



elmwood

Buster®

BUSTER PLUGHOLE CARE:
Because... plugholes need love too

► **INDUSTRY SECTOR:** ◀

Household goods and home construction

CLIENT COMPANY: Challs International

DESIGN CONSULTANCY: Elmwood

SUBMISSION DATE: June 2015

FOR PUBLICATION



BUSTER SALES UP
50.6%
▶ **IN 2014** ◀
AN ADDITIONAL
£3.85m
IN REVENUE

13.9%
▶ **TOTAL CATEGORY**
GROWTH IN 2014 ◀
DRIVEN BY BUSTER



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Challs International's Buster emerged from obscurity on the supermarket shelves following a brand overhaul by Elmwood in 2004. Since then the company had continued to invest in design – its main marketing investment – to support its range of plughole unblockers and fresheners. A brand evolution in 2009 helped elevate the brand into a serious category contender, raising its ranking to become the UK's No.2 brand. The challenge for Buster now was to create a platform for sustained growth, to expand internationally and ultimately to claim the top slot in the UK market.

Faced with continuing global recession and competition from well-financed mega-brands the market wasn't exactly flowing freely. Against a background of austerity how was it possible to challenge the big brands and persuade more people to buy Buster?



NO.1
BRAND IN THE
▶ **CATEGORY** ◀



PRE-2004

The answer? Change everything. Evolve brand packaging to challenge the category norms and cut through the noise to help customers get what they want. Redefine your product range and change the category language to drive home your USPs. And finally add some innovation with a new product.



2004

In tough times, consumers look for products that really work because they can't afford to waste money. So, a specialist approach works better than a generalist. With the re-design for both Buster products, our aim was to drive home the brand's specialist approach to plughole care and to bring Buster out from under the sink. The new designs were launched in June 2013 and by January 2015 sales had gone through the roof.

(248 words)



**UK
NO.2
BRAND**

2009



**UK
NO.1
BRAND**

2013/14

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Outline of the brief

We first worked with the Buster brand in 2004 as part of a Design Council initiative to help small businesses. The brand relaunch helped establish national supermarket sales and listings for its four core products: an unblocker and freshener for both the bathroom and the kitchen. In 2009 a move from labels to shrink sleeves helped the brand to keep moving forward, increasing sales and distribution and raising it to the No 2 slot in the UK.

Buster was doing well in a category dominated by big brands. Mr Muscle and Domestos had the advantage of physically larger formats and big above the line budgets, yet in eight short years to 2012 Buster had become a serious category contender. But despite its strong position, with consumers inhibited by a continuing climate of austerity, the sales weren't flowing through.

Buster was also heavily reliant on one product, their Bathroom Plughole Unblocker which accounted for 79% of sales. While consumers understood the need for unblockers, they hadn't quite grasped the need for regular cleaning and maintenance to prevent blockages and bad smells. Without the above-the-line funds to build awareness and help educate consumers this was a significant challenge. Buster had previously presented these products in several guises as Sink Fresheners and Sink Treatments but without continued success.

To help Buster achieve the desired growth, we had to create a compelling brand proposition that would persuade more consumers to buy all its products and further appeal to retailers. Only then could the brand hope to challenge the big brands at home and build its presence internationally. Any change had to be delivered through an evolution of the brand and packaging as this was the consumers' main interface with the brand.



Smaller pack format compared with competitors



Heavily reliant on Bathroom Plughole Unblocker which accounted for 80% of sales

► SPECIFICALLY, OUR JOB WAS TO: ◀

1 Develop a strategy and platform for growth, both in the UK and abroad – specifically to double UK value sales by 2017 (5 year plan)

2 Strengthen the impact of the Buster brand on shelf, in order to become the No.1 brand in the UK market by January 2015

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW (CONTINUED)

Description

Challs International, Buster's parent company, is a small, Ipswich-based business that began manufacturing cleaning products in the early 1990s.

Buster has four principal products, each having a separate distinct purpose. These are two kitchen-focused products (an unblocker, formulated to combat fat and grease and a 'maintenance' treatment) and two bathroom products (an unblocker to clear hair and soap, plus another 'maintenance' treatment).

Overview of market

In 2013 the plughole category was worth £32.6m in the UK (Nielsen 52 we 05 Jan 2014). The category is a low-interest one, shopped in moments of distress when blockages occur. It is dominated by power brands like SC Johnson's Mr Muscle and Unilever's Domestos with big above the line budgets.

Typically competitor products are multi-purpose rather than focused on a specific application. For Buster with its task-specific product range, here was the opportunity to become the specialist brand.

(501 words)



The category in store

Project launch date

June 2013

Size of design budget & production costs

£40k



Buster vs. the big brands

3. OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION

Our observations in store showed consumers with blocked plugholes are already in an agitated state. When confronted by a wall of power brands shouting for attention they simply didn't know where to look. To compound the problem, Buster bottles were physically smaller and so had to work much harder at the point of sale.

We applied ground-breaking design principles to challenge the market norms and create cut-through. Biomotive triggers are sensory cues that affect our subconscious, generating emotion and action before the conscious part of our brain can respond. These can be used to prompt instinctive action in consumers.*

Our solution was to challenge all the assumptions of marketing in this category. We knew that shouting louder than everyone else wouldn't really cut it. In everyday life, we rarely experience moments of visual or auditory calm, so when they do occur, we naturally gravitate towards them. Recognising the consumers' bewilderment when faced with a wall of power graphics, we contrasted the Buster design experience with simple, calm design and a clear visual hierarchy to ensure standout.



We made it easy to understand at a glance:

WHO I AM

Buster

WHAT I AM

**PLUGHOLE
UNBLOCKER
(FOR EXAMPLE)**

**WHY I AM
RELEVANT**

**I'll do the job you
need me to do in the
kitchen or bathroom**

* 'Biomotive Triggers' are sensory marketing techniques, developed at Elmwood in collaboration with Bradford University School of Management. They are biological and emotional responses to visual and other stimuli that can be used to trigger reactions and action in consumers.



The new evolved brand mark



Unblocker iconography



Deep Clean Foamer

3. OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION (CONTINUED)

People shop instinctively by colour and shape, they don't read many words. So we evolved the Buster brand mark to clearly signal our area of expertise 'the U-bend', increasing its prominence in the design hierarchy making it a bigger feature of the design.

Next we created simple visual iconography to help people understand the products in the range. For the unblockers the plughole icon and active vortex below communicates power and effectiveness. This was supported by simple messaging and a clear statement of the benefit. No tick lists or noisy, distracting graphics.

The maintenance products presented more of a challenge as consumers did not understand the need for them. Following the same design principles, we contrasted the black world of unblockers, where the graphic represents matter going *down* the plughole, with a clean fresh white for the plughole sanitisers. Combining the plughole, the U-bend graphic and the flowers coming *out* of the plughole (representing cleanliness and freshness) allows customers quickly to understand what the product's about. It's also more attractive than competitor packs, giving consumers permission to leave it out on display.



Sanitiser iconography

As part of the platform for growth, we created a design for the anticipated introduction of a new deep clean foamer for weekly use. This provided a bridge between the unblockers and sanitisers. Here we employed simple design cues to create a robust yet softly curved structure and graphics that convey a brand experience somewhere between Marigold and Dyson. This product showcases the future development of the Buster range.

(446 words)

4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

A great platform for growth

The strategy for growth was to become **THE** authority for plughole care. We needed to clearly differentiate between the products in the range to become less reliant on Buster's Bathroom Unblocker and increase the appeal of the Sanitisers.

The improved clarity between products was clearly a hit with retailers, leading to increased distribution for Buster:

- ▶ Sainsbury's now lists Bathroom Plughole Unblocker in all 1,294 stores in the UK, including local stores where you will **ONLY** find Buster, in favour of their own brand.
- ▶ Buster has deeper distribution in Asda – approx. another 300 stores for both Kitchen and Bathroom Plughole Unblockers in 2015.

▶ SPECIFICALLY, OUR JOB WAS TO: ◀

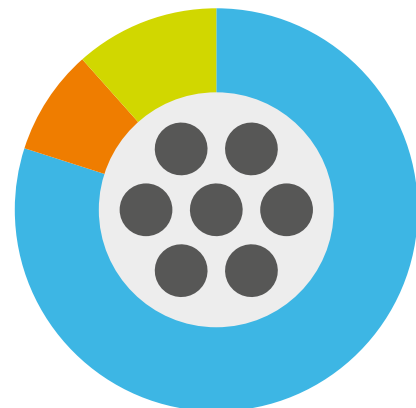
1 Develop a strategy and platform for growth, both in the UK and abroad – specifically to double UK value sales by 2017 (5 year plan)

**BATHROOM
PLUGHOLE UNBLOCKER
REPLACED
OWN BRAND IN
SAINSBURY'S
STORES**

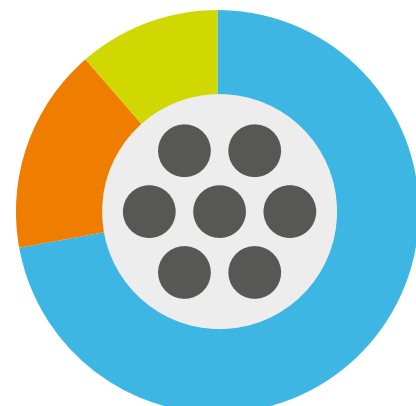
Kitchen Unblocker now accounts for 16% of Buster's sales – doubling its percentage before the redesign, and Bathroom Unblocker has gone from 80% to 72%. Whilst the combined Sanitiser sales have remained fairly static, they are still selling a lot more of them than they had previously done, and have raised an additional £320,000 in value sales.

- ▶ Bathroom Plughole Unblocker
- ▶ Kitchen Plughole Unblocker
- ▶ Sanitiser/Sink Treatments

BEFORE LAUNCH



AFTER LAUNCH



**Reducing the reliance on
Bathroom unblocker**

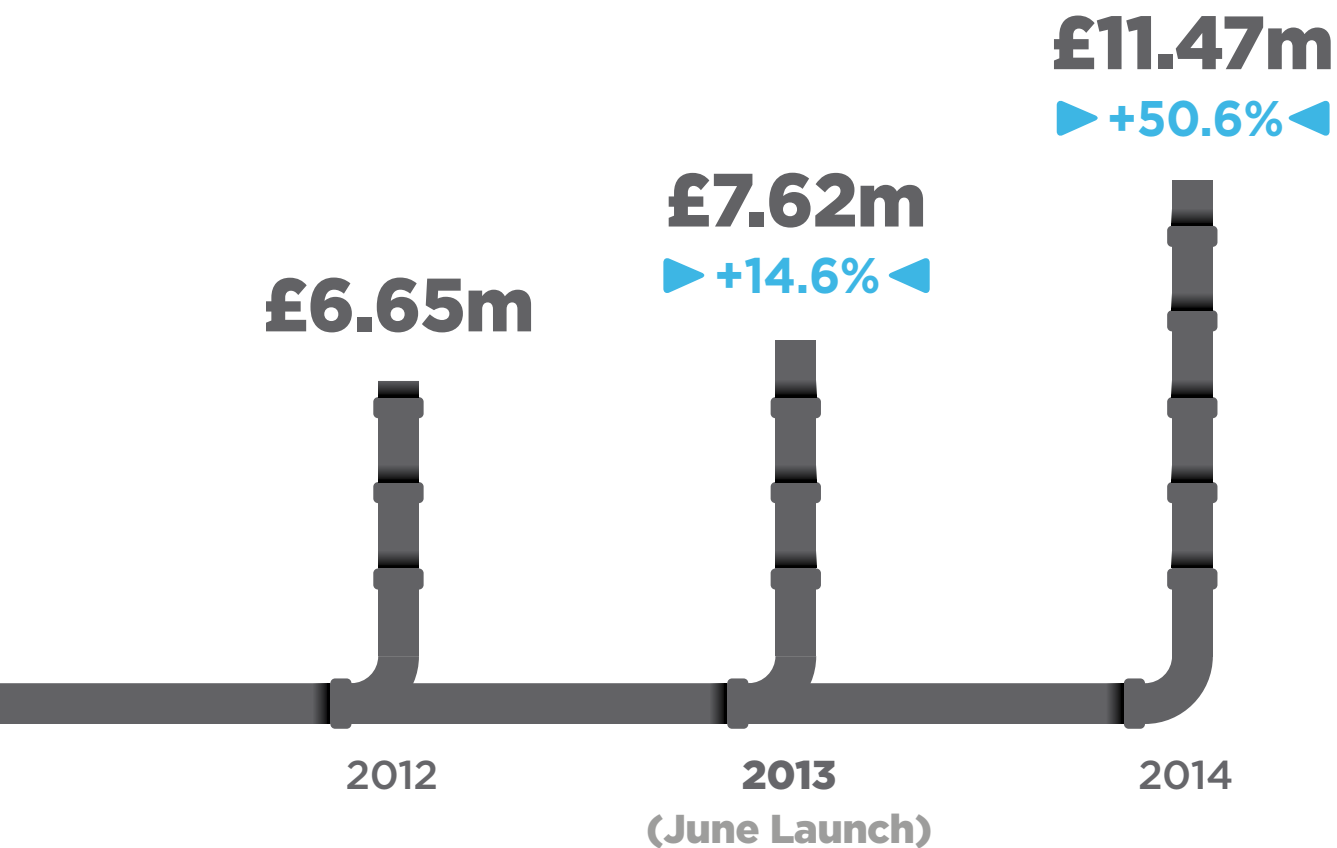
4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS (CONTINUED)

Double sales value by 2017

Phenomenal sales increases show the impact the redesign has had, and put in the context of a market that has grown by 13.9% (from £32.61m to £37.13m), Buster is clearly leading category growth. (Nielsen, 52 wk 4 Jan 15).

With 2 years remaining Buster is well and truly on track to achieve this target way ahead of schedule, particularly with the brand taking off abroad too.

BUSTER SALES UP
50.6%
► IN 2014 ◀



Exports

The new branding has allowed Buster to secure new listings in Australia and New Zealand, Singapore, the US and Denmark, and it has experienced impressive export results already, with a total of 2% of their growing sales coming from exports.

Despite a purposely-cautious start in the US market (currently being treated as a test launch in two retailers only – Schnucks and Rouses) Buster is currently in discussions with further retailers including the mighty Walmart.

The brand also has further plans to export to Malaysia and expects to be trading there in the second half 2015.



4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS (CONTINUED)

Creating an impact

With the packaging being the consumers' main interface with the brand, it was important to retain the strength of the two Unblockers' packaging whilst really dialling up the Sanitisers' shelf-appeal, and conveying its role within the plughole care category.

SPECIFICALLY, OUR JOB WAS TO:

2 Strengthen the impact of the Buster brand on shelf, in order to become the No.1 brand in the UK market by January 2015

“The new Buster Sanitiser designs have moved them from an out-of-sight under the sink product to make the brand **premium and display-worthy**”

Voodoo Research, Feb 2013



And a happy client who's investment in design is paying off

“The senior management team have worked closely with Elmwood from the initial Design Council initiative in 2004 to strategically reposition the Buster brand, creating a vision and compelling brand proposition that has engaged both retailers and consumers alike.

When you don't have huge above the line budgets, you need to invest wisely. The focus of our investment for 12 years has been using the power of design to cut through at the point of sale, and that has been pivotal in making Buster the No. 1 brand”

Graham Burchell:
Managing Director, Challs
International Ltd

4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS (CONTINUED)

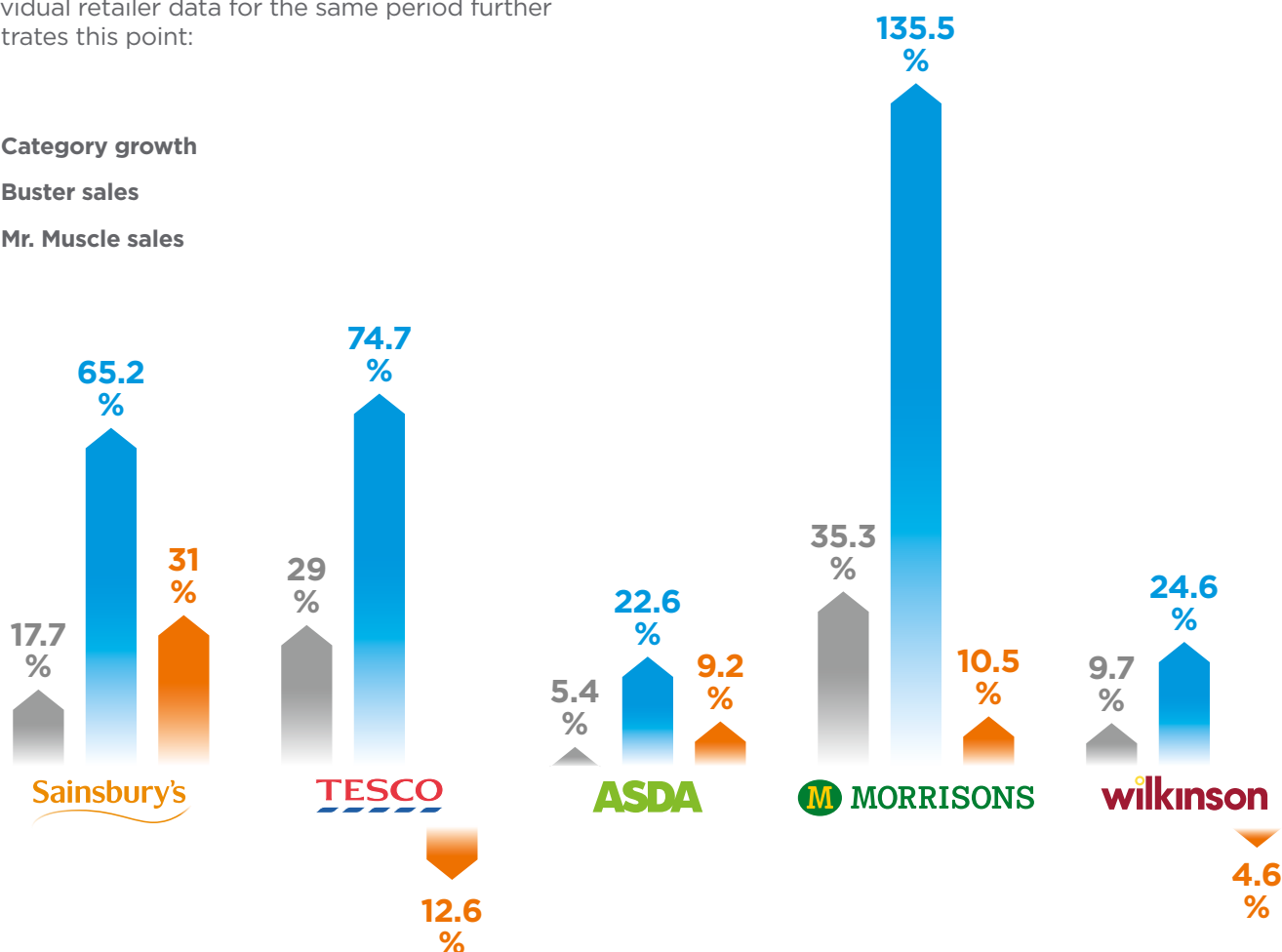
Number one brand

In May 2014 Buster became the No.1 plughole brand in the UK with an overall 30% market share in 2014.

In 2014, the plughole category (value) grew by 13.9% from £32.61m to £37.13m, and within branded products, Buster has directly driven this total category growth (Nielsen, 52 wk 4 Jan 15).

Individual retailer data for the same period further illustrates this point:

- Category growth
- Buster sales
- Mr. Muscle sales



Exceeding expectations

Buster's success has allowed Challs to create 10 new jobs in the UK and 2 in Singapore (an extra 20% of workforce), where they have also opened a new office. A new UK headquarters is set for completion later this year, creating further job opportunities. The company is also building a new warehouse on the site of a previous smaller one.

The new strategy, has also allowed Buster to introduce a new Deep Clean foamer product which began its trade sell-in in February 2015. Listings have been secured in Robert Dyas, Ocado and other independent stores, and its continued sales forecast looks promising as the mainstream grocery sell-programme commenced in May.



10 new jobs in the UK and 2 in Singapore

5. OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

Unlike Unilever or SC Johnson, Challs does not have significant marketing budgets to support the Buster brand. Their success to date had previously generated a small amount of extra budget to allow them to create a TV advert. This was simply updated with new product graphics for the next advertising campaign.

It was only as a result of the phenomenal increased sales throughout 2014, that allowed them to reinvest some of their profit into their biggest advertising campaign yet in December 2014. This and the fact that the biggest peak in sales happened between April and August 2014 suggest that the redesign was the major contributing factor.

Other than that, no other significant marketing support was needed – no direct mail, online, poster campaigns, additional promotions, etc. Buster has made it to the top of the market by providing packaging that cuts through at the point of purchase.

6. RESEARCH RESOURCES

All data supplied by the client

Kantar Worldpanel

Nielsen (52 we 4th Jan 15)

