

## KATH RHODES, QUAL STREET: 2019 WINNER

It's often a frustration that insight doesn't 'rise to the top'.

One way to make a difference to a business, and get into the boardroom, is to 'go small'. Working in a tight team where researchers and clients collaborate, to embed insight into the business.

Qual Street worked with Bells of Lazonby on two projects in 2018 into what an indulgent cake brand in the Free From aisle needed to be.

We guided the team to understand who their target market was, what their need was, what an ideal indulgent 'Free From cake' was...

They've just launched the brand. BELLS & WHISTLES are gluten, milk free, vegan and delicious.

Here's what Josh Boydell-Smith, Marketing Director says:

"From initial packaging concepts and brand positioning, we were able to calibrate our thinking and decision making against the rich insight...from the qualitative sessions. As a result, we have secured substantial UK listings in: Sainsburys (557 Superstores), Waitrose (200 stores) and ASDA (ranging to be confirmed). Initial response to BELLS & WHISTLES has been overwhelming and we are delighted that working with an embedded research process has meant that we have created a truly unique brand that is already loved by consumers."

### Synopsis (1500 words)

Our entry focuses on how an independent agency like Qual Street can provide clients with truly agile collaboration, leading to deeper embedded insight.

Independents have the freedom and flexibility to 'give their all' to a project, which is what we did for Bells of Lazonby. Combine 'dedication to the answer' (the Qual Street's brand promise) with research expertise, and what you get is research excellence – which is why we'd like to be considered for the award.

Research excellence – insight with impact helped Josh Boydell-Smith launch the BELLS & WHISTLES brand from idea to full execution in a little over a year...

Here's what he has to say about the research process:

'As a brand owner it was critical for me to be present and immersed in the qualitative research we commissioned. It enabled me to have raw insight into the true behaviour of a target market that celebrate indulgent food but constantly balance their diet and consumption by a perceived understanding of their own health and wellbeing. From initial packaging concepts and brand positioning, we were able to calibrate our thinking and decision making against the rich insight that Qualstreet were able to draw from the qualitative sessions. As a result, we have secured substantial UK listings in: Sainsburys (557 Superstores), Waitrose (200 stores) and ASDA (ranging to be confirmed) and will be launching in to our first international market in October with full distribution in Coles stores, one of Australia's leading supermarkets. Initial response to BELLS & WHISTLES has been overwhelming and we are delighted that working with an embedded research process has meant that we have created a truly unique brand that is already loved by consumers.'

Josh Boydell-Smith

Head of Brand and Marketing Bells of Lazonby

Josh approached us with the following objectives:

- To gain a qualitative understanding of who the target market shopping the Free From Aisle would be
- Exploration of the needs of people buying 'Free From'
- Insight into what a delicious cake would need to be: this was 'macro' – big vs small cake, right down to the detail: ingredient mix, calories, nature of the messaging, price parameters
- An understanding of where in-store/s the product should sit
- Any, all insight, we could give them to help formulate their business plan and make the idea of an indulgent cake within the Freefrom cake aisle come to life

Our constraints:

- We needed to be agile so they could hit their tight timeframes (they started in 2018 with an idea, they've launched in 2019 with fantastic product... that's fast)
- They didn't have a huge budget, Bells of Lazonby is a successful cake own label supplier (and Baker), this was a new, and ambitious venture
- They didn't have a huge amount of data about the potential target market, but they did have a hunch that 'lifestylers' – people who want but don't need to buy 'Free From' where were potential lies...

Our Approach

- Workshops that involved visiting the FreeFrom aisle with consumers to explore what was on offer, what the aisle was saying to consumers, how well their needs were met...
- Reconvening in a central location... to look at specific cakes, to explore:
  - o needstates and occasions

- o food experiences - tastes, textures, quantity
- o pricing and price anchoring

Josh and his colleague Emily came to all of the initial insight gathering sessions: these were workshops with a mix of traditional 'Free From' buyers and 'Lifestylers' who were shopping from the aisle because they wanted Free From, not because they needed it.

We, the Qual Street researchers, led the workshops, but Josh and Emily asked questions too, with our guidance. Everyone in the room rolled their sleeves up to explore the Free From market to identify where opportunities were. That meant we objective-shared with participants so they were able to take Josh and Emily on an insight journey with them.

The Bells team were fully immersed in the sessions, but to squeeze value and insight from the project we did what we always do at Qual Street: we paid extra care and attention to the process.

How:

- pre-screening participants ourselves. Projects have less value when you are speaking to the wrong person, and the way to avoid that is to get researchers involved in the recruitment and screening process. That's what we do at Qual Street, to make sure that everyone is on-spec and going to deliver useful insight. (We know it's hard to un-hear unreliable responses, so we make sure we screen them out).
- running one session per night and doing analysis session (with the client team) after each one. This meant that we were hypothesising and building our insight as we went along. We only did 4 workshop sessions with the client, but each one dug deep to understand more about their target market – to help identify who mattered to them.
- our analysis sessions were pure qualitative insight building, so Josh and Emily went through the total process of thinking through what was said, and then what was meant, what the qualitative insight was. This totally transparent process meant there was no 'black box' magic going on. We were making the black box together, and then helping to create longer lasting and more impactful insight for Josh and Emily, which in turn translated into better brand and marketing strategy and a better product brief...
- memorable debriefs matter. We know that the more memorable a debrief is, the more insight is embedded, so for the full Bells team we used lots of video clips and pen portraits to help them 'get' who their target customer was. These profiles have formed the backbone of the creative brief to the packaging, marketing and PR agencies too. Josh and Emily know their target market because they've spent time with them in workshops, and thought about what they had to say. They are advocates for the target consumer... but the rest of the team too 'get' the target customer because we filmed them and delivered a film-story and customer profiles.

After the customer immersion and insight research, Josh delivered a food brief for the chefs at Bells to get creative with. The result was 6 possible bars that all came in at around the 100 calorie mark each, that were truly indulgent in taste, and looked fantastic.

We recruited 60 participants to come in quick succession to do depth interviews with us, to taste the cake and think about price points. We gave our participants price anchors from the Free From aisle to help them put their 'value' on the BELLS & WHISTLES proposition.

The sessions were filmed too, and attended by a wider team from Bells of Lazonby. We refined our recruitment based on insight from stage one, recruiting a balance of 'mainstream' Free From purchasers, buying based on need, and 'lifestylers' buying Free From by choice.

This tasting stage helped us understand (qualitatively) which of the recipes were most likely to score well with the target consumer groups, and to gain a sense of what was valued about the cakes in terms of occasion, pack size, price point and messaging.

Josh and Emily were with us again throughout the process, experiencing what the consumers' reaction to their brand was.

## Conclusion

You might think... Qual Street just facilitated - it was the Bells team who did the heavy lifting on this project. It's true they were fully committed to the process and fully present in a way that clients usually aren't. That was a massive factor in the success of the research (and how it fed into the launch). However, it takes skill and expertise, real confidence in our research understanding to embed clients to this degree. The insight, we believe, was always guided by us.

Sometimes small is beautiful. We are a small agency. Josh and his colleagues make small cakes. They are a thing of beauty and we are proud to have helped with their launch.

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