Challenge

The executive team at Lowe's had a hypothesis that they could bring a new niche of mechanics' tools to retail. They saw a chasm in the hand tool marketplace. "Weekend-warriors," guys working on their cars at home, bought Sears Craftsman brand. Professional mechanics purchased brands like Snap-on and Matco from tool trucks. The gap in price and availability between Craftsman and Snap-on was huge. Lowe's believed that guys who love cars wanted better tools.

Lowe's needed to test their hypothesis and, if valid, create the brand that could take on Craftsman and win. But they had not created a brand on this scale before, so they turned to BOLTGROUP.
**Solution**

With innovation as one of the pillars of the brand, Kobalt needed to set the standard in mechanics’ tools from day one. The finest mechanics’ tools available at retail. Every touchpoint—from name, logo design, and brand identity system, to package design, visual merchandising, and marketing communications—had to use the brand voice. We conducted months of quantitative and qualitative research to determine the best brand positioning, product design features, and brand identity elements for the aspirational mechanic. An integrated product + brand strategy was conceived and Kobalt Tools was born.

**Result**

Through meticulous development and testing, validating everything through target consumer research, we not only established Kobalt as a national brand in stores but also as a brand that people love. The brand design embodied the look of high quality with hints of German heritage, as if it had been around for years. Next we put Kobalt in front of writers, trade magazine editors, celebrities, and shade tree mechanics, creating word-of-mouth buzz for the brand. Through an association with NASCAR, Kobalt achieved an even higher consumer mind share.

Today Kobalt is the most successful proprietary brand in the store's history—a multi-hundred million-dollar brand. In fact, in a 2015 study, Kobalt was found to be one of the 10 most desired brands among U.S. dads. It was also listed as a “brand to watch” on Landor’s 2012 “Breakaway Brands,” published by Forbes. A full-circle testament to design excellence, strategic innovation, and thoughtful leadership.

“Kobalt sets the standard for private branding by Lowe’s Companies. BOLTGROUP created the template for this unprecedented success.”

— Lindsey Carter, Manager, Visual Marketing, Kobalt

TO TALK MORE ABOUT TRANSFORMING YOUR BRAND, EMAIL ED@BOLTGROUP.COM