

#IPA
Social
Works

A.H. Beard

Using social to create a 'Sleep Challenge'

Agency: Mentally Friendly

The first cross-industry collaboration between



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Market context

Mattresses are a challenging product category where every product looks the same and the buying cycle is approximately once a decade.

A.H. Beard was the second biggest category manufacturer in Australia and had been producing mattresses for 115 years. But although Australians had some recognition of A.H. Beard's sub-brands, King Koil and Domino, awareness of the A.H. Beard master brand itself was very low. This meant it carried less influence with retailers than competitors and retail staff were more likely to push consumers towards the brands they recognized, leading to lost sales opportunities for A.H. Beard products.

Typically, it is not until there is an issue such as a broken spring that mattresses begin to occupy consumers' share of mind. This occurs on average once every 10 years. The mattress category is a low-trust category with retailers setting the price-point and controlling the in-store experience. To quote from www.mattressscam.com, 'You could pay \$1,300 for a mattress in store A when store B sells what is basically the same model by the same manufacturer for less than \$700!'

And though communications in the category often emphasises features such as 'pocket springs', 'memory foam' or 'posturepedic', these words are generally boring and meaningless to consumers.

Arming customers with product knowledge prior to shopping was therefore essential.

Competitors in the category typically invested in mass, broadcast media. With a more conservative media budget to play with, A.H. Beard could not afford the wastage associated with this approach.

A.H. Beard needed to gain some control of the customer experience. It was our task to make sure that when customers walked in-store they asked for A.H. Beard.

Business/marketing objectives

A.H. Beard needed to

- Target consumers in the consideration phase to generate demand and create a more informed consumer, relying less on retail staff to drive sales
- Open up direct lines of contact online with consumers in order to remain top of mind for when it came time to replace their mattress.

Channel Choice/Strategy

During research and discovery we learned two key facts.

In 2012 a study of 13,089 people conducted by Central Queensland University revealed that 96% of respondents woke up feeling tired. Simply, Australians were not getting quality sleep.

Sleep affects every aspect of your life. We arrived at this conclusion through a series of one-on-one interviews with a sleep doctor at A.H. Beard as well studying the book, *Sleep for Success*, by sleep researcher Dr James B Maas. Specifically interesting to us was that depression, energy levels, food cravings and weight loss are all linked to sleep and are all topics customers are passionate about.

Mattresses are not interesting, but great sleep is. By teaching Australia how to sleep better, A.H. Beard would be able to add value to its audience on a daily basis, and engage them on topics they love to talk about.

An AdWords campaign, 'Get better sleep and lose weight', was run to gauge online interest in the topic and identify specific sleep pain points.

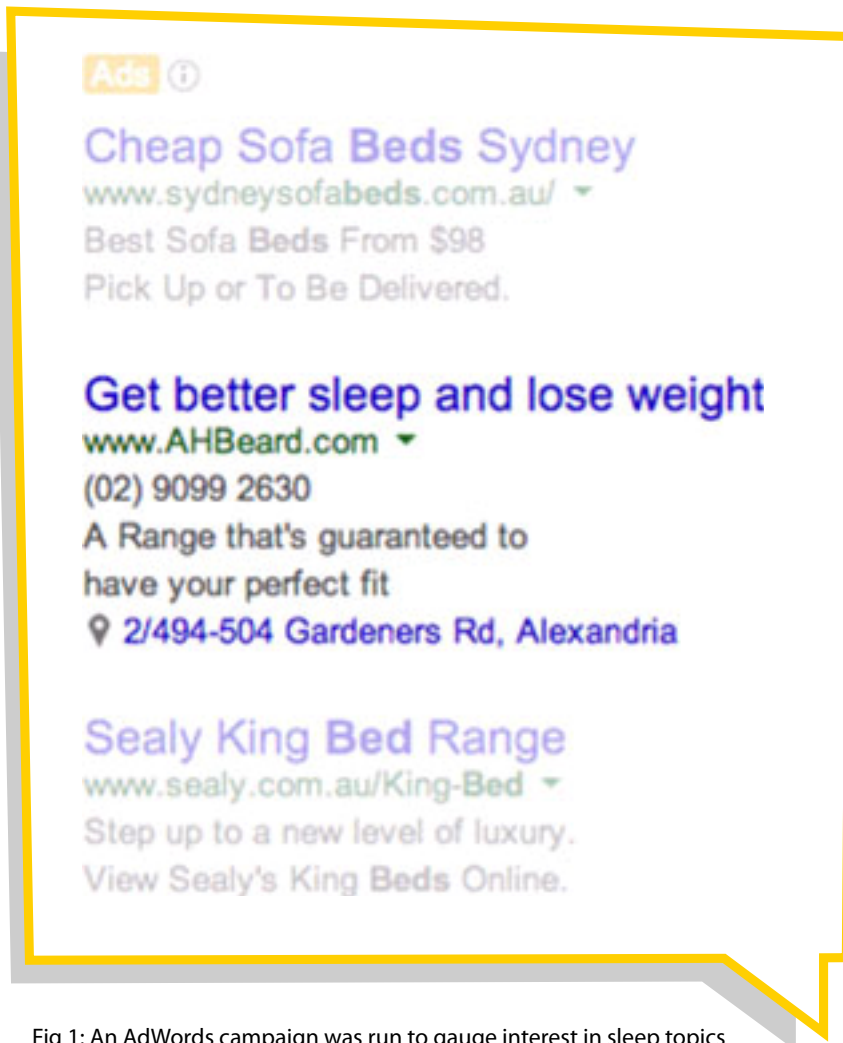


Fig 1: An AdWords campaign was run to gauge interest in sleep topics

The dummy AdWords campaign received 157% more click-throughs than the company's ads with product-feature-based AdWords. We had confirmed that Australians wanted to improve the quality of their sleep, and we identified the most interesting sleep-related lifestyle benefits.

A.H. Beard would no longer sell mattresses: it would sell sleep. So strong was this insight and so convinced was A.H. Beard of its potency that the business rebranded to include a new brand promise, 'Improving Lives Through Better Sleep'. This promise was to be facilitated through a sleep community called the A.H. Beard Six-Week Sleep Challenge. Why a challenge? Like all good fitness and weight-loss programmes the challenge acts as the catalyst to join the community.

Sleep being such a universal pain point meant that even if our audience did not have trouble sleeping themselves, they would know someone who did and refer them, resulting in earned media through social sharing.

From our interviews with sleep doctors and the AdWords research campaign, we determined that the majority of Australians would recognize at least one of four possible frustrations as the major contributor to their poor sleep. We then jazzed up the names a little:

Waking up during the night = Interrupted Sleeper;

Pain during sleep = Pained Sleeper;

Trouble getting to sleep = Eventual Sleeper;

Erratic sleep patterns = Spontaneous Sleeper.

We also designed the Sleep Challenge as a synchronous activity. Community members would begin the challenge together, complete each weekly task at the same time and end together.

Studies show synchronous activities strengthen social attachment and more successfully coordinate groups in taking social action. In both online and physical learning environments, social interaction and collaboration are identified as a major factor in successful learning outcomes. (See Bonk and Zhang, 2006; Martinez-Caro, 2011)

The challenge structure made it an easy and natural process for community members to connect around their shared experiences. It is that connection that helps members stay accountable and on track. Most importantly for the brand, having established a common purpose for members, A.H. Beard would have a reason to talk to consumers more than once a decade.

Creative/media implementation

The Six-Week Sleep Challenge was developed as a free online health and wellbeing improvement programme that challenged members with a lifestyle-related task each week.

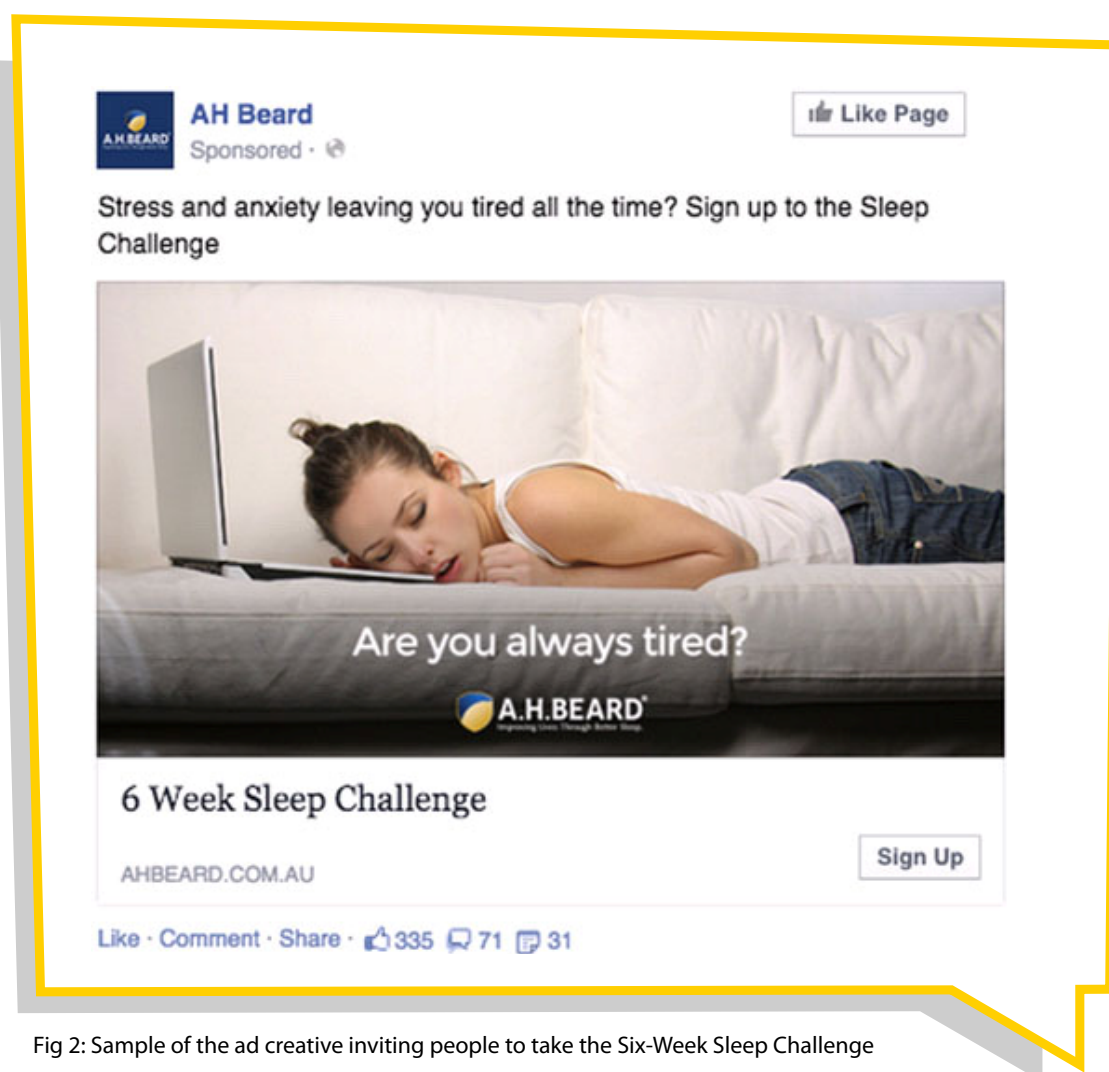


Fig 2: Sample of the ad creative inviting people to take the Six-Week Sleep Challenge

At sign-up, customers identified which of the four sleep groups was most relevant to them.



Fig 3: Sample of Sleep Group selection

The groups provide a sense of universality as members see their specific sleep problems are shared with others. Categorization also made it easy for new visitors to determine whether the challenge was appropriate for them.

Each weekly task was accompanied by customized sleep advice based on one of the four 'sleep groups' chosen at sign-up. Members received support from the community in the forums and read expert advice on the blogs. At sign-up, members were added to the database, which served as the company's future distribution channel.

The six weekly challenges

Each challenge was based on research studies which proved that these changes positively impact sleep. These happened to be lifestyle topics our audience were already interested in.

Week 1: Crafting your sleep sanctuary

Take control of the light, temperature, comfort and sound in your sleep environment

Week 2: Caffeine – to sip or not to sip?

Stop drinking coffee and other caffeinated drinks at least eight hours before you go to bed.

Week 3: Get the gadgets out of sight

Keep phones, computers and televisions out of the bedroom and stop using them 30 minutes before bed.

Week 4: Let's get physical

Complete 30 minutes of light to moderate exercise every day.

Week 5: You are what you eat

Stay away from heavy meals and alcohol two hours before bedtime.

Week 6: Making 'me' time

Take time from your busy schedule and dedicate 30 minutes to yourself each day.

At the end of each week participants logged their progress in their online sleep log. Participants could track whether completing the challenge had had a positive impact on the quality of their sleep.

Starting with at a community database of zero, we had quite a task to recruit members. Various media channels online and offline were trialled to recruit Sleep Challenge participants during a four-week recruiting period. We learned from each round to help create a clearer profile of community members, to refine creative and inform channel choice for following rounds.

By taking this agile, hands-on approach to media planning, we were able to maximize a conservative media budget. We put in place a very straightforward method of testing various creative and audience segments using database CPA to determine high-performing Ad Groups so we could use the majority of the budget to back the winners.

Facebook media was one of our primary channels used to recruit members, with these generating a large volume of earned media through thousands of Australians tagging and sharing the posts with sleep-deprived friends, telling them to sign up.

We quickly learned that the most effective Facebook media highlighted the typical concerns and emotional states that accompanied a lack of sleep ('Overworked and overstressed' or 'Too tired to enjoy the Weekend?') rather than physical symptoms or the sleep tips we also tested.

In addition, the sign-up rate between 12 am and 4 am was 70% higher than it was the rest of the day. So we developed a low-cost 15-second TV commercial which we aired on cable channels in the early hours of the morning. This also happened to be the most affordable window to buy ads. The commercial reached 874,000 late-night viewers.

AdWords was in place during recruitment to support the TV commercial. We reasoned that viewers in their sleep-deprived state would likely need pointing in the right direction when typing in phrases such as 'A.H. Beard commercial' at 2 am.

Results

Social effects

Members' participation and commentary throughout the challenge, as well as feedback in follow-up surveys, tell us that the programme was seen as a genuine solution to address sleep problems.

There were 26,000 participants.

Facebook fan growth went from zero to 11,000, all driven by the Six-Week Sleep Challenge.

18% of people who clicked to view an ad commented on it, and the majority were also tagging friends, telling them to sign up.

Participants shared their tips and feedback with peers in the forum.

In a follow-up survey with over 1,000 respondents, 87% of participants rated the helpfulness of the forum as 'very helpful' or 'helpful'. Customer feedback influenced the development of new message threads on issues such as the best sleep positions.

Participants completely opened up in the forum, giving us insight into the extent poor sleep has had on their quality of life, and thanked us for the opportunity to do something about it.

The Six-Week Sleep Challenge is also helping A.H. Beard deliver its brand proposition of 'Improving Lives Through Better Sleep', with participants reporting a 44% improvement in sleep quality from Week 1 to 6.

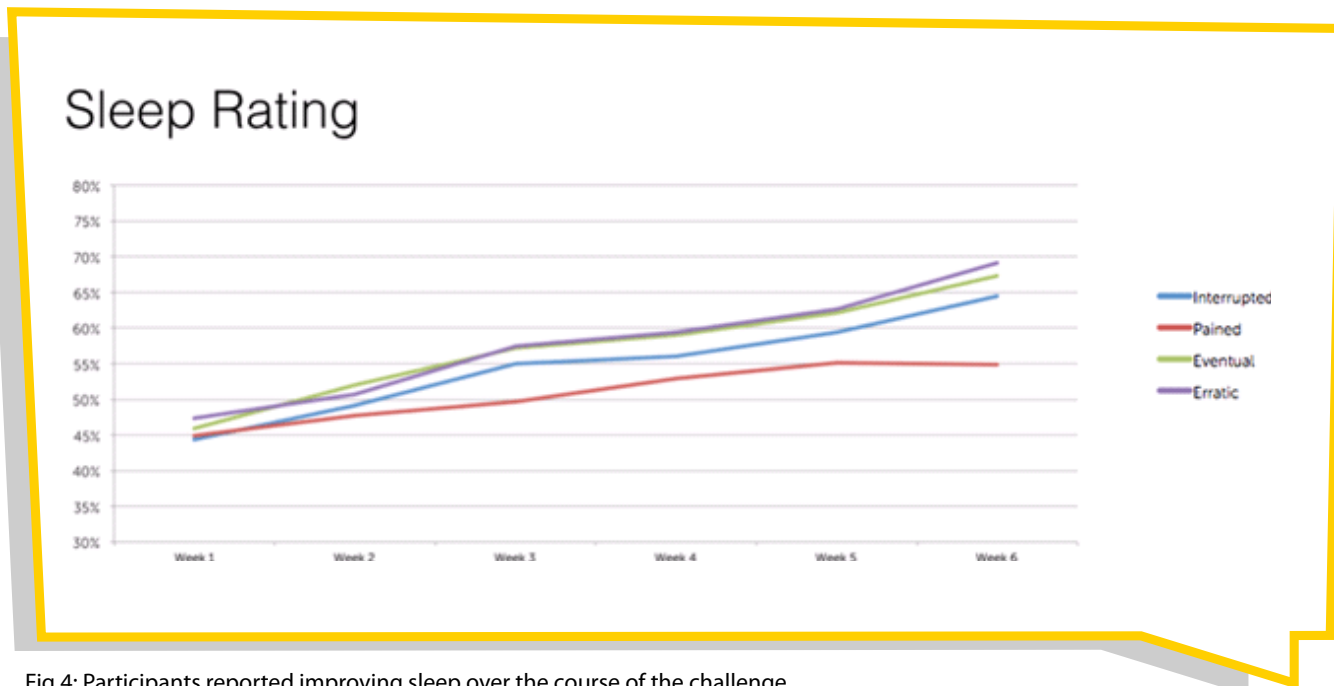


Fig 4: Participants reported improving sleep over the course of the challenge.

Business effects

The Six-Week Sleep Challenge has proven to be an effective social engagement tool for A.H. Beard to grow its customer database and engage retail accounts.

But the greatest achievement is that by making a genuine effort to improve the lives of existing and future customers we are driving sales and purchase consideration, as confirmed by a survey of more than 1,000 respondents.

The survey indicates 9% of respondents have purchased an A.H. Beard mattress since joining the challenge. Comments in both the forum and survey supported purchase: 'Just had to have this mattress, and lucky for us there was a sale on. So we ordered the mattress and I should be sleeping on it in two weeks, I cannot wait.' – SweetDreams (Sleep Challenge Forum username).

60.6% of participants reported they were 'likely' or 'very likely' to purchase an A.H. Beard mattress as their next purchase, with 60.5% likely to purchase in the next 12 months as a result of participating.

The success of the Six-Week Sleep Challenge is now a conversation starter A.H. Beard takes to retailers. This story has given the company influence with key accounts, who are still the gatekeepers in this product category.

The survey also shows that 68% of participants had never heard of A.H. Beard before the challenge.

With a very conservative media budget, we grew a future distribution channel from zero to 26,000. The cost per acquisition was A\$2.35. This cost was 61% lower than the estimated AdWords top page bid of A\$6.06 needed to compete with both distributors and manufacturers in the mattress and bedding category, and this cost would have been just to get people to the site!



Fig 5: Decreasing cost per participant

Key learnings

1. Social ideas can be part of long-term strategies

We developed a long-term idea, with digital objectives to match A.H. Beard's long-tail business objective.

Because our solution was to develop a social product rather than a social campaign, cost savings have been made as we roll out each round of the Sleep Challenge, iteratively making small improvements based on the previous round's lessons.

2. Take an agile approach to media

Avoid spending all your media budget without conducting and testing your own hypotheses. In each round we tested specific targeting, messaging and creative to enable us to make informed updates. By taking an agile approach to media we achieved a 66% decrease in cost per database acquisition from media. On top of that, we increased the sign-up conversion rate by 146%, honing in on our most responsive audience groups to drive the most engaged, quality visitors.

The lessons from media tests we have conducted are so valuable they have not only informed media creative and targeting, but also user experience and product design.

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