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How a century-old Australian workwear brand lifted purchase intent by 40% in 6 months

A brand revitalisation blueprint by DPR&Co



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KingGee is a century-old Australian brand that had been a market leader and innovator since its inception. Many of the workwear features we now take for granted, such as flame-resistance and temperature regulation were pioneered by KingGee.

Disparate messaging and inconsistent investment over recent times meant the brand had lost momentum. In fact, brand health tracking in NSW and Victoria showed that KingGee was virtually unknown to younger audiences.

Compounding the problem was increased competition from new market entries, some of which were blurring the lines between workwear and fashion. These brands were building broad acceptance among young audiences.

Recognising the underperformance of the brand, a new marketing team had been tasked with meeting a growth target for KingGee of 50+% over the coming five years.

Clearly, meeting these targets would require a powerful brand revitalisation.

How could KingGee be given a new sense of energy and relevance? How could a brand that had once been part of the national psyche be redefined for an entirely new audience while preserving the value of a rich hundred-year history?

The opportunity was both an honour and a massive responsibility.

Our starting point

After conducting extensive attitudinal testing among our primary audience of 16–25-year-old trades employees and contractors (male and female), we discovered that, among those who knew the brand, KingGee was well respected. It was rated highly for fit, comfort, durability style, performance and quality.

We also established that, while modernity is important to young trades-based professionals, they also had a healthy respect for a brand that had been around for 100 years.

The bad news was that, while older audiences were aware of the brand, our primary target (18-25-year-old tradies) audience was startlingly unaware of the brand, heavily under-indexing when compared with their 30+year-old counterparts. In addition, purchase intent for the brand had declined to just 10%, further compounding the problem of low brand awareness.

The fear was that KingGee was losing relevance with the audience of the future. For a brand that had made its name as a sector leader and innovator, this was a problem that called for urgent focus.

We needed to reverse brand disengagement amongst young tradespeople, a challenge that would require us to inspire a new generation to see this iconic Australian brand in a completely new and relatable light.



Guiding insight – the rise of the tradie

In the immersion stage of our engagement with the KingGee brand, we developed the hypothesis that a fundamental societal shift had taken place in Australia over the past two decades in attitudes toward vocational careers and that a trade-based education was no longer viewed as being inferior to a university degree.

Informing this hypothesis was the fact that tradies are likely to earn more in their lifetime than their degree-qualified counterparts. They are also more likely to become employers themselves. Tradies are now Australia's most in-demand class of employees and will be for decades to come.

What's more, the nature of vocational and trade work had shifted, becoming more technical and requiring higher skill levels than ever before. Trades professionals were increasingly likely to evolve their working lives to do less work 'on the tools', and more work managing their businesses.

To sum it up, the tradie "class" had moved up in Australian society. They are more respected today than ever before.

We judged that KingGee could ride this wave of societal change and that, with its hundred-year history and its performance credentials, it was in a perfect position to "own" this insight: *More than any other brand, KingGee could celebrate the Rise of the Tradie.*



Audience and positioning defined

Our research enabled a deeper understanding what drives today's trades-based workforce.

What we found was a cohort of people who were prouder than ever to call themselves tradies. Their jobs are now more skilful, their workforces more diverse, their expectations higher, and their workplace behaviour more professional. In many cases, post apprenticeship, they are big earners who like the good things in life. Most aspire to work for themselves and build wealth. And they are more gender and ethnically diverse than ever.

Importantly, they also share a focus on performance – their own, that of the people they work with and for, and the tools and workwear they rely on to succeed.

We determined that our brand idea should build a connection to this incredibly motivated and proud audience and in doing so, position KingGee as *high-performance workwear for today's high performance trades professionals*.



Strategy – finding KingGee's New Truth™

Moving the needle in a crowded market with a modest media budget would require high-impact creative.

DPR&Co's proprietary creative development methodology is called The New Truth. It requires us to develop simple, one-line statements about the brand that pass the test of being a) new, in what we are saying or how we are saying it; and b) true.

Through the New Truth process, we explored themes of heritage, innovation, consistency, performance focus and reward for effort as the underpinning foundations of our campaign.

The New Truth methodology also gave us the opportunity to consider possible long-term brand risks and opportunities, establishing a creative 'space' within which we could push communications boundaries while retaining the support of the brand owners.

We engaged in, and tested a broad spectrum of New Truths, and filtered and validated our ideas with our client and research audience.

The selected New Truth leveraged our guiding insight: that the tradie class had moved up in Australian society and that they were more respected today than ever before.

We expressed this New Truth as:

Tradies, KingGee has been with you the whole way as you've risen to the top – on your own terms.



Creative response

Based on this New Truth, DPR&Co's creative team developed three creative concepts, which were quantitatively tested with our core target audience.

The winning concept emerged. It leveraged both the brand name and the iconic "crown" logo that appears on every garment, with the positioning line:

'KingGee. You wear the crown'.

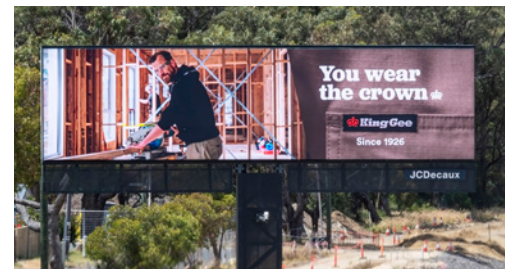
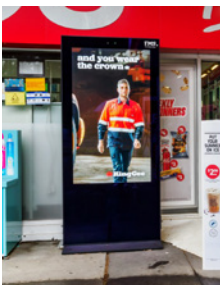
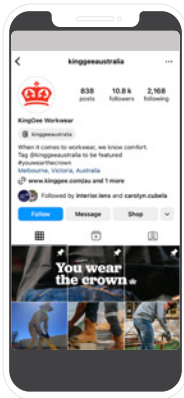


Creative response



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Results

The campaign launched in October 2023 as part of a holistic brand revitalisation that included a focussed channel strategy, new product introductions, deep retailer engagement in the campaign and other retail activity. These elements all played a part in achieving a significant uplift in performance.

The two key levels of data that Workwear Group utilises to assess campaign performance are brand performance metrics and sales metrics.

Brand performance

After a period of just 6 months in market, brand tracking showed **an increase in brand consideration of 8% to 45%**. Even more compelling is that **purchase intention rose by 40%**, from 10% to 14%.

Sales performance

Before the campaign went live, You Wear the Crown had been shared with Workwear Group's primary retail partners, winning unanimous support for the brand revitalisation.

Financial year-to-date (to February 29th, 2024) figures demonstrate:

Wholesale revenue up

10.4%

Online retail sales up

19%

Purchase intention rose by

40%

Workwear Group's head of marketing, Jayne Willmott, shares her experience of DPR&Co's New Truth process.



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