

B&Q does the right thing

Published: 5 March, 2012

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In troubled times the best retailers are those that understand that things are rarely, if ever, perfect.

Even the biggest need to examine what they do on a regular basis. The decision by B&Q to relay almost all of the floorspace in its stores within three years (all part of planned budget) should not therefore come as a surprise. The bigger you are, the greater the need for consistency of experience and for ensuring that shoppers know what to expect when they come into one of your branches.

Yet it's surprising how often this is overlooked. To see this in action, all that's required is to take a walk around a store dubbed a "flagship" and then to visit any shop within the same chain that is not thus labelled. Naturally, it would be unreasonable to expect all the bells and whistles that make a flagship a flagship. But equally the shopper should understand where they are in any of a chain's stores and the old cliché about removing the name over the door and still being able to 'read' the interior should apply.

The trouble is, it frequently does not and when you look at a branch in the suburbs, say, it may bear almost no resemblance to what's going on in the city centre leviathan or the out-of-town superstore. And this does mean rather more than the superficial exterior appearance of the shop. Anybody can put a logo on a building, but it is a combination of interior experience, visual merchandising and service that will make a specific store a recognisable part of a chain and when one of these elements is missing it tends to be noticed.

What B&Q is doing is ensuring not just that it is the market leader, but that whether you travel to Havant, New Malden or perhaps Whetstone (a "Mini Warehouse"), the experience will be broadly the same. It is also seeking to deal with that perennial customer command: "Give me a reason to come into your store".

In the current climate, shoppers expect more and we remain over-shopped in most retail categories.

Or put another way and to use another retail cliché - 'right thing, right place, right time', etc etc - the 'place' bit of this equation being the initial dealmaker that will determine whether shoppers choose your store ahead of others. B&Q understands all of this and is doing the right thing in the right places at the right time. Shoppers and retailer will be the better for it.

Source : Retail Week