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# Case Study




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**Client**
Selleys

**Title**
"If You Can Take It, It's Yours": The tradie torture test that turbo-charged Selleys

**Category**
B12. Media-Led Ideas

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## Q1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & WHY DOES THIS CASE DESERVE AN AWARD?

Would you subject your product to a public torture test, just to prove it works?

For Selleys, it was a no-brainer.

Because to revive this stagnating legacy brand, we needed to give it serious grunt and abandon words for hard-earned proof.

Selleys is an iconic Australian brand, serving both tradies and DIYers. It dominates Bunnings' shelves with a 61-SKU portfolio that covers every job and need.

However, by 2024, cracks were showing. Growth lagged the category 2:1, brand equity had been eroding for years, and global competitors were closing in.

This wasn't a surface issue - it required a structural reset.

Deep analysis revealed four hard truths:

- **Selleys was focused on the wrong audience.** Tradies not only drive 88% of category value, but they are also vital endorsers of the brand. And they had gone cold on it.
- **It lacked tradies' respect.** On-site, we saw Selleys used for small jobs, while high-stakes work went elsewhere.
- **Our own marketing caused it.** Years of DIY-led marketing made the brand feel unfit for serious jobs.
- **Fragmented campaigns fragmented the brand**. Decades of product-led marketing reduced the brand's ultimate asset, "If it's Selleys, it works", to a punctuation point.

We didn't launch a campaign - we reset the brand.

"If it's Selleys, it works" was elevated from a faint echo, to a loud shout.

Communications were rebuilt to earn tradie respect: tougher, louder, and grounded in proof.

This paper highlights the most iconic campaign from this iconic brand's revival: the live "tradie torture test" that turned a billboard into a public arena.

Tradies don't care what a brand says about itself - they care what it does when they put it under pressure.

So to revive Selleys' stagnating 'Liquid Nails' - we let them do exactly that.

We built a billboard in a busy Sydney intersection, then stuck valuable items (well, valuable to tradies) to it using nothing but Liquid Nails: a kayak, arcade machine and even a 2.8-metre marlin.

With a simple challenge: if you can take it, it's yours.

Pedestrians tried. Tradies yanked. Creators posed. Every attempt became social content, amplified by an army of tradie influencers.


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The result? Selleys went ballistic.

The isolated effects of this campaign saw Selleys:

- Outpace a flatlining category by 4.76x
- Reverse brand decline with tradies, sparking double-digit growth
- Go viral, generating +60.2 million impressions
- Deliver a net-profit ROI of $6.48

It even out-performed every other Selleys ad.

Far from a tactical stunt, this campaign became the most vital chapter of Selleys' brand overhaul, proving the power of a disruptive media idea.





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## Q2. WHAT WAS THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGE?

Selleys is an Australian household name, famous for adhesives, sealants and its long-running platform: "If it's Selleys, it works."

It's the brand you grow up with - in the shed, under the sink or holding a broken mug together.

Established by Martin Selleys in the 1930s, the business has grown to 61 sub-ranges (like Liquid Nails, No More Gaps and Storm Sealant), dominates shelf spaces and commands a 10–20% price premium over the rest of the category.

Its market is split into two distinct worlds: DIYers, where Selleys holds 40% market share; and 'Professional Users' (tradies), where Selleys hold 13% market share.

Whilst they make products serving both, DIYers have been the businesses historical focus due to their audience size (64% of purchasers). *(Figure 1)*

Selleys seemed to have an enviable position, but underneath, cracks were forming.

**CHALLENGE #1 - A decade of brand decay**
Selleys' had been suffering with both DIYers and tradies for nearly a decade.

Among DIYers, awareness, consideration and reported purchase had slipped by 10-12 ppt since 2015 *(Figure 2).*

The tradie trajectory was no different. They'd been deprioritised as an audience, but the most up-to-date research (2021) showed similar slides in awareness, consideration and reported purchase (*Figure 3)*.

**CHALLENGE #2 - International invasion**
For the first time ever, foreign brands were closing in.

US-based Gorilla was gaining ground fast with DIYers and for the first time, eroding Selleys' eSOV advantage (*Figure 4).*

The result? Their mental availability was on the rise, whilst ours was under attack (*Figure 5*).

**CHALLENGE #3 - Sales were stalling**
By late 2024, Selleys' sales were stagnating, slowing to a worrying weekly growth rate of just 0.016% *(Figure 6).*

While Selleys' crown jewel, Liquid Nails, which drove 49% of Selleys' total portfolio revenue was declining **-1.03% YoY** (Jan-Sep 2024 vs Jan-Sep 2025) . *(Figure 7)*

Bunnings, our major channel, closely guards access to competitors' market share figures, but we do know category growth rates.

And ours were concerning: half the rate of the wider category *(Figure 8).*

**THE STRATEGIC CHALLENGE: A LEGACY BRAND RUNNING OUT OF ROAD**

Nearly a decade of eroding brand equity and an increasingly competitive landscape had resulted in Selleys being outpaced by the very category it helped build.

Our challenge was to rebuild brand and business foundations - and fast.

This wasn't a tactical paint job; it was a structural reset.


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## Q3. WHAT WERE YOUR OBJECTIVES? State specific goals.

Our task was to act before stagnation led to decline.

The burden fell entirely on marketing to reverse stagnation and outpace category growth.

Whilst the business had broad, longer-term objectives for its revival, our immediate campaign objectives for its three months of activity were as follows.

**BUSINESS OBJECTIVES**

**OBJECTIVE 1. Outpace category growth**

Drive total portfolio sales growth that outstrips the post-COVID category average.

**OBJECTIVE 2. Accelerate priority SKUs**

Unlock immediate, sustained sales uplifts for Liquid Nails and high-performance trade lines.

**BRAND OBJECTIVES**

**OBJECTIVE 3. Reverse masterbrand decline**

Claw back the decline in Selleys' equity and increase brand health YoY

**COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES**

**OBJECTIVE 4. Exceed creative benchmarks**

Surpass Kantar global norms on metrics that drive memorability and maximise media spend; distinctiveness, branding and enjoyment.

**OBJECTIVE 5. Generate brand buzz**

Drive conversation about Selleys that gets it off the shelves and into people's world.


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## Q4. WHAT WAS YOUR STRATEGY AND HOW DID YOU GET THERE?

Our transformation strategy was built on four foundational insights.

**INSIGHT #1 - TRADIES WERE THE APEX PREDATOR OF DIY - ECONOMICALLY, ATTITUDINALLY AND INFLUENTIALLY**

As sales stalled, the business was forced to reflect on its source of growth.

*For the first time ever,* Selleys conducted its own market analysis amongst both its DIY AND tradie audiences.

The finding? The two were not made equal.

Despite their market size being half of DIYers, tradies drove *88%* of market value. With only 13% market share of tradies, Selleys' headroom for growth was 7.5x that of DIYers. *(Figure 9)*

Winning them was essential, but also difficult.

Despite declining consideration, Selleys still won out on DIYers' drivers of choice - confidence and efficiency.

But for the drivers of choice that mattered to tradies, Selleys was losing to Sika - the Swiss chemical giant. *(Figure 10)*

Convincing tradies also had a final benefit. They'd provide powerful social proof of Selley's efficacy to our DIYer audience. Tradies are potent endorsers generally, but particularly in Australia where they carry real cultural weight.

**Our first problem was abundantly clear: the Selleys brand was over-orientated to the wrong audience. Tradies needed to be reprioritised, not deprioritised!**

So, all sights were set on understanding how we could earn back the respect and business of this pivotal audience.

**INSIGHT #2 - SELLEYS DIDN'T PASS THE TORTURE TEST**

Having neglected tradies for years and discontinued audience research with them in 2021, we needed to understand them. Fast.

Like any studious planner, we conducted six focus groups with tradies on Zoom to understand how Selleys could win back their respect.

Unfortunately, the findings did not bring us any closer to the problem *(Figure 11)*; people played back that they knew the brand and thought it worked just fine (even quoting "If it's Selleys, it works" to us unprompted).

Delightful to hear, but inconsistent with brand tracking and our market share.

Perplexed, we went where no callus-free advertising strategist has dared to go before: on site.

We spoke to cabinet-makers, carpenters and everything in between - their time paid for in slabs of Great Northern, of course.


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Observing their work and conversations on site revealed the inconsistencies behind the polite Zoom answers.

Firstly, Selleys products were widely present on site.
(Figure 12)

But when we started to interrogate what Selleys was used for, we uncovered a psychological ceiling being placed on the brand.

Selleys was used for small jobs inside the house, like architraves or trimmings.

“But, when would you use Sika over Selleys?” we asked.

The answer? Any job of consequence. Think the steel frame of an elevator that could fall down on passers-by at any moment; the timber holding up a patio a family convenes on.
(Figure 13)

So, we asked if this was based on genuine product experience; had Selleys let them down in the past? Where did they learn it all?
(Figure 14)

Selleys’ inferiority was simply tradie folklore, passed down from boss to apprentice.

And so we had our second problem: Selleys’ challenge in winning tradies wasn’t one of affinity - it was respect; tradies didn’t think it could handle the level of gutsiness they require.

**INSIGHT #3 - WE HAD TRAINED THE MARKET TO UNDERESTIMATE US**

Historical advertising had reinforced this perception: decades of communications focussed on winning the DIYer had positioned Selleys as the solution for little jobs around the house.
(Figure 15)

At best, communications helped people fix small jobs (quite literally a child’s drumstick). At worst, it diminished the role of the tradie entirely, reducing them to eye candy and innuendo (“Do it yourself, before someone does ‘it’ for you”).

We had made the brand so domestic and comfortable, little wonder the conclusion had been that Selleys can’t handle jobs of consequence.

**INSIGHT #4 - FRAGMENTED CAMPAIGNS WERE FRAGMENTING THE BRAND**

Our final hurdle was self-inflicted: product specs had completely overpowered our organising brand idea.

Historically, Selleys focussed on building strong sub-brands within its portfolio through product-led campaigns.

This resulted in decades of isolated, fragmented campaigns that had reduced our ultimate asset, “If it’s Selleys, it works“, to a sign-off. We had turned a powerful promise into a punctuation point.
(Figure 16)

To crack a sceptical trade market, we had to stop using our tagline as an afterthought and make it the centrepiece of the campaign.


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### THE STRATEGY THAT BROUGHT IT ALL TOGETHER

Selleys needed to radically change its brand and communications strategy with three imperatives:

1. Re-orientate the brand to the most commercially valuable, hard-nosed and influential audience.

2. Un-do decades of communications that placed Selleys in the world of odd jobs, instead proving it can handle the level of gutsiness tradies require.

3. Transform the latent asset of 'If it's Selleys, it works' into an active, unifying promise capable of driving the entire portfolio.

## Q5. HOW WAS YOUR STRATEGY BROUGHT TO LIFE?

### FIRST, WE LAID THE FOUNDATIONS

Selleys didn't come out swinging with the idea we're here to discuss. In the year prior, we laid the foundations that signalled its reorientation.

**Communications were tradie-proofed**

We needed to reset how the brand showed up.

People had gotten too comfortable with "If it's Selleys, it works", rather than something we had conviction in. So we made it a bold declaration that the brand was willing to stand behind, publicly.

In everything we did, the brand showed up with guts, volume and proof it bloody backed itself.

**Products went to the background. Brand promise went to the foreground.**

Despite having to retain the business' focus on product comms, we couldn't keep fragmenting the brand.

In every piece of communication, 'If it's Selleys, it works' became the beginning and end. No more product specs. Just a bold brand promise.

The product became an excuse to make the brand talk; a functional alibi. Every touch point was treated with absolute consistency, composure and a sense of jeopardy.

This would create a halo effect on the rest of the portfolio, instead of promoting asingle product at a time.

*With the foundations now laid, we could double down.*

### WE PUT LIQUID NAILS TO THE ULTIMATE TRADIE TORTURE TEST

**An idea born of great account casting and client onboarding**

As part of the brand's re-direction, we deliberately cast two creatives that were ex-tradies to lead the account. Their understanding of the tradie psyche proved invaluable.

When the Selleys team briefed the agency on their commercial objective to revive Liquid Nails, they prepared examples of just how powerful the adhesive is.

One of these: a pair of steel handles glued together. The Selleys team light-heartedly issued a challenge: "Go on, try to pull them apart!".


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But the ex-tradie team did not take it lightly.

The rest of the briefing, they spent competing with each other to see who could pull it apart first. It was their strength vs. Liquid Nails'.

It was the same ego and competitive drive the team had experienced many times on site before – *"move over princess, let me do it", "oi, let us have a crack".*

From this realisation, their brilliance struck.

*The idea: Don't just say Liquid Nails is strong. Prove it, by daring tradies to try and defeat it.*

### A billboard, turned public arena

This idea hinged on tradies putting Liquid Nails to the test, in real life. So, we built a billboard that doubled as a live product torture test.

This wasn't OOH in any traditional sense. It was a physical experience designed to put the product's reputation in the hands of its harshest critics. No controlled conditions. No safety net.

### An appeal to their ego

We issued a simple challenge on the billboard: "If you can take it, it's yours"

The provocation was designed to be impossible to walk past, appealing to their professional pride.

### We glued items of desire – not items of relevance

Great brands are a magnet to their audience, not a mirror. We didn't want to stick tools they used everyday – we chose items they yearned for.

A kayak. A 2.8m marlin. An arcade game. An outdoor BBQ. And so much more.

### The billboard was the stage. Social was the amplifier.

Every interaction became content. Every person who walked up to the billboard and tried to pull something off, whether they were a passing pedestrian, a professional builder, or Australia's second-strongest man, created an authentic, unscripted moment.

Social gave the proof scale: a video of a real builder straining to rip a tool off a board, failing, and walking away carries more persuasive weight across social platforms than any traditional product demonstration could.

### Designed to get Selleys in the group chat

This audience shares content within tight peer networks. They tag mates. They challenge each other. The activation was designed to trigger exactly that behaviour, turning viewers into distributors and skeptics into advocates.

We also seeded the content with influencers and high-profile participants to ensure the challenge entered multiple social layers beyond the trade community.

### A high-stakes gamble

We were putting the entire brand on the line. Not just legally, but reputationally.
If someone pulled an item free, the product's core promise would be publicly destroyed, captured on camera and shared by the same tradie audience we were trying to win.

Thankfully, because Liquid Nails is from Selleys – it worked.

(Figure 17, 18, 19)


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## Q6. HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT YOUR CAMPAIGN WAS SUCCESSFUL?

**BUSINESS RESULTS: SELLEYS HIGHEST-EVER SALES PERIOD.**

The shift to being brand-first, product-second has meant that Selleys' campaigns now work like the rising tide that lifts all boats. Despite being a Liquid-Nails campaign, the entire portfolio soared.

**OBJECTIVE 1. Outpace category growth. Done.**

**The entire portfolio grew immediately.**
"If You Can Take It, It's Yours" delivered an immediate +4.24% sales increase year-on-year (YoY)

(Figure 20).

**We beat the market.**
As anticipated, the category's growth continued to stabilise, growing at a measly 0.9% during the campaign period.

Selleys sprinted past it, with the total portfolio growing **4.78x** the category.

(Figure 21)

**A higher sales floor.**
This sustained uplift created an elevated baseline with a **+13.5% uplift in average weekly sales** across the portfolio.

**OBJECTIVE 2. Accelerate priority SKUs. Done.**

**We breathed new life into a decades-old product.**
Liquid Nails had been stalling through 2025, shrinking -1.03% YoY.
During the campaign period, sales grew **+6.53%.**

(Figure 22-23)

**High-performance trade SKUs saw a halo effect.**

Proving the power of a more unified master-brand, sales for tradie-oriented products like 650FC were turbo-charged during this campaign, growing **+11.7%** YoY.

(Figure 24)

**BRAND RESULTS: THE RESPECT OF OUR TOUGHEST AUDIENCES, EARNED.**


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**OBJECTIVE 3. Reverse Masterbrand Decline. Done.**

Winning the respect of Australia's most cynical audience flipped the brand's entire trajectory, turning an eight-year slide into a clean sweep across the funnel.

**As intended, we clawed back the respect of tradies,**
Amongst tradies, Selleys smashed its competitor's performance, seeing massive growth at every stage of the funnel:

- Awareness: +15% uplift (39% relative growth)
- Consideration: +13% uplift (42% relative growth)
- Usage: +9% uplift (26% relative growth)

(Figure 25)

**COMMUNICATIONS RESULTS: PROOF THAT WORKED HARDER THAN WORDS EVER COULD**

**OBJECTIVE 4. Exceed creative benchmarks. Done.**

**We didn't just beat creative benchmarks - we smashed them.**

The designed-for-social asset that Selleys produced and ran on owned channels performed incredibly strongly on Kantar's involvement metrics.

(Figure 26)

It over-delivered on every critical metric in creative testing with tradies – **138%** above the norm on Enjoyment, **70%** above the norm on 'Active Involvement' scores, **140%** above the norm on 'Meets Needs' and **70%** above the norm on 'Purchase Intent'.

(Figure 27)

Audience takeaways from Kantar campaign testing were perfectly in line with business objectives. The top three message recall with tradies being:

1. "Selleys products can be relied on to work"
2. "Selleys makes high performance products"
3. "You can trust Selleys / You can rely on Selleys in extreme situations"

The social-first asset that stemmed from this campaign has became Selleys best-ever performing piece of communications and is now being utilised as its hero piece of advertising.

**OBJECTIVE 5. Generate brand buzz. Done.**

**"If you can take it, it's yours" wasn't just compelling - it went viral in Australia and globally.**

The campaign's social content delivered a whopping +60.2 million impressions, generating coverage across national mastheads like News.com.au, The Australian and 9News.

Demonstrating the power of not just understanding your audiences' buying behaviour but their culture and mindset.

(Figure 28)


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## Q7. WAS THE CAMPAIGN A GOOD INVESTMENT?

## Q8. DEMONSTRATE THAT THE RESULT WAS NOT DUE TO OTHER FACTORS

**Category growth?**
No. We outpaced category growth as shown by 4.76x.

**Seasonality?**
No. Tradies are not seasonal as an audience.

**Distribution?**
No. Bunnings' footprint did not grow in this period.

**New products?**
No.

**Pricing?**
Selleys' maintained its price premium of 10-20% across this period.

## Q9. GIVE CONTEXT TO BUDGET IN COMPARISON TO COMPETITORS.

## Q10. GIVE CONTEXT TO THE BRAND'S OVERALL BUDGET.

## Q11. MEDIA BUDGET ELABORATION

## Q12. DESCRIBE OWNED MEDIA ACTIVITY

## Q13. OUTLINE ANY SPONSORSHIPS

## Q14. OUTLINE COMMUNICATION TOUCHPOINTS


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