

Belu Spring Water – you drink clean water: they drink clean water

The opportunity

- One quarter of the world's population never gets a clean glass of water
- 69% of UK consumers are prepared to pay for bottled water and the market is growing
- So, could we launch a water brand which responds to both these situations, and is able to compete as an ethical product in a category which is all about quality?

The process

?What If! have partnered the entrepreneurs who run belu since it's inception in 2003 and engaged a range of our in-house innovation skills and resources as the venture has developed:

- Development of brand values and vision: we developed and set the values and vision for belu which has since led decision making on all aspects of the venture, from design work, to copy writing, to recruitment
- Creation of consumer proposition: initially we created a series of potential positionings for belu along a scale from 'emergency charity water', through to 'high-end club water' to establish where consumers thought belu should sit. They told us that it shouldn't shout 'charity' as that would infer it was of low quality, but that they'd like to know that it was doing good
- Leveraging our network for sales support: we have given belu invaluable access to our network - an endorsement from us allows them to shortcut the sales process and gives them a real advantage over other new products
- Strategic and back office support: we hold a non-executive place on the belu board and continually advise on strategy. We also give the team at belu access to the wider ?What If! team for very practical support such as IT, finance and recruitment

The solution

A non-profit bottled water which...

- Invests 100% of its profits in clean water projects around the world and here in the UK
- Is priced competitively so consumers or buyers are not penalised for making an ethical choice
- And despite being ethical (which normally equals poor quality in consumer minds), belu is also a leader in quality, taste and style. To ensure we were all these things we: visited every mineral source in the UK, had Jamie Oliver's sommelier write our taste descriptor, and enrolled top design house Lewis Moberly to develop our packaging
- All characterised by a brand which is not preachy or worthy in its message, instead choosing to celebrate water, the social opportunity of profits, and the consumers who drink it

The result

- belu was launched in glass in April 2004, and is now stocked in Waitrose, Nobo, The Groucho Club, Sketch and many other top end London restaurants, along with several corporates and the Department for Culture Media and Sport
- belu was the only bottled water available backstage at Live8 in the summer of 2005
- Clean water projects are underway: providing drinking water and sanitation in Tamil Nadu, India; and cleaning sections of the Thames in East London with Thames 21
- belu continues to innovate - a plastic variant was launched in August 2005 in the UK's first ever compostable plastic bottle – made from corn!
- belu has also collected it's own accolades –

2004 Shine Award for Product Design Award from British Glass

2004 Silver Award from International Brand Packaging (USA)

2004 Award for Excellence from Communication Arts



"?What If! have been integral to how we've positioned the belu brand, the crystallisation of our values and our mission, and how we've articulated our long-term business objectives. They've also provided us with expert advice on how to approach and sell to customers, and are so firmly established in the top tier of the business community that they have literally saved us months by repeatedly introducing us to the right people at the right level, including our first big break when they took us by the hand and dragged us into Waitrose. They are true friends and supporters."

Reed Paget and Marilyn Smith, founders of belu and joint CEOs

"Working on projects like this give you a chance to feel like you're changing the world at some small, fundamental level. It's why we set up the Footprint part of ?What If!, to work with people like Reed and Marilyn and see ideas put out into the world that don't just make economic sense but have a great social output too. We're deeply, deeply proud of what the guys have achieved!" **Kris Murrin, ?What If!**

