



ENTRY FORM

THE EFFIE AWARDS AOTEAROA IN ASSOCIATION WITH TVNZ – ENTRY FORM

ENTRY ID	666-B02
ENTRY TITLE	Worst Kept Secret
CLIENT	Firth
PRODUCT	HotEdge
FIRST MEDIA APPEARANCE DATE	22 March 2024
CAMPAIGN START DATE	22 March 2024
CAMPAIGN FINISH DATE	12 April 2025
CATEGORY	B02. – Limited Budget (less than \$250,000)
CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	<p>Campaigns with a total production and media spend of \$250,000 or less. It must be a stand-alone campaign as opposed to a single execution from a larger campaign. This category is all about achieving a lot for a little. Judges are looking for strategic thinking, creative work, and results that show how to convert a modest budget into a significant commercial result.</p> <p>Note: The budget limit must include the cost of any promotional prizes or incentives. If any media has been provided at non-commercial rates, this needs to be calculated at rate-card equivalent. Entrants should indicate if any production has been provided at non-commercial rates.</p> <p>Entrants in category A13 cannot enter this category.</p>

WORD COUNT: 2500 MAX

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY [0%]

Give the judges an understanding of the case they are about to read by providing a brief summary for each of the items below. A one-sentence summary is recommended for each line.

(Maximum: 100 words in total – not included in total word count)

The Challenge:	<i>HotEdge was overlooked by architects (and builders) when determining how to meet R-value regulations.</i>
The Insight:	<i>Architects needed to see the design flexibility it gave them, to be more creative elsewhere in the build; builders to recall us.</i>
The Strategic Idea/Build:	<i>This was a secret insider ‘hack’ those in the know were keeping secret; leveraging it you’d ‘look good’ and achieve R-values without compromising on design.</i>
Bringing the Strategy & Idea to Life:	<i>Those ‘in the know’ letting out the ‘worst kept secret’; we leveraged the tropes of ‘identity hidden’ interviews.</i>
The Results:	<i>Short term revenue up 37%, digital tools usage up 21%, web users up 272%, ROI 280%, 3yr ROI trend 1001%.</i>
Why is this entry an outstanding example for effective marketing in this Effie entry category?	
(Maximum 90 words – this is not included in total word count)	
<i>In a construction market down 10.8% over the campaign period, a campaign spend of \$202,000 is driving a projected \$2.2m incremental sales growth, lifting revenue 28% and unit sales 44% (YoY), plus a 21.6% growth in the use of our digital tools, with time on (web)site up 196%. We never show the product, instead using category disruptive advertising to share how HotEdge helps meet the R-value. The campaign, from teaser to full reveal and ongoing activity, is still delivering due to the slow cycle of design to consent and purchase.</i>	

01.	<p>Challenge, Context & Objectives [20%]</p> <p>This section covers your strategic business context for your marketing activity, alongside your key business challenge and objectives.</p> <p>Please provide the necessary context on your industry category, competitors, and brand so the judges, including those unfamiliar with your brand/category, can evaluate your entry. Outline the degree of ambition represented by your objectives. Including historical data may be useful here to provide judges with a clear picture of the situation the brand or organisation found itself in.</p>
01A	<p>Before your effort began, what was the state of the brand's/organisation's business and the overall category in which it competes? What was the strategic challenge that stemmed from this business situation? Provide context on the degree of difficulty of this challenge.</p>

A highly regulated building industry

The building industry is beset by regulation and red tape, exacerbated as a consequence of two specific factors, multiplying the complexity of architects' jobs in designing homes.

First, the 'leaky home' debacle in the late 'nineties, when poor building regulation saw thousands of homes not fit for purpose for New Zealand conditions, with an estimated \$47 billion remediation cost¹. A consequence is a more stringent building and product regulation regime, adding significant cost and complexity to homebuilding.

Second, recent changes to 'H1 building regulations' in New Zealand, focusing on energy efficiency and insulation requirements, announced in November 2021 (implemented May 2023). These Building Code updates are aimed at improving the thermal performance of buildings, reducing energy consumption, and contributing to New Zealand's climate change goals.

This is encapsulated in the 'R-value', a rating for how well insulated your home is. Architects must incorporate higher insulation standards in their designs and plan for New Zealand's varied climate.

So, you might think great news for the manufacturer of an insulation product – the regs say we need more! If only it were that simple...

Cluttered market with a confusing number of products and suppliers

There are four ways to insulate, in principle: walls, floor, ceiling, and slab. In addition, glass (double glazing) can contribute to the R-value. The competitive environment is vast, the ways to reach a compliant building solution, myriad.

Leading competitors in home insulation include Pink Batts, Expol, Autex, Knauf, Greenstuf and Kingspan, and within the slab insulation category Firth's HotEdge competes with Expol, Resene, MaxRaft, Koolfoam and Quickset.

HotEdge uses a superior extruded polystyrene (XPS) that is more dense, with greater durability and better thermal performance. So it has installation, handling and thermal advantages.

With a limited budget in a complex market, how do we get the attention of architects and builders for our category of insulation, let alone our brand?

¹ Archipro, 2024

8 years old and not well known

HotEdge was introduced eight years ago. It insulates the edge of the concrete slab, where 80% of slab heat loss occurs. Fair to say, it's the least visual of a non-visual category, and it's unlikely consumers would ever discuss it with an architect. We had resources, literature and sales teams advocating for HotEdge; but failed to achieve acceptable growth, apparently not on the radar. With the construction industry down c.24%, we had to behave differently.

Our research indicated that architects overlooked slab edge insulation as a way to meet R-value, specifying cheaper less effective products².

01B

What were the objectives you set to address your challenge? For each objective, include: KPI, benchmarks, previous outcomes and the rationale for why it was selected.

Please outline one business/organisational objective and a maximum of 3 marketing and 3 advertising/comms objectives.

With little prior activity of note, it was difficult to set specific numerical targets for the below. Instead, we sought to benchmark for the future.

Short Term

- (1) Business objective: Drive awareness for builders/foundation layers to choose HotEdge on unspecified product (where slab perimeter insulation is on plan but brand not specified). We sought a short term sales increase of 10% by making HotEdge top of mind in a low awareness category.
- (2) Marketing objective: Drive awareness for architects to find out more on our website and **explore our digital tools** including our H1 calculator. Grow use of tools by minimum 10%, time on website/page views by 50%, and active users by 80%

Long Term

- (3) Marketing objective: Awareness for architects to **drive specification** of Firth HotEdge products **on plans**.
 - Achieve unprompted brand awareness of 30%
 - We sought a 150% increase in on plan specification of HotEdge by name

We didn't have an awareness metric prior to the campaign, but very low by name specification, and our more general research with architects, suggested it was sitting below 20%.

Ultra Long Term

Resultant significant sales growth over time (laying the foundations as it were...) (**out of scope** for this entry - 3-5 years down the pipe).

² Client 1-1 interviews with architects, 2023.

02.	<p>Insights & Strategy [25%]</p> <p>This section covers the key building blocks of your strategy. Explain to the judges how you arrived at your strategy and clearly articulate that strategy. Focus on the thinking or insight(s) that unlocked your solution and tied it to successfully addressing your objectives.</p>
02A.	<p>Explain the thinking that led you to your strategy. Explain how any insights discovered were directly tied to your brand, your audiences behaviours and attitudes, your research and/or business situation.</p>
<p>Architects are at the core of the solution, they can specify HotEdge on plan, meaning it must be used.</p> <p>We asked, what makes architects tick?</p> <p>The University of Auckland architecture school describes their course like this:</p> <p><i>“Through studio courses, real world case studies and future-based speculation projects, you will develop your design skills and creative practice. You will...bring your concepts to life.”³</i></p> <p>Not <i>“you will wrestle with information overload for what can be specified while juggling dozens of complex regulations, not to mention budget considerations, all to satisfy a vague architectural brief”</i>.</p> <p>Architects are dreamers at heart. We validated this by speaking to some⁴. At a high level, their passion is for design and creative expression. Their own bookshelves are loaded with books such as Frank Gehry's deconstructivist designs, Zaha Hadid's futuristic structures, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier. Not regulations and ‘The Dummies Guide to R-Values’.</p> <p>Architects told us they are passionate about design and aesthetics, but regulations force compromise. For a single project, they may juggle over 100 different specification numbers due to the complexity of today’s construction regulations.</p> <p>Their office shelves are bulging with dusty manufacturers’ folders, they get so many emails with dry information, and don’t have the time to process it all. Like many of us, they rely on what they know and trust, only seeking new solutions if forced to.</p> <p>Insights</p> <p>Conventional category information wouldn’t shift the dial. We’d tried that. This mattered in reaching builders too – similarly bogged down on site.</p> <p>Our insight was that thanks to HotEdge, architects don’t need to compromise on their design to meet regulations, and that builders need easy, proven solutions (time savings, peace-of-mind without compromising on their build quality).</p> <p>Whether at a high visionary level, or the functional level, this was a way in for HotEdge; greater freedom for the design of the rest of the structure. Something that isn’t seen in the final build takes care of important stuff like meeting the R-value, so the rest of the lived in spaces can be bolder, more imaginative and creative – perhaps higher ceilings, larger windows, open spaces.</p>	

³ University of Auckland, School of Architecture, BAS course outline

⁴ Agency & Client research, 2024

We needed to make it easier; the HotEdge team had developed new foundation design software. Where it was used, we saw much more likelihood for HotEdge to be named on plans meaning it was hard to substitute (for a similar product). But not enough people had tried it, web traffic was low, downloads lower.

Finally, short term sales come from builders – we needed to target them too, to drive purchase where brand was not specified on plan. The benefit for them is easy on-site installation, this too a ‘worst kept secret’.

02B.

What was the Core Idea or strategic build that enabled you to reach your solution?

(Be succinct. A maximum of 50 words.)

Architects dream of designing without constraint, yet new building regulations made that increasingly difficult, in fact closing down options for creativity. HotEdge slab insulation was the secret to creating design freedom elsewhere in the build; in an information overloaded world this secret needed to be revealed.

03.

Bringing the Strategy & Idea to Life [20%]

03A.

Describe the creative solution and how it helped the idea break out of the category and resulted in unexpected solutions.

We turned the whole thing on its head - this is the **worst kept secret**, and our campaign can reveal the secret to design freedom that architectural peers **have been trying to keep**.

There's nothing like finding out that there is something that would make a difference to your life, job, passion that no one had told you about. Someone said "it's like it's been a secret, not enough architects are specifying it". This was the leap in thinking.

We would celebrate through the campaign the 'not so secret information' that other Kiwi architects and builders have known for years. That's why we'll call it the worst kept secret.

Our video-led campaign was all about allowing architects in on the not so secret news that would give them so much design freedom, as they'd be much closer to the entire R-value for a build. For builders, we extended the message to highlight 'the secret' of how easy it was with HotEdge.

For both audiences, we recognised the way in was to be category disruptive, and so:

We don't feature the product visually

There's no concrete being poured (or shown at all)

No diagrams showing arrows for heat escaping, or thermal heat imaging graphics

Instead, our approach borrows from the genre of hidden identity interviews, where whistleblowers seek to disguise their face and voice. Shot heavily backlit, with their head or face off-camera or fuzzed, our 'leakers' make a hash of being secret themselves while clearly communicating the HotEdge message.

This fun, disruptive approach was highly unusual in such a conventional category. And took quite a bit of selling in; traditional engineers and management at Firth were convinced that showing product was essential to effective marketing.

The solution also helped with our budget challenges, as it allowed us to shoot in close, discrete environments with effectively non feature talent.

03B.

WHAT WAS THE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY?

This section relates to the media and communications thinking and strategy that brought the creative solution to life in the most powerful and relevant way for the target audience. Include all significant touchpoints and channels in this section.

Outline the rationale behind your communications strategy. Explain how the key elements worked together to drive results:

We used distinct, disruptive 30" films and 15" cutdowns through digital channels: LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, plus the theatre of the mind, radio. Looking and sounding like secret interviews with mysterious industry personas 'blowing the whistle' on the advantages of HotEdge.

Teaser Phase

Built anticipation using digital across LinkedIn, Meta, and Display, teasing them about a secret in the building industry, creating intrigue and anticipation - but not telling them that it was HotEdge. We encouraged registration at worstkeptsecret.co.nz to find out more - with no indication what the product or brand was.

Launch Phase

A focus on owned channels, particularly email, was important to reaching targeted audiences cost effectively. We emailed our database of builders and architects, including those who had registered. We added radio and YouTube to maximize awareness of the new product during the first month and a half, including builders in the targeting. We continued with our Meta, LinkedIn, and Display to generate engagement and drive traffic to the HotEdge page on Firth's website, revealing the brand and product. On Meta, to push messaging to those who'd shown interest, we ran a retargeting audience.

We additionally had paid search running targeting HotEdge keywords so if anyone is searching HotEdge or related terms they see our Google text ad first.

Campaign flow

Teaser media live: 22nd March

Email launch to registered interest: 8th April

Email launch to Firth DB: 9th April

<p>Media Launch: 11th April</p> <p>Second video drop: 26th April</p> <p>Main campaign concludes: 30 June 2024</p> <p>Remind campaign: July 2024 – April 2025 (social & contextual targeting)</p> <p>Email journey monthly – stretching our tight budget to continue to build saliency.</p>	
<p>List all supplementary communications touch points used in this campaign (the touchpoints that were not central to the campaign).</p>	
<p>Webinars to support enquiries during the campaign.</p>	
<p>What was the \$ Spend? Outline the media and production spend on the campaign within the campaign period. Use actual spend rather than ratecard. In the case of donated media please list the rate card value separately from the paid media spend.</p>	
Media Spend	\$106,000
Outline the media spend in relation to competition and versus last year	It's hard to track competitor spend in B2B. Analysis suggests we are significantly outspent within the overall category with very small SOV. No significant activity year prior.
Creative Production Spend	\$96,000

<h1>04.</h1>	<p>WHAT WERE THE RESULTS? [20% for 4A and 15% for 4B].</p> <p>Outline the results achieved by the campaign against the short and long-term objectives set, provide conclusive proof that it was the campaign that drove the results.</p> <p>In this section, the judges will be looking to see a clear cause and effect between the communication activity and business performance over time. Show the compelling evidence that will convince even the most cynical finance director.</p> <p>Please Note: All results must be sourced to be judged; any unsourced results will not be considered by judges.</p>
<h1>04A</h1>	<p>Overall achievement against objectives [20%].</p>

Clear proof that the objectives established in section one have been achieved. Judges will be seeking quantified results. Successful entries ensure that results can easily be aligned against objectives established in section one.

Note: Please ensure all data is sourced, and is specific to the results period outlined in the Call for Entry, and geographically isolated to Aotearoa.

In a market with consents down 24%, our results exceeded all expectations. We grew short term sales, market share and longer term specification on plan. This vindicated a category disruptive advertising campaign where we never showed the product.

Short Term – business objective

- (1) Drive awareness for builders/foundation layers to choose HotEdge on unspecified product (where slab perimeter insulation is on plan but brand not specified).

For context, in the year-ended May 2024, 15,309 stand-alone houses were consented, **down 18 percent year on year** (HotEdge is more relevant to standalone houses).

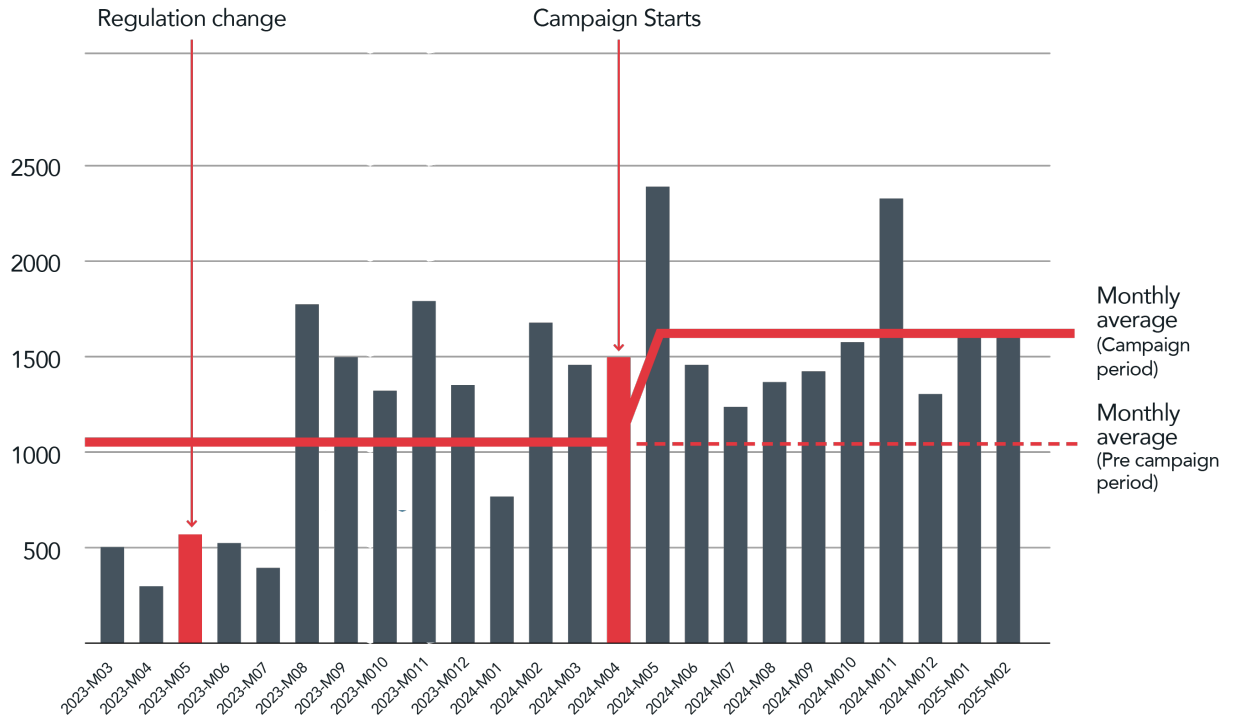
Pre-campaign average monthly sales: 1,094 units/month (revenue \$2.00M)

Campaign period: **1,572** units/month (revenue \$2.57M)

- Unit sales up 44%

With soft market conditions in the construction industry, any growth achieved is particularly noteworthy. This was spectacular, with resultant revenue up **28%** (12 months).

Monthly Sales Volume



Source: Firth

(2) Drive awareness for architects / Group Home Builders to find out more and explore our digital tools including our H1 calculator.

Target: Grow digital tool usage by minimum 10%.

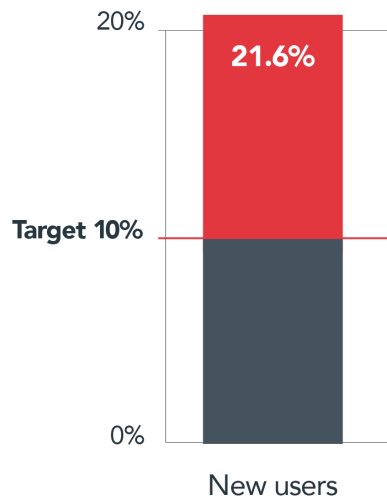
Result: 21.6% growth in registered users of our free design software over the immediate campaign period (to June). Continuing to be adopted by ~20% more each subsequent month.

Target: Time on website/page views up 50%, Active users up 50%

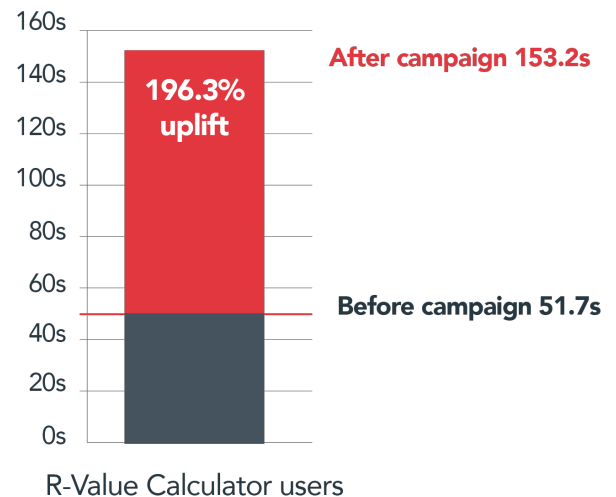
Result: Design tools web page engagement up from 51.7 seconds to 153.2 seconds (+196%).

Adoption of Digital Tools

Foundation Design Software Growth in Users



R-Value Calc Engagement Time



Source: Firth

All HotEdge web pages saw significant uplift, and specifically to the campaign:

- Page Views up from 19,517 to 53,503 (+174%)
 - 54% of views to campaign page
- Active users up from 11,701 to 43,585 (+272%)
 - 58% of active users on campaign page

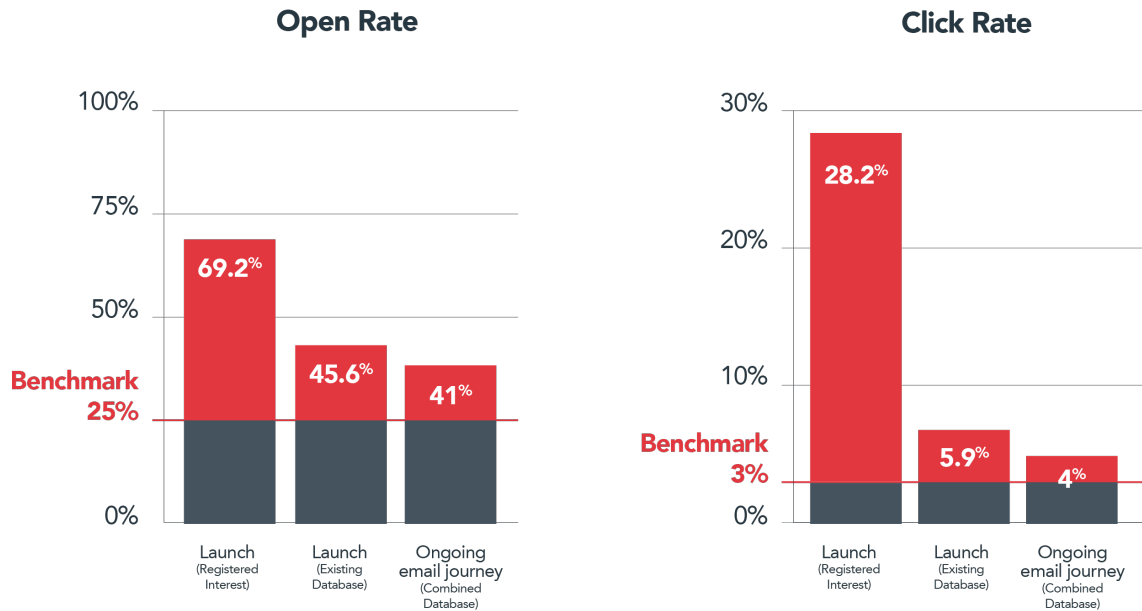
Teaser campaign – We set no target, but this drove 80 architecture firms to register to find out more, despite not knowing what it was about. Our first email to this niche group (once registered from the mysterious advertising) had a 69% open rate, and 28.2% clicking to find out more.

Database eDMs - Our first email to architects and builders obtained a 45% open rate and 6% click through rate; despite being an established audience the engagement metrics were very high.

Our subsequent emails to builders achieved a 48% open rate, 4.5% click through (supporting sales in objective 1 above) and 40% open rate, 3% click through.

Overall, our cost effective emails massively outperformed benchmarks over the 12 month campaign period (c. 41% open rates, 4% click through rates).

Email Results



Source: Firth

Long Term

(3) Awareness for architects/Group Home Builders to drive specification of HotEdge on plans.

Our focus on getting more architects aware of HotEdge AND using the calculator was crucial.

Until plans complete the consent process we don't know what the actual value is, but using an average house size we can project the revenue value of the campaign as below.

On plan specification of HotEdge: Target 150%.

Our internal metrics⁵ indicate that we've achieved a 400% increase in on plan specification, way above our campaign expectations.

ROI

Immediate campaign ROI (based on incremental revenue v campaign cost):

\$566,104 – net revenue growth (YoY campaign 12 months)

- 28% YoY growth
- 44% YoY units sales growth (campaign 12 month period YoY)

⁵ Client internal plan reporting.

<p>\$202,000 – Campaign cost</p> <p>1-year ROI – 280%</p> <p><i>Three year (36 months) ROI (assuming maintaining momentum):</i></p> <p>\$2,223,297 - incremental revenue from the campaign</p> <p>ROI – 1,001%</p> <p>Ultra Long Term</p> <p>(4) Resultant significant sales growth (out of scope as this is 3-5 years down the pipe)</p> <p><i>Not relevant for this entry – carrying through from objectives.</i></p> <p>All metrics: Client supplied results.</p>
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<h1 style="margin: 0;">04B</h1>	<p>Convincing proof that the results were a direct result of your campaign [15%].</p> <p>Outline other external factors that could account for the results outlined in 04A and provide compelling evidence and rationale for why these did not contribute significantly to those results. There are almost always other factors that could have affected your results, such as product changes, pricing, distribution, stock levels, competitive activity, weather, etc. You need to convince the judges that these factors were not responsible for your results, or estimate their contribution and/or demonstrate how they needed the campaign to amplify their impacts.</p>
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<p>The Building Code H1 requirements did change, increasing the amount of insulation (R-value) a property needed. The changes took effect in May 2023 and the campaign ran late March 2024 to early April 2025. A lift was seen with the regulation change but sales plateaued within normal seasonal variations by Feb 2024. All YoY comparisons are against post regulation change data.</p> <p>Market conditions were down with housing consents declining c.18%. Had the campaign not been successful we would not have seen growth.</p> <p>Significant uptick in the use of the design software (21.6% user growth) directly attributed to campaign activity.</p>
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<p>Guidance Notes</p> <p>Please refer to the guidance notes below, to ensure your entry conforms to eligibility criteria.</p>
<p>Eligibility: Data presented must be isolated to Aotearoa, and work must have run between 1 June 2023 and 30 June 2025. Results may be included up to 22 July 2025. Results data that fails to isolate or identify data specific to the eligibility period and/or Aotearoa New Zealand risks low marks and/or being ineligible.</p>

Data Sources: All data referenced in the entry requires sources (recommended as footnotes on the page referenced or at the end of the entry).

Charts and Graphs: Entrants are encouraged to display data via charts & graphs within the limits allocated in each question. Sources required for all data including charts and graphs.

Agency names: No agencies, of any kind, are to be included in the entry.