

Life Weekly Gold Coast, Wednesday 15 July



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# BANKING ON FUNNY

THE GREATER BUILDING SOCIETY BRINGS SEINFELD BACK TO TV!

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### COVER STORY

# BANKING ON FUNNY

## Seinfeld's comeback

COMEDIANS don't always have a long life expectancy. The door often slams in their face just as quickly as it opened. But Jerry Seinfeld – who strode onto our screens over 20 years ago with his hit show based on everyday life in New York city – is still standing. Carving up the crowds with his stand-up routines and living off the long held cult status of his sitcom, he recently reprised his comedic talents as Barry B Benson in last year's *Bee Movie* – which he also co-wrote and produced. But the star is most well-known for his 'observational humour' that characterised a new kind of funny and made him one of the most well-respected, entertaining and philosophical comics of all time. And now, he's made his TV comeback – as the man behind The Greater campaign.

Other Australian brands have used Hollywood stars to promote their campaigns before, but Seinfeld brings a level of humour and star clout,

few can compete with. Which is exactly why The Greater felt the comedian would be the perfect man to front a new series of advertising campaigns – that went to air this week.

The idea to put the funny man behind the camera again was the brainchild of John Dwyer – who has worked as The Greater's marketing consultant for over 10 years.

Dwyer, who has spent the better part of his career promoting brands, has rubbed shoulders with all the big names – from Princess Diana to Meatloaf and even produced the TV show, *Dreams Can Come True* – so he's no stranger to fame, yet still says he was gobsmacked at the nature of Seinfeld. "Jerry is one of the nicest guys I've met. With him, what you see is what you get. He's very down-to-earth and humble, stopping and signing autographs and genuinely caring about the people he met."

Setting the wheels in motion in January, Dwyer approached Seinfeld's manager and within



months was on a jet headed to New York for their 2-day filming shoot.

Although Dwyer admits at first, he wasn't entirely sure if the comedy icon would sign up to front a campaign for an Aussie brand – Seinfeld has only ever done two other TV advertising campaigns – and both were for global products. But within five days of conversing with George Shapiro (the star's manager for over 30 years who discovered him at a comedy club) the deal was signed. "George loved the idea so much he emailed our proposal to Jerry and we were ecstatic when we received notification just a few days later, that Jerry also loved the idea and had agreed to come on board."

It was The Greater's aim for Seinfeld to bring attention to their brand because of his likable personality – and it has always been their policy to use real people as a marketing strategy. After compiling a lengthy research project into which Hollywood stars command the greatest accolades with their audiences, Dwyer discovered Seinfeld came up trumps, with almost all of those surveyed (99 percent) within Australia and the US saying they loved the comic.

"He's a subscriber to over-delivery which is what our brand also represents. No other star of his level would have given us the amount of content we got from him," says Dwyer who travelled with CEO Don Magin to meet with the star in his 54th-floor apartment overlooking Central Park. And both Magin and Dwyer were impressed with the star's humility. "He gave us some great ideas and we came up with the concept in that first meeting," he says. "We wanted Jerry to be himself and so he led the creative process. He gets it. I mean some stars don't understand that the campaign has to work, but Jerry does because he understands marketing. When you meet him, it's so refreshing to find he is exactly the same person you see on his TV sitcom. No airs or graces, but rather a friendly and courteous person who genuinely seems interested in other people's opinions and views."

Seinfeld has weaved his trademark dry humour into The Greater's campaign with hopes of hitting not just the funny nerve of

their customers, but a familiar and personable element as well. "We are not just engaging the services of an entertainer for attention-grabbing purposes we have strategically sought a huge personality who embodies the same brand principles that we do."

The crew set about making arrangements to get the campaign rolling and seeking out a location. To shoot at a local branch would have been the preferred option for The Greater but Seinfeld's hectic stand-up schedule meant the star couldn't leave the US, so instead The Greater moved over there. They settled on the town of Cedarhurst, just an hour from New York city, and began creating an Australian-ised street with all the fixtures authentic – right down to the parking metres and street lights. An empty shop was turned into a Greater branch and within 48 hours, the scene was set. "We used photos as a reference to reinventing other components in the Cedarhurst streetscape. We even went as far as changing street signs, rubbish bins, bus stops and pavers."

The campaign features Seinfeld wheeling out his stand-up garb in a shopping trolley and setting up right outside The Greater branch. It wasn't long before the media caught onto filming going on behind the street blocks. And as soon as word got out Jerry Seinfeld was making a comeback to TV, CBS News arrived on the scene with a camera crew and ran a two-minute clip on the evening news with a crowd of onlookers gathered to catch a glimpse of the star. "The shoot couldn't have gone better," says Dwyer. "Jerry was a joy to work with and adds considerable 'wow' to our brand. We look forward to having a long and successful relationship with him."

Visit the Greater's website to watch exclusive behind-the-scenes footage from the "making of" the TV commercials.

**John Dwyer is a marketing consultant for The Greater and owner of Coolibah Marketing. For further information go to: [www.greater.com.au](http://www.greater.com.au)**



Jerry Seinfeld with John Dwyer, Marketing Consultant, Greater Building Society

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