

# RetailWeek

## Comment: Is it time the DIY market had a make-over?

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Easter is upon us – the time people traditionally think about doing a spot of DIY – but the DIY industry itself needs a makeover.

The sector faces some hard challenges and needs to take difficult steps to address these. Only this week B&Q announced it will reduce its store estate by 60 stores.

In March ICM Unlimited spoke to more than 2,000 consumers about their ownership and use of DIY tools. While we discovered that four in five consumers own DIY basics – such as screwdrivers, hammers and pliers – for many these tools are something that they have in case they're needed, rather than for regular use.

People also admit that, despite having them for emergencies, they are likely to struggle to find their DIY essentials when they are needed.

The apparent infrequency with which people do DIY and use their tools is a clear challenge for retailers. The lack of interest in DIY is even more marked when we look at the younger generation.

Eighteen to 24-year-olds are most likely to admit to never having used their tools and struggling to find them. While just over half (56%) have a drill in their household, one quarter of these (24%) have never used it and 8% said they'd struggle to find it.

The picture is similar for never having used other tools like saws (30%), spirit levels (23%) and Allen keys (16%).

But does this lack of tool use indicate a lack of appetite for DIY? And, if it does, how can retailers respond?

Changing attitudes and learning skills that have been lost over generations will take time, but it's been done in other areas. The revival in crafts such as baking and sewing has been driven by the popularity of TV programmes like The Great British Bake Off and Sewing Bee.

Importantly, the accompanying information on the benefits of having these skills is as important as showing how to develop them.

Could a revival of a programme like 'Changing Rooms' do the same for DIY?

The combination of inspiration and information in this kind of format would certainly help, but it needn't be something that needs buy-in from a TV production company.

Younger consumers are increasingly turning to YouTube and social networks' online tutorials. A number of retailers have their own YouTube channels, a great first step.

The next stage is for them to promote the content to engage, inspire and spread their benefits to encourage youngsters – and all consumers – to take DIY seriously.

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We also can't ignore the fact that the low use of DIY tools by the younger generation may be because they are more likely to be renting than other age groups.

The answer has to be innovative solutions for non-permanent changes or removable additions because, as retailers know, capturing them at this stage will have long-term benefits when they become home owners.

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