

Hovis Limited
Case study

**Nigel Wright leads multi-assignment project
focused on building the marketing function
at newly formed Hovis Limited**



Executive summary

ABOUT THE CLIENT

- Hovis is an iconic British bread and flour manufacturer and one of the UK's best loved brands;
- It employs approximately 3,800 people across the UK;
- Hovis was acquired by Premier Foods in 2007;
- In January 2014, Hovis Limited was created following the sale of Hovis to Gores Group.

BACKGROUND

- In August 2014, Flintlock, owned by former Diageo Marketing Director Philip Gladman, was hired to kick start the new Marketing and Innovation agenda;
- One of Flintlock's deliverables was to recruit the long term marketing department at Hovis Limited;
- In October 2014, Nigel Wright was appointed to lead the recruitment of ten critical roles within the new marketing team at Hovis.

THE CHALLENGE

- Hovis needed to quickly establish a team of experienced brand and innovation marketers, Nigel Wright's initial brief included nine roles;
- Brand Director, Innovation Director, MS&P Director, Head of Insights, Head of Category and Shopper Activation, Marketing Manager - Core Brand, Marketing Manager – Innovation, Grocery Director and Convenience and High Street Director.

NIGEL WRIGHT SOLUTION

- Nigel Wright recommended an eight week process focused on an executive search and professional networking strategy complimented by a proactive marketing campaign;
- A significant factor in the success of this project was Nigel Wright's proactive marketing campaign;
- This aided candidate engagement by articulating the story and potential of newly formed Hovis Limited, as well as enabling us to expertly sell the opportunities and extend their reach beyond our own networks;
- Because this project involved a large number of different roles at several levels, various teams in different locations worked collaboratively on the assignments;
- All teams communicated with each other regularly and worked hard to update candidates on their progress;
- Client update meetings were also held every week with Hovis' Head of HR to make sure the process was meeting its objectives and that all stakeholders were informed of its progress;
- During the frequent meetings with Hovis, Nigel Wright was able to add value to the development of the new marketing function by endorsing various changes to the initially proposed team structure;
- Nigel Wright was instrumental in successfully identifying outstanding talent for all of the assigned roles within the agreed timeframe;
- Our marketing campaign was also successful in persuading these individuals that Hovis was a business worth considering at a time of change and perceived upheaval for the business, as well as within the context of heightened competition for talent in the UK food industry;
- On the back of these campaigns, Nigel Wright's partnership with Hovis continues today.



About the client

Hovis is an iconic British bread and flour manufacturer which dates back to the 19th Century. It is one of the UK's best loved brands, cementing its place in the hearts and minds of the public with its famous 1973 TV commercial 'Boy on a bike.' It employs approximately 3,800 people at ten bakeries, six flour mills and two regional distribution centres across the UK.

Hovis was acquired by Premier Foods in 2007. In recent years, however, the ambient food giant chose to focus on developing its core brands including Bisto, Mr. Kipling and Sharwood's. In January 2014, Premier Foods agreed to sell a majority stake of Hovis to US private equity outfit Gores Group, creating a new vertically integrated company, Hovis Limited, as a joint venture.

Executive Chairman Nish Kankiwala was appointed by Gores Group in April 2014 to help reinvigorate the Hovis brand. Premier Foods and Gores Group also announced a joint £200m five-year investment programme to upgrade Hovis' operational infrastructure and factories, as well as providing the business with up-weighted marketing spend.

Since agreeing the sale of Hovis, as well as the five year investment plan, the Hovis brand is no longer part of the broader Premier Foods commercial strategy. Hovis Limited is a unique standalone joint venture with a new single minded focus. Gores Group is entirely committed to supporting Hovis Limited in once again becoming a sustainable and growing business.





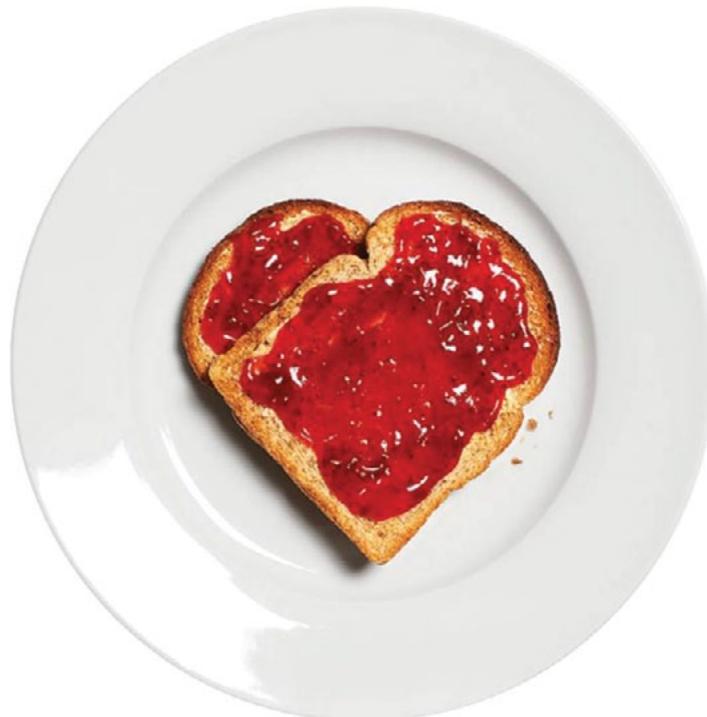
Background

In acquiring Hovis, Gores Group aim to bring fresh outside thinking to the Hovis brand and its portfolio of products.

With the emphasis on brand and innovation, its plan includes provisions for raising the credibility of Hovis by 'winning over health-conscious customers', offering more 'on-the-go' options and capitalising on new flavours to offset the broader decline in the bread category.

In August 2014, it was announced that former Diageo Marketing Director Philip Gladman and his team of seven from Flintlock would join Hovis to kick start the Marketing and Innovation agenda. As well as creating the new structure for the Hovis marketing function, one of the team's other deliverables was to recruit the long term marketing department.

In October 2014, Nigel Wright was appointed to lead the recruitment of ten critical roles within the new marketing team at Hovis. Hovis selected Nigel Wright due to its reputation and network within the private equity community, as well as its in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the broader consumer industry.





The challenge

To successfully achieve the objectives set out by its new owners, Hovis needed to quickly establish a team of experienced brand and innovation marketers who understood the challenges the business faced and who could have an immediate impact on driving value and growth for the brand.

Prospective candidates needed to have core discipline knowledge, likely developed through early training within a large blue chip environment, as well as experience of managing a P and L. Although perhaps used to working within a process driven culture, they also needed to demonstrate the ability and desire to perform with increased autonomy and responsibility in a leaner, more fluid and agile environment.

Nigel Wright's initial brief included ten roles comprising both a Brand and Innovation Director, an MS&P Director, a Head of Insights and Head of Category and Shopper Activation, as well as Marketing Manager roles covering core brand and innovation. Additionally, Nigel Wright was asked to identify candidates for two new commercial roles – a Grocery Director and a Convenience and High Street Director – who would enable Hovis to get closer to its customers.

The challenge was twofold. On the one hand, a large number of candidates would have to be identified and assessed to ensure only the best candidates were being put forward. Secondly, in going to market, it was essential that prospective candidates were made fully aware that Hovis Limited was a unique standalone joint venture where Gores Group had full autonomy and ownership.





Nigel Wright Solution

We recommended an eight week process focused on an executive search and professional networking strategy complimented by a proactive marketing campaign. The executive search phase involved targeting specifically agreed organisations and utilising our broad networks within the consumer industry, as well the wider private equity community, to source referrals for potential candidates.

A significant factor in the success of this project was Nigel Wright's proactive marketing campaign. Led by our internal marketing team, the strategy consisted of creating a microsite and candidate pack and managing a branded email campaign. This aided candidate engagement by articulating the story and potential of newly formed Hovis Limited, as well as enabling us to expertly sell the opportunities and extend their reach beyond our own networks.

The marketing campaign specifically sought to leverage the fact that this was an opportunity to create a legacy, developing one of the all-time great British brands, as part of a wider transformation programme led by Hovis' new owners. We made it clear that Premier Foods was now very much focused on growing its own portfolio of iconic British brands and that the creation of a standalone JV was a positive development for both businesses.

Because this project involved a large number of different roles at several levels, various teams in different locations worked collaboratively on the assignments. They included Nigel Wright's Executive Search team and UK Consumer Sales and Marketing team in London, our internal marketing function in Newcastle upon Tyne, as well as Hovis' internal recruitment team in High Wycombe, tasked with filling a number of junior roles within the new structure.

All teams communicated with each other regularly and worked hard to update candidates on their progress, ensuring continued engagement and guaranteeing that the 'employer brand' of Hovis was managed in the most positive manner. Client update meetings were also held every week with Hovis' Head of HR to make sure the process was meeting its objectives and that all stakeholders were informed of its progress.

During the frequent meetings with Hovis, Nigel Wright was able to add value to the development of the new marketing function by endorsing various changes to the initially proposed team structure. For example, Hovis decided to remove the brand director role therefore allowing the innovation director to be clearly recognised as the most critical position reporting into the CMO. This enabled Nigel Wright to engage more high calibre candidates in the market.

Nigel Wright was instrumental in successfully identifying outstanding talent for all of the assigned roles within the agreed timeframe. Our marketing campaign was also successful in persuading these individuals that Hovis was a business worth considering at a time of change and perceived upheaval for the business, as well as within the context of heightened competition for talent in the UK food industry.

On the back of these campaigns, Nigel Wright's partnership with Hovis continues today.



Client testimonial

“This was a very challenging project but Nigel Wright performed brilliantly to ensure that all of the candidates were an excellent fit for each of the roles. Their impressive networks, in-depth industry knowledge and collaborative way of working were the factors that led to success. The types of candidates that Nigel Wright has successfully placed at Hovis Limited all bring broad industry and category experience that will no doubt give the business a clear edge in the market.”

Phillip Gladman: Founder, Flintlock

