



Design Business Association  
Design Effectiveness Awards 2010

Category

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4.0 Packaging

Sub category

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4.4 Own Brand - Food

Client company

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Waitrose

Design consultancy

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Waitrose Graphic Design - Packaging Team

10th June 2010

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## Executive summary 299 words

# essential Waitrose

Our fundamental belief is that few things in life are more important than the food you buy. Good quality is essential.

The introduction of **essential Waitrose** in March 2009 following months of preparation, just as the recession was beginning to bite, undeniably helped Waitrose deliver the most impressive results in its history. Waitrose has since outperformed the market, growing share and increasing sales on an impressive scale, and **essential Waitrose** has been cited by numerous industry analysts as a key factor in achieving this unprecedented growth.

There was a significant gain on like-for-like on **essential Waitrose** products in just the first 12 weeks immediately following the first of the newly repackaged products arriving on our shelves, and prior to any ATL support. Having recently celebrated its first birthday, **essential Waitrose** is already a £½ billion brand and accounts for around 17% of our sales. Nearly three quarters of Waitrose customers have bought essential Waitrose products, without the range cannibalising existing sales of other products. When the range launched it helped to attract over 400,000 new customers each week to Waitrose, making it the fastest.

**essential Waitrose** successfully 'democratised' quality food with a clearly signposted 'everyday' offering. In so doing, it has had a transformative impact on the Waitrose business and brand and been met with universal approval by industry, customers and internal audiences alike. It all started, well before the depth of the recession was forecast, with a packaging brief to raise the profile of the Waitrose brand identity in-store and to increase awareness of its own label everyday products, whilst communicating the values behind the brand. For the vast majority of the lines, no change to the product or significant change to price\*1, only a redesign of its label, box or bag.

“To build a half-billion pound brand from a standing start, in a single year, would test many businesses. Waitrose deserves recognition for having done it with essential Waitrose”

Ian King, Deputy Business Editor at The Times

\*1 Price alignment for quality was benchmarked against Sainsbury's

# Project overview

## 1. Outline of project brief

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### Business objectives

- To encourage more of our existing customers to do a full shop with us.
- To give customers a clear entry price point with no compromise on quality.

### Marketing objectives

- To be more confident in the use of our Waitrose brand identity.
- To reinforce value for money at Waitrose by highlighting everyday products at everyday prices, the Waitrose quality you'd expect at prices you wouldn't.
- To broaden the appeal of the Waitrose brand.
- To improve shopability, awareness and recognition of these everyday products – previously not easily identifiable as our own label due to eclectic presentation and recessive branding.
- To avoid alienating our loyalists who were highly suspicious of 'down-market' shifting or revolutionary change, through reassurance of the same Waitrose quality standards, taste, care and commitment to responsible production.

## 2. Description

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The new **essential Waitrose** everyday product range now comprises 1,400 SKUs – the majority fresh and other everyday food staples, (but the range extends across 'everyday' product categories in-store). 1,200 existing own label products have been rebranded and repacked on a rolling basis, and 200 new products introduced following initial launch to round out the offer within the 'everyday' tier across all categories.

## 3. Overview of market

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Our fundamental challenge was to make our everyday products more visible and relevant to our customers, which was made increasingly urgent by the arrival of the recession. Our competitors had previously been building their credentials in our key areas of differentiation – product quality, sourcing standards and ethics – but were now moving their emphasis back towards price and value. We needed to ensure that we straddled both quality and value territories, and were able to get the balance right between the design of our everyday own label packaging as alternatives to branded products.

## 4. Project launch date

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Soft launch and rolling introduction of packaging lines from 8th March 2009.

ATL advertising and support launched 3rd June 2009

## 5. Size of design budget

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The majority of time spent on this redesign was incurred by Waitrose in-house packaging team resource (of permanent staff with long-term freelance support).

In addition to this 'business as usual' cost, the following budget was required to commission illustration over the whole project: £250,000

\*1 Consumer Insight.

\*2 50% measured by value (Kantar) or self-report in survey data.

## 6. Outline of design solution 363 words

While retaining the distinctiveness and visual integrity of Waitrose, we required a bold and unique identity and design language for **essential Waitrose**, consistent across all 'everyday' categories, to dramatically shift customer shopping behaviour for everyday products and their value perceptions of Waitrose.

In choosing the name, we avoided the language of 'value' or 'basics' in order to reassure customers of the Waitrose standard quality of these products. Meaning something "vitaly important, absolutely necessary...fundamental or indispensable" (Collins dictionary) '**essential Waitrose**' was felt to be ideal for the wide range of everyday staple purchases, both food and non-food.

For the **essential Waitrose** visual identity, we also needed something distinctive and iconic, with sufficient cut-through to change perceptions, without reliance on ATL support. It needed to be true to the Waitrose brand, its quality and market leadership credentials, not to create another 'me-too', while also communicating the everyday nature of the products and their value for money.

We developed a set of visual components which created a strong and distinctive family of products cross-category, while enabling a degree of flex to strike the right balance between value and quality through all categories.

We combined a simple, elegant, pared-back look (flat white backgrounds and straightforward typographic elements) with imagery that flexes from photography to illustration to accommodate the differing needs of category convention or the nature of the product.



The illustrative style was born of a style already established by Waitrose (for example, used already on some product packaging and Bag For Life), thereby ensuring familiarity and encouraging engagement by loyalists.

A fixed visual relationship was established between the **essential Waitrose** identity and the product name, we developed clear rules to ensure minimal descriptors, thereby simplifying copy and prioritising key messages to avoid clutter on pack.

With this design framework established, the layout of the packaging for each product was given appropriate care and attention, to ensure an optimal design for the size of packaging, positioning and visibility on shelf, before the illustration or photography was commissioned.

The versatility of this design language is further proved by its extensive and highly successful use across point of sale throughout the store and beyond in the ATL support.



In-store shelf edge barker



In-store launch leaflet

## Summary of results

The launch of **essential Waitrose** has delivered the most impressive results in Waitrose's history. It has been described as “**hugely successful**”<sup>\*1</sup> and ensured that “**there’s no doubting the real star of the supermarket sector**”<sup>\*2</sup> and that Waitrose had simply “**shrugged off the recession**”<sup>\*3</sup>

It has been successful in its own right, in boosting sales of everyday products at Waitrose but it has also improved brand perceptions of Waitrose as a whole and significantly changed shopping behaviour.

### Increase in essential Waitrose sales

The **essential Waitrose** redesign made an immediate and significant impact on sales from the week it went onto the shelves.

- **Like-for-like sales of essential Waitrose grew by 16% in 12 weeks**, during early stages of roll-out.
- Isolating the first 12 weeks, prior to ATL communication support, we saw year-on-year, like-for-like product sales significantly increase as essential Waitrose products progressively reached the shelves and replaced the previous packaging<sup>\*4</sup>.
- Looking purely at those like-for-like sales, as products were rolled out, **we saw increases of 13% in the first week, rising to over a 16% increase YOY by the 12th week**<sup>\*5</sup>.
- **essential Waitrose immediately and dramatically increased the share of basket for our everyday products to 14%**, by the end of that same 12 week period after launch<sup>\*6</sup> This equates to an **essential Waitrose** product being present in 35% of baskets, and being purchased by 2.2 million shoppers - 59% of our shoppers<sup>\*7</sup>.

This powerfully demonstrates the direct and immediate impact of packaging in-store on customer's purchasing decisions. Clearly our new packaging was doing an extremely good job of navigating customers through product options and around the shop, and reassuring our customers on quality.

Perhaps The Times<sup>\*8</sup> summarises its impact most powerfully:

“essential Waitrose has proved a formidable weapon  
in the supermarket's armoury”

\*1 Daily Beast blog 01.01.10.

\*2 Management Today 05.02.10.

\*3 The Telegraph 13.01.10.

\*4 All essential Waitrose rebranded products were given a new line number to ensure their sales could be tracked independently of the product with the pre-essential Waitrose packaging.

\*5 We experienced a dip in sales post Easter/Mother's Day week, shared by other food retailers.

\*6 Internal sales figures – share of Waitrose basket.

\*7 Kantar WorldPanel 12 weeks to May 17 2009 vs 2008.

\*8 The Times 10.03.10.

## Research resources

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### Consumer Insight

- Brand and advertising tracking study (continuous tracking study).
- essential Waitrose boost (bespoke study).

Kantar Worldpanel.

Internal sales data.

## Other influencing factors

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### Press

- Press coverage prior to ATL advertising was almost exclusively in business press only.

### Point of sale

- There was only limited POS in-store during the first 12 weeks, present and required only in categories such as meat and milk (shelf edge and checkout till dividers only). This was as a direct replacement for existing POS, migrating our message from the current 'Select Farm' communication explaining sourcing and quality standards to an **essential Waitrose** one. Therefore we feel that any positive impact on consideration or purchase should be considered negligible.

### Price promotion

- During the soft launch period there was no additional price promotion activity on essential Waitrose products, beyond the 'business as usual' schedule. Any significant price promotion activity on **essential Waitrose** was undertaken concurrent with the introduction of ATL advertising.