



ENTRY FORM

THE AOTEAROA EFFIE AWARDS IN ASSOCIATION WITH TVNZ – ENTRY FORM

ENTRY ID	451-A07
ENTRY TITLE	#ThisIsPoolLife
CLIENT	The PoolHouse
PRODUCT	Pools
FIRST MEDIA APPEARANCE DATE	11 September 2023
CAMPAIGN START DATE	11 November 2023
CAMPAIGN FINISH DATE	End March 2024
CATEGORY	A07 – Consumer Durables
CATEGORY DESCRIPTION	Any product which is not purchased on a regular basis, and where there is a high involvement decision-making process. For instance, motor vehicles, white goods, brown goods, household furnishings, pharmaceuticals.

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:	Transform the business from decline to growth, in a recessionary market.
The Insight:	Buying a pool was intrinsically tied to recreating childhood poolside memories.
The Strategic Idea/Build:	Stop selling pools and start selling memories, by celebrating the unforgettable stories that define kiwi pool culture.
Bringing the Strategy & Idea to Life:	#ThisIsPoolLife – Every PoolHouse pool tells a story: of unforgettable memories that last a lifetime.
The Results:	Awareness of The PoolHouse brand surged to 50% of the previous brand's awareness, while almost tripling leads YOY and driving a 29% sales increase. That's a 70% sales shift to growth, despite a 37% market decline.

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)

This case has the watermark of an against-all-the-odds, epic success story.

Four ambitious entrepreneurs devoid of industry knowledge, purchased a failing business, in a recessionary market, despite the company's brand reputation having the appeal of a wet towel.

With immediate returns essential for business survival, we dissolved 25 years of equity in a brand treading water – plugging a market gap with a playful brand led approach that sold memorable moments, not just pools.

In doing so we quickly halted decline and propelled The PoolHouse to growth, making category ownership waves.

01.**Challenge, Context & Objectives [20%]**

This section covers your strategic business context for your marketing activity, alongside your key business challenge and objectives.

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.

01A

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.

Covid19 was prosperous for the Pool industry. With homeowners in lockdown, discretionary income was spent on backyards. Pool sales flourished, as did franchised pool businesses like Aqua Technics.

However, as borders opened, surplus cash dried up and interest rates spiked, making pools less sought after. Unsurprisingly, pool consents dropped 37%¹ and Auckland company, Aqua Technics experienced a sharp decline in sales, 41.5%² in one year. Additionally, sub-standard customer service eroded brand value to such a degree, they were left with one option - to sell the business.

Four ambitious new owners, devoid of any industry experience, purchased the company in March 2023 and embarked on a mission to - **transform the business from decline to growth, in a recessionary market, in Auckland.**

A sinking reputation allowed only two options to drive growth;

1. **SWIM WITH THE CURRENT** - Salvage the 25 year old brand equity in Aqua Technics by improving customer service and raising brand perception.
2. **SWIM AGAINST THE CURRENT** - Transform the business by repositioning and rebranding, sacrificing the brand's existing equity.

Research highlighted the state of the overall category and consequential opportunity:

a. Our competitors were thinking small.

Our competitors were spending on lead generation campaigns, but placing no emphasis on brand. In lieu of this, category ownership was there for the taking.

b. Our competitors were talking product, not people.

Everyone was selling functional attributes such as tech and specs, Accordingly, category advertising norms were duller than month-old tan lines. Yet pools were a catalyst for emotive experiences. Conversations yet to be had.

The industry was missing a trick.

Option 2 all the way. It was time to swim against the current and transform the business.

However, **there were further strategic challenges:**

1. Stakeholder management:

Rebranding necessitated convincing the Australian Aqua Technics owners that dissolving 25 years of brand equity was a strategically robust idea.

2. Smaller spend than competitors:

Meanwhile, Nielsen data revealed that our competitors were outspending Aqua Technics 7:1³ at key periods of the year. To win, we needed to employ a visionary application of our media budget, swimming where rivals didn't, in the brand space.

3. No category measuring stick for success.

However, as sole players in the brand space, we were moving into uncharted waters. To be successful, we'd have to draw from learnings in other categories.

4. Long lead times and the power of summer

One such learning was the power of weather. With long lead times we needed to drive future demand by building a channel that capitalised on increased desire during the crucial summer period.

Therefore the summary strategic challenge was to:

Transform business decline to growth by owning the category with an emotionally engaging rebrand, in order to generate desire during the crucial summer period.

SOURCES

- (1) SPASA New Zealand - the industry body
- (2) Aqua Technics & The PoolHouse Sales data
- (3) Nielsen Data

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.

As a result of the strategic challenge that stemmed from Aqua Technics' business situation, the following objectives were established;

BUSINESS OBJECTIVE:

Objective 1: Transform the business from decline to growth, in a recessionary market, in Auckland.

KPI: Arrest the decline and turn into positive sales growth from a start point of -41.5%² the prior year. >42% growth
Benchmarks: The Pool category in New Zealand was in decline, marked by pool consents declining by 37%¹ in FY23
Previous Outcomes: 41.5% in decline in FY22³
Why Selected: The new owners' priority was to protect their investment and achieve positive returns.

ADVERTISING OBJECTIVE:

Objective 1: Drive awareness of The Poolhouse.

KPI: Establish the new The PoolHouse brand in market, generating 7.5% awareness in the first year - 50% of the old Aqua Technics brand.
Benchmarks: Tracksuit Benchmark, Great = 4%⁴ awareness across a year.
Previous Outcomes: Aqua Technics had 15%⁴ awareness in the Auckland market at the start of our campaign.
Why Selected: As a result of the rebrand, it was essential we drove awareness to ensure we were in buyers' consideration set during the purchase process.

MARKETING OBJECTIVE:**Objective 1: Increase lead generation**

KPI: Double leads, as measured YOY in the same period, January – March 2024

Benchmarks: Sales in the same period (Jan-March) during the previous year was the benchmark. Doubling leads during the summer would convert current decline to growth.

Previous Outcomes: 106⁵ leads generated by Aqua technics in January - March 2023

Why Selected: Leads through to The PoolHouse sales team was the ultimate barometer of \brand transformation impact.

SOURCES

- (1) Pool Consents, NZ
- (2) Aqua Technics Pool Sales FY19 - FY22
- (3) Pool Sales Aqua Technics FY22 & The PoolHouse FY23
- (4) Tracksuit Brand Tracker
- (5) The PoolHouse sales leads 2023-24

02.**Insights & Strategy [25%]**

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.

02A.

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.

Our strategic exploration unearthed three insights that shaped our decision to utilise an emotionally engaging brand led approach to arrest decline and return the business to growth.

Category Insight 1:**Pool advertising has never made a splash.**

No Brand was leading the way at a brand level. .No one was doing brand campaigns above the line.

The category was acting small. Accordingly, we saw an opportunity to gain unfair share of voice, by breaking category conventions and taking a brand led approach.

Category Insight 2:**We're not selling pools; we're selling experiences.**

Qualitative research¹ highlighted an opportunity.

At the time, brand and category messaging was purely functional, wrapped around technical specifications and pool dimensions. Consumers were left informed, but not inspired.

Post Covid-19, a new language was evolving in the nation, with an emphasis on well-being and forging connections with family and community.

So instead of focusing on specs and tech like our competitors, we decided to celebrate the psychosocial connections and emotional experiences pool owners relish.

Customer Insight:

The experiences we are selling are memorable ones.

We discovered that most prospective pool buyers grew up with a pool. Either their families pool, or a neighbours, Every customer had a story from their youth they were looking to recreate.

As a result, pool buyers were NOT always looking to purchase a pool, but rather the opportunity to recreate childhood poolside memories.

We realised that to drive desire we needed to reignite the feelings associated with these stories. So we executed a people first strategy that connected pool life to good times, long summers and beautiful relationships.

Weather Insight:

When it was hot, our memorable moments needed to shine.

We understood that pools were seldom impulse purchases, but much like any big ticket item had an elongated consideration period.

Our research¹ revealed that consideration and enquiries increased exponentially on hot summer days.

Accordingly, we tapped into this potential, by configuring a media strategy that capitalised on the heat of summer to advance future demand.

The Strategy in a nutshell:

Create a brand campaign that celebrates and immerses Kiwis in backyard pool culture, turning up the heat on hot summer days, to evoke the perfect balance of nostalgia and desire.

SOURCES

1. Agency Research

02B.

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

(Be succinct. A maximum of 50 words.)

To own the category, stop selling pools and start selling memories, by celebrating the unforgettable stories that define kiwi pool culture.

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.
<p>Introducing: The PoolHouse</p> <p>A strategic reframing of Aqua Technics from a traditional, functional pool brand, to "The PoolHouse," an emotive brand - building equity in 'helping Kiwis create memories that last a lifetime'.</p> <p>The PoolHouse name was conceived through a marriage of the findings of our consumer research: people's affection for the house next door with the pool, and the aesthetics of the company showroom: a literal house of pools eleven, in fact.</p> <p>The brand imagery had to evoke recollections of pool house fun and indelible poolside memories. So we designed a contemporary new brand with a warm, inviting colour palette embodying subtle retro overtones to elicit nostalgia.</p> <p>The result was a premium yet playful aesthetic that stood out. Part contemporary-fashion, part retro-nostalgia, 100% evocative.</p> <p>Their new strapline – <i>Our Pool. Your Stories.</i></p> <p>1. We swam against category advertising norms with an emotionally engaging brand led campaign...</p> <p style="text-align: center;">#ThisIsPoolLife</p> <p>An entertaining glimpse into New Zealand's colourful and lively pool culture, made vivid through an outdoor campaign portraying one iconic scene, capturing a myriad of relatable poolside moments and occasions, the likes of which spawn unforgettable kiwi summer stories.</p> <p>From fun times with the kids, to dogs taking owners for walks, sunbathing on lilos with a book, cocktail soirees with friends, water fights with dad, getting pushed in the pool, manus next to mum and more -</p> <p>We set about owning the category by owning the stories that define kiwi pool culture - piecing 20 shots together to create a PoolHouse stage on which the tranquility, theatrics and thrills of New Zealand's summer came to life in one epic celebration.</p> <p>2. We capitalized on the heat of summer with weather triggered advertising.</p> <p>We used weather triggered media to stoke the flames of desire. When the temp hit hot, we increased our frequency of messaging by 25%, targeting all stages of the buying cycle.</p> <p>On hot summer days, our media immersed Kiwis in backyard pool culture, rousing the perfect balance of nostalgia and desire - the spirit of The PoolHouse.</p> <p>3. We extended the campaign's impact on digital and on demand.</p> <p>We further amplified the campaign through social, BVOD and dark ads that explored the stories in the billboards at a deeper level - a fun, social commentary of life being lived around The PoolHouse pools, revealing the rich tapestry of the revelry, fun, games and beauty of The PoolHouse life.</p> <p>4. We collected Kiwi poolside stories, to own Kiwi pool culture..</p>	

We created promotions gifting the poolside items in our billboards in exchange for poolside content, inviting Kiwis to tag their posts with #ThisIsPoolLife in exchange for Webber BBQs, fancy lilos and more.

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:

The rationale for our comms strategy consisted of the following;

1. We repositioned the brand to set it up for success.

We dissolved 25 years of brand equity in favour of an emotive, contemporary rebrand that cut through in market and stood out from our competitors.

2. We shifted from focusing solely on conversion (existing demand), to an omnichannel approach that fueled existing and future demand.

Our media strategy addressed all stages of the buying cycle, focusing on:

a. Existing demand - short term sales generated through an always-on lead generation framework.

b. Future demand - longer term brand building, harnessing an emotionally charged brand led approach.

3. We established ourselves as big brand by launching outdoor

With Auckland our only market, we doubled down on brand, putting 40% of our spend into outdoor. The share weight of coverage enabled us to appear larger than we were. It was a big brand move to own the category, made by a little guy.

4. We used weather triggered media to stoke the flames of desire.

We concluded through our research that product consideration and enquiries increased exponentially on hot summer days. Consequently, when the temp hit hot, we increased our frequency of messaging by 25%, targeting all stages of the buying cycle.

5. We extended our reach through digital media.

We created three 6" BVODS that dialed up product benefits in humorous ways, linking familiar poolside scenarios to clear product benefits e.g. Mum on a lilo being battered with pool noodles by her kids – *With our first class service, there will be no battles with us.*

We targeted key ondemand shows that dialed up summer, lifestyle, home and feel good content.

6. We utilised promotions to secure ownership of kiwi pool culture.

To further cemented The PoolHouse as THE dominant, #1 pool brand in Auckland, we incentivised audiences to tag their fun poolside moments with #ThisIsPoolLife in exchange for the chance to win poolside accessories such as Webber BBQs.

List all supplementary communications touch points used in this campaign (the touchpoints that were not central to the campaign).	
Auckland Home Show: Activation (september rebrand launch) Showroom refresh.	
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.	
Media Spend	\$210,100 – November 2023 - March 2024
Outline the media spend in relation to competition and versus last year	<p>Competition - November 2023 - March 2024.</p> <p>11th for media rate card investment¹</p> <p>Prior Year - November 2022 - March 2023</p> <p>Aqua Technics (previous owners) spent \$40,000 - 14th for overall investment in the category¹</p> <p>Sources</p> <p>(1) Nielsen Data</p>
Creative Production Spend	\$60,350

04.	<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>
04A	<p>Overall achievement against objectives [20%].</p> <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.</p>

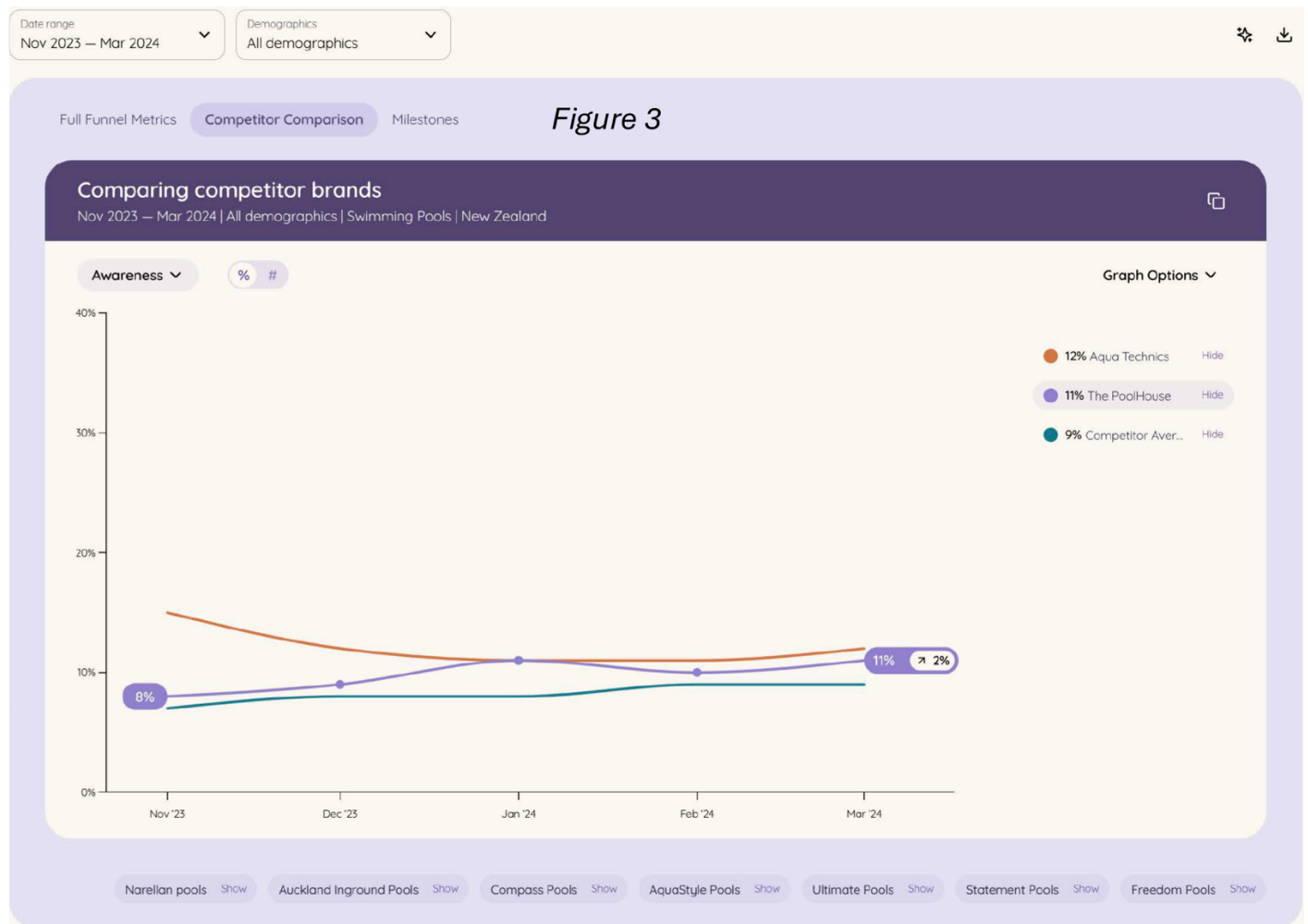
Note: Please ensure all data is sourced, and is specific to the results period outlined in the Call for Entry, and geographically isolated to Aotearoa.

Objective 1: Did we drive awareness of The PoolHouse to within 50% of the old Aqua Technics brand, in the first year?

Result: Yes we did.

Aqua Technics had 15%³ awareness in the Auckland market at the start of our campaign therefore we needed to achieve 7.5% in year one.

- a. We grew awareness of The PoolHouse from nothing, to 11%³ by March 2024.
- b. Currently, awareness of The PoolHouse sits 2%³ higher than the category average.



Source: Tracksuit Brand Tracker

NOTE: Brand tracking began in November at the beginning of the campaign. First read of 8% is end November

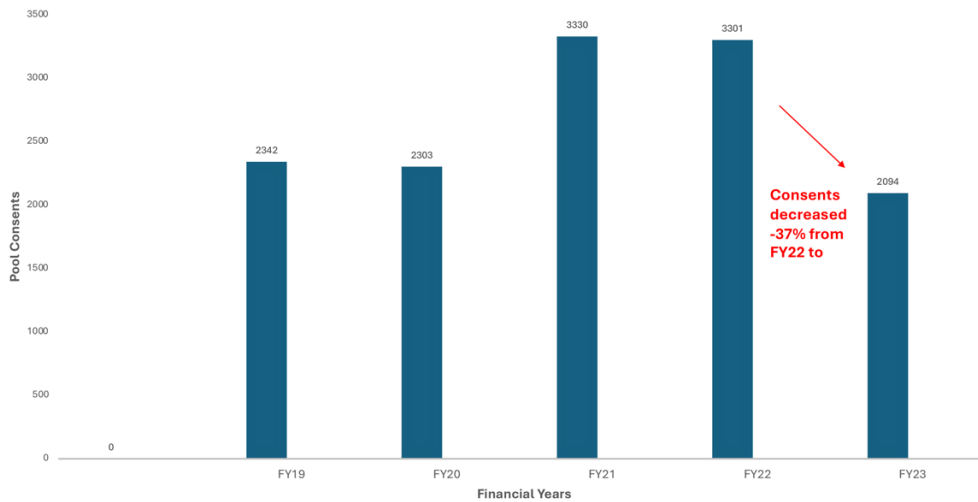
Objective 2: Did we double leads, as measured YOY in the same period, January – March?

Result: Yes we did.

- a. We constructed a strong foundation for the new brand to thrive. initiating a promotional period in August to clear existing stock.
- b. We launched the new brand at The Home Show in September 2023, in Auckland, spawning 70² leads over 3 days.
- c. We almost tripled the generation of leads, from 106² generated by Aqua technics in January - March 2023, to 298² leads generated by The PoolHouse in the same period the following year.

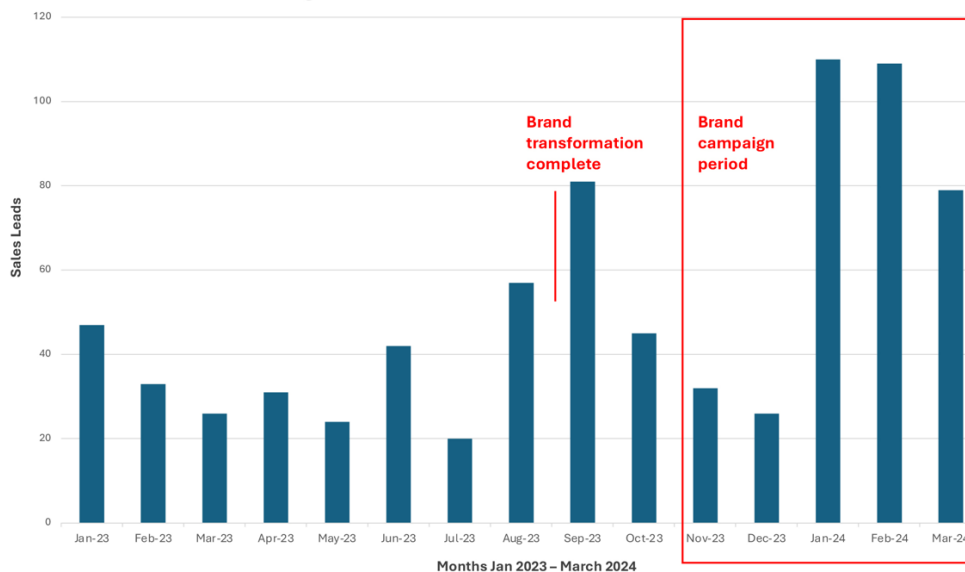
That’s a 281%² increase YOY, despite overall pool consents dropping by 37%¹ in the Auckland region.

FIGURE 1 : POOL CONSENTS AUCKLAND, NZ



Source: SPASA – the industry body. [SPASA New Zealand](#) | [SPASA](#)

Figure 2: The PoolHouse Sales Leads 2023-24



Source: Aqua Technics & The PoolHouse sales leads data
 **Note the new owners only started tracking leads upon buying the business in January 2023, so there is no prior data.

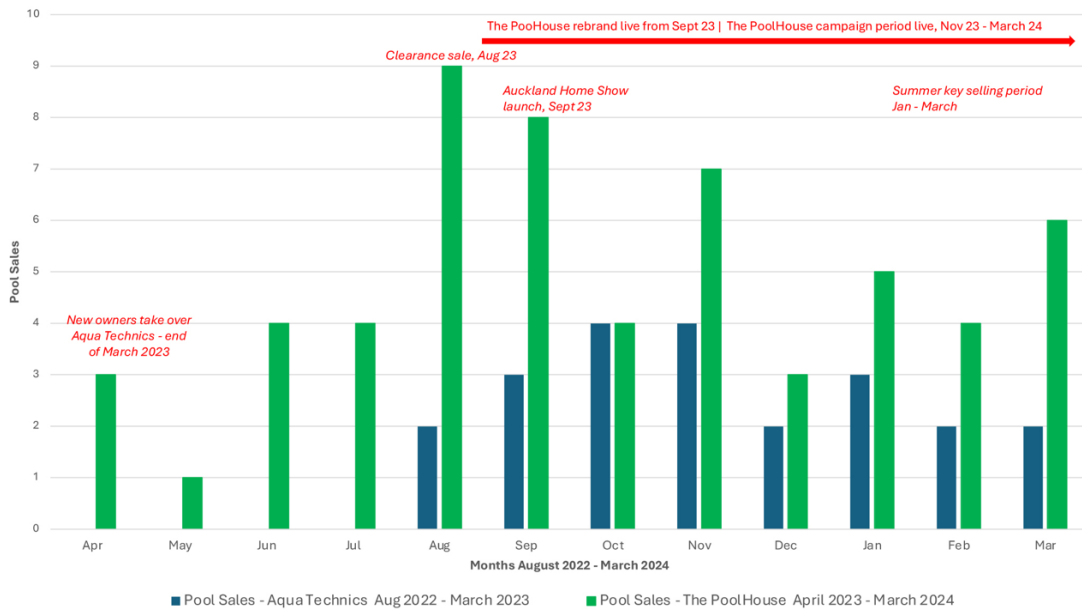
Objective 3: Did we arrest decline and return the company to growth in year one?

Result: Yes we did.

- a. Following the brand transformation, sales have risen by 29%⁴ in FY23, as opposed to being in decline by 41.5%⁵ in the prior year.

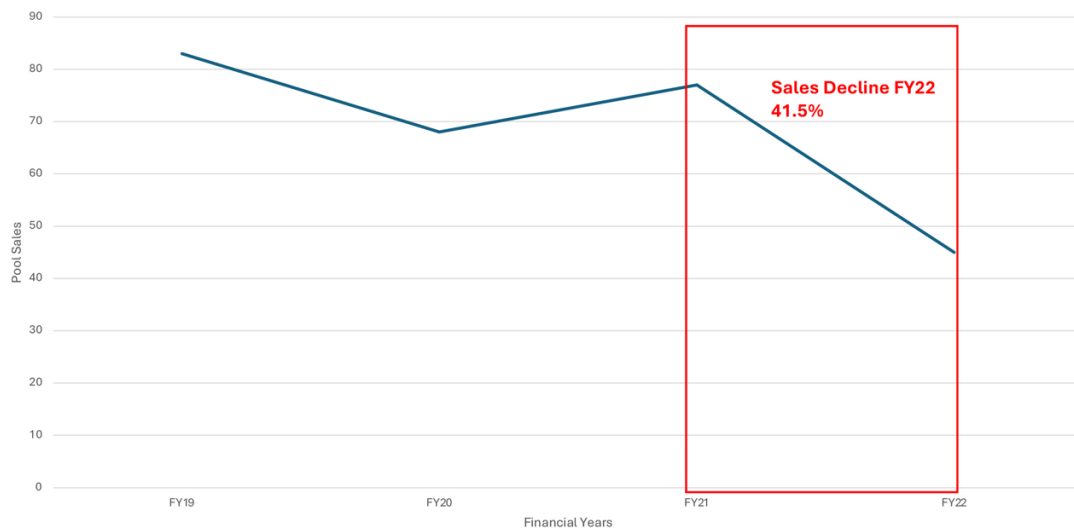
That's a 70%+ shift in a recessionary market.

Figure 4: Pool sales Aqua Technics FY22 & The PoolHouse FY23



Source: Aqua Technics & The PoolHouse sales data

Figure 5: Aqua Technics Pools Sales



Source: Aqua Technics pool sales data

04B**Convincing proof that the results were a direct result of your campaign [15%].**

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.

External factor 1 : Change in Ownership

The business had changed ownership and new management emphasised customer service. This would have had an impact on converting leads to sales.

The entire showroom at The PoolHouse was revamped in line with the rebrand. The building was modernised and fresh pools installed to create a contemporary look in line with the new brand.

While the above points would have had a positive impact on results, **the rebrand was the point of departure for these actions**, as the business was in significant decline, which was unlikely to be salvageable without significant repositioning.

External Factor 2 : Weather conditions

We had a warm summer which was highlighted by being 0.51°C to 1.20°C higher than usual temperatures. The rainfall levels were below normal, accounting for only 50 - 79% of typical levels¹.

Higher temperatures provokes desire in homeowners to have access to a pool.

While hot temperatures can generate a desire to cool off, it is unlikely to result in impulsive pool purchases. **We exploited the potential of weather conditions by amplifying advertising on hot days** to seed demand to drive future growth.

External Factor 3 : Stock levels, Pricing and Distribution

We convinced Australian owners, to get on board with the rebrand and **sold existing Aquatechnic's** stock in August, which explains the spike in sales for that month.

Pricing remained the same as did distribution, and therefore had negligible impact on our campaign.

SOURCES

1. NIWA