

# KYLIE JENNER

## ... AND THAT \$300,000 VIRAL POST

A new book reveals the strategy behind an Aussie tanning product's US victory

Extract **BERNADETTE SCHWERDT**

**T**he right influencer can change the fortunes of a brand overnight, something that Bondi Sands co-founder Shaun Wilson found out for himself. "Marketing hasn't changed in hundreds of years," he says. "The most effective form is still referral. Social media just scaled it."

Bondi Sands built its strategy around that insight, working with a wide range of influencers who shared genuine stories about why they loved the brand.

Bondi Sands went big from the outset and approached uber influencer Kylie Jenner. It was a risky move. Her fee, more than \$300,000 for just one post, was enormous for a homegrown brand that had started a mere three years earlier.

The good news was Jenner already used the product and liked it. She'd stopped using solariums, cared about skin protection and loved their signature dark foam tanning product.

"That was critical for us," Wilson says. "We'd only work with someone who was using the product."

The post of Jenner posing with the can of tan in her bathroom mirror went viral. Sales went through the roof, five-star reviews flooded in and Bondi Sands became the go-to brand for a new generation of sun-smart women who wanted an instant tan.

### TIMING MATTERS

For Bondi Sands, the real test came when the brand set its sights on the United States.

Landing a national pharmacy chain there can make or break a consumer brand.

Wilson's chain of choice was Walgreens. With more than 8000 stores, Walgreens offered instant national distribution, credibility and scale. A successful range review would put Bondi Sands in front of millions of customers overnight and fundamentally change the direction of the business.

The backstory as to why Bondi Sands hired Jenner is instructive. Wilson had a meeting scheduled with Walgreens shortly after the Kylie Jenner post went live.

The timing was deliberate and the stakes were enormous. Walgreens doesn't take on



Influencer Kylie Jenner; Jenner's Insta post promoting Bondi Sands, above; and, below, author Bernadette Schwerdt. Pictures: Matt Winkelmeier, Instagram

brands lightly. They expect proof that a company can fund serious co-operative marketing, generate immediate consumer demand and support the operational needs of a national rollout. This meeting was Wilson's one shot to prove Bondi Sands could meet those expectations.

The Kylie Jenner post was more than a tactic to generate sales and headlines.

It was a calculated move designed to prove Bondi Sands could create demand at scale, convert attention into revenue and attract a new demographic of customers.

Wilson had done his homework. He'd studied Walgreens' corporate plans, understood their gen Z focus and sun-care strategy, and arrived with a tailored pitch.

That alone would have been sufficient to

get a decent hearing. But Wilson went further. He took time to research who Walgreens' buyers were and boosted Jenner's post directly into their social feeds.

It was a paid, hyper-targeted push aimed at one audience only: the decision-makers who'd be sitting across the table from him.

By the time Wilson walked into the room, the Walgreens' buyers already knew the Bondi Sands story, and it shifted the dynamic. He was no longer just another small challenger brand asking for distribution. He was a global brand with proven sales offering them a chance to partner with a credible firm who could bring them a new cohort of customers.

Walgreens liked what they saw and offered Wilson a \$10m opening order, and

a nationwide rollout over 8000 stores, which was exactly what he wanted.

It was one of the biggest wins in Bondi Sands' history, engineered from a single post, amplified by global PR and delivered into the right hands at the right moment.

It put them on the map and they've never looked back.

### LOOK BIGGER THAN YOU ARE

Like Bondi Sands, Swisse started locally but thought globally. Former CEO Radek Sali knew he couldn't outspend the giant pharmaceutical companies, so he had to out-think them.

With limited marketing dollars, he focused on creating the perception that Swisse was bigger than it really was, because the pharmacy buyers needed to know that the brands they ranged had the financial and operational capacity to support a national rollout and contribute to a co-operative marketing campaign.

Instead of taking out individual billboards across the country and spreading the marketing budget across multiple markets, Radek studied where all the pharmacy buyers for the vitamin category actually travelled – their commute routes, the roads they took to the airport, the freeways they took to their various head offices – and then bought billboards in those locations. As buyers went about their daily business, they'd spot a Swisse billboard on the drive to work, another on the way to the airport and then another at the terminal entrance.

What was, in reality, a modest media spend centred around a small geographic region suddenly looked like a full-scale national campaign.

When Radek walked into their offices, the overwhelming response he received from the buyers was, "Wow! You're everywhere." He wasn't. He just thought he was, and that belief opened doors, won shelf space and laid the groundwork for their bigger goal – to get ranged in the major grocery stores. The moral of the story? You don't need to be big; you just need to look big.

**This is an edited extract from *Secrets of the New Online Entrepreneurs* (Wiley \$34.95) by Bernadette Schwerdt, founder of the Australian School of Copywriting, a TEDx speaker and host of podcast *So You Want to Be a Copywriter*. [bernadetteschwerdt.com.au](http://bernadetteschwerdt.com.au)**

