-Lyons

## Manufacturing team:

Henry Zhou, Jojo Lee

## Photography:

Elizabeth Lock

# References

1 <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2025/apr/01/wild-co-founders-sale-of-natural-deodorant-maker-unilever>

2 <https://www.warc.com/newsandopinion/opinion/sustainability-and-the-consumer-in-2019/en-gb/3024>

3 Based on Full Accounts filed with Companies House December 2022

4 <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/wild-raises-5m-to-grow-plastic-free-personal-care-portfolio/664633.article>

5 <https://store.mintel.com/report/uk-deodorants-market-report>

6 Figures based on data from the primary manufacturer that have produced 70% of the Wild deodorant packaging.

7 <https://worldbranddesign.com/a-fully-sustainable-refillable-deodorant-wild-promotes-eco-friendly-personal-care-through-innovative-design>

8 <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/comment-and-opinion/why-unilever-has-gone-wild-for-a-deodorant-challenger-brand/700962.article>

9 Based on a reserved figure of 1.8 million units ordered in 2024 and design fees outlined above.

10 Based on the average weight of leading disposable plastic stick deodorants in retail in the UK of 30g and factoring that single use deodorants are typically 50g vs 40g Wild refill.

11 Based on 16 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per tonne of aluminium - <https://www.carbonchain.com/blog/understand-your-aluminium-emissions> and 1.6 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per tonne of 30% PCR PP <https://plasticseurope.org/sustainability/circularity/life-cycle-thinking/eco-profiles-set/>