



TONGS CORPORATION



A voice for Solomon Islands' building industry

Anyone who has ever visited or lived in the Solomon Islands will likely know Tongs Corporation. Based in Honiara, the 40-year-old, family-owned hardware store serves a range of customers including families, builders, plumbers, homeowners and farmers, assisting them with anything from their day-to-day needs to large construction projects. Having grown to a team of around 120 employees, the company also runs two other operations: motor vehicle company, United Auto, and the Meat Lovers butcher.



Tongs Corporation takes a creative and innovative approach to promoting their brand. They also believe in promoting other businesses at the same time, to help boost the Solomon Islands' building industry. They hope that in doing so, other corporations might take notice and continue this model of supporting local enterprise. *“Our vision is to bring innovation and professionalism to the building and hardware supplier industry,”* said John Wopereis, Tongs Corporation's Sales & Marketing Manager.

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The company recently devised a new marketing plan, which included establishing a platform to help their businesses and trade professionals gain exposure through a radio program called, 'Buildim Better Show.'

"The program focused on inspiring stories from local builders sharing their journey, building know-how discussions, and updates of projects happening around the country. Each episode featured a different industry representative such as electricians, plumbers, surveyors and engineers," explained John.

Aired every Wednesday on SIBC, the official radio broadcaster of the Solomon Islands, *"these building*



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professionals shared building and renovation knowledge to the general public. When we start to improve the way that we build, you also start to improve the way that you live. It feels like you are contributing to something big," he added. Visual recordings of the show were then posted online on Tongs' Facebook page to magnify the reach and audience. The show received positive feedback and in promoting local businesses, even helped some building professionals to acquire new work and customers. A second season is slated to launch in 2022.

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“What was really nice was that everyone who I had on the show, they all got something out of it. Not in terms of confidence but business. They put their branding out there through our platform and it helped them get more work during such tough times,” shared John.

To further promote their brand, Tongs Corporation set out to use social media in 2019. While at first, they did not have a clear strategy of how to best use digital platforms, they quickly learned that posting regularly with images of construction companies and tradespeople using their products, they could share stories about local building projects that resonated with different communities and became an important voice for Solomon Islands’ building industry.



“We work together with our existing customers a lot to create content. We share their work and their stories. My team, we take a lot of content from customers’ worksites. Our goal is to post at least a minimum of twice a week,” described John. Through this storytelling, Tongs Corporation have been able to reach an even broader audience, including overseas. The personal and engaging nature of their digital content has received terrific feedback from near and far, including from their suppliers all the way in Australia and New Zealand.



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“We recently had a Zoom call with them and one thing they actually mentioned was the great and engaging content we had shared online. For them, that was a standout thing that they wanted to mention to us,” said John proudly.

Tongs Corporation also supports local communities, and recently sent out a skilled team along with the necessary materials to assist in renovating the Special Development Center, a school for children with special needs in Tandai, Honiara, which is operated by the Solomon Islands Red Cross Society.





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