

RETAIL REVIEW: B&Q comes under the spotlight

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InternetRetailing's team of independent reviewers take a look at B&Q's eco-system of website, mobile, the use of digital in store, its overall strategy and where the company sits in the IRUK 500.

B&Q and the Kingfisher group in general are among the more innovative multichannel retailers in the country. The DIY retailer secured a Model position overall in InternetRetailing's Top500 index, and was in the top 10% of retailers measured. Audacious use of ecommerce in-store sees customers virtually design kitchens when browsing in a B&Q, with designs saved for later tweaking online. The real challenge of a DIY and homeware retailer is, of course, delivery. Items are often bulky and sometimes require extra care to move. The logistics side, however, performs well when measured from the customer's perspective, with simple, convenient and inexpensive fulfilment options available.

The reviews from Uservision, Burn The Sky, Kurt Salmon and Transform are below. Overall, B&Q scores 72%.

B&Q Strategy Review – Score 25/25

Joe Tarragano, director, Transform [IRDX VTRA]

The scale of B&Q's investment in its digital transformation is well recorded. As is the shifting organisational context it is experiencing as part of leadership changes within Kingfisher. The key strategic question for it then is how it navigates these substantial changes, in particular noting that not all its long-serving staff will be comfortable with the journey. However, in individuals such as Mike Durbridge it has hired in impressive leadership and it's clear that there is strong activity around the foundational underpinnings of a modern digital business.

One such underpinning is the embedding of a customer-centric culture and B&Q appears to be moving successfully on that journey. They were quick to break down channel based sales targets and KPIs. And while there are still too many service (and complaints desks) doubling as click & collect

points and too many store staff focused on tasks rather than service, the emphasis on building a better customer experience can be seen clearly in its efforts around the kitchen design process. It has used innovation technology and sound thinking around the customer journey to explore how it can transform the way this challenging (and highly valuable) activity can be made better for the customer.

Part of that is about identifying which customer B&Q actually wants. As a sector the customer segmentation has traditionally been more around DIY competence levels, when a more personal and mission-focused approach is increasingly what's needed. There are an increasing array of category specific retailers online, with rich, tailored experiences and content, especially for big-ticket items, and Homebase clearly focused more on a female, home enhancement proposition. B&Q therefore needs to be very clear on whether it will have universal appeal, or win on key projects & missions, or for key segments.

As it develops its strengths in the 'inspire me' aspects of the 'big transformational project' mission, these will still need to sit alongside the more mundane 'fix my problem' type transactional missions and the smaller projects. In these areas more work would appear to be needed around inventory management, in particular stock level awareness and in the supply chain functions. It may benchmark against the handful of other large shed based sellers who similarly offer a reserve & click model rather than click & collect, but customer expectations will likely drive a change.

While some of these legacy areas still need overhauling, B&Q has redesigned its website as fully responsive from the outset. This may be unsurprising today, but to make those initial investment and design decisions some years ago suggests a good strategic perspective.

Another strong indicator that the strategy is thought through and well-joined up is that the store colleagues utilise the same systems as the customers. Developing a single supporting infrastructure is not only more efficient, it is a step towards empowering colleagues so that they are at least as informed as the increasingly sophisticated customer. Service and advice, be it over live chat or delivered on the shop floor, can be a key customer requirement. WiFi is rolling out across the whole estate and there is increased emphasis on developing in-store digital support i.e. navigation, social proofs and the like. By leveraging the same tools across both physical and digital channels, B&Q is taking the right steps towards goals that many are wrestling with such as the single view of transaction, of stock, of product and of customer.

So, B&Q would appear to be building upon strong foundations, with some key pillars in place and good thought being given around how the experience should feel. What remains to be seen is whether it has the right culture and employees to do justice to those initiatives, and whether the European winds of change blow away any barriers or instead blow off the whole roof.

Scoring

The simple scoring from Transform is based on whether or not five services are offered by the retailer in the UK with a score of 0 for no and 5 for yes. On this basis, B&Q scores 25/25.

Collection in-store: Yes

Mobile app: Yes

Mobile web: Yes

iPad app: Yes

In-store tech: Yes

B&Q Mobile Site Review – Score 13/25

Natalie Chandler, Burn the Sky

First Impressions (3/5)

In 2014, the UK's largest home DIY retailer, B&Q, spent £60m on its new responsive website.

Even avid DIYers could be forgiven for not spotting £60m worth of improvements. The bulk of the cash – beyond ensuring that user interface is customised to each channel – went towards the retailer's backend, enabling DIY.com and in-store ordering systems to run off the same database. The knock-on benefits, according to the retailer, include improved on-shelf availability, inventory costs and sales.

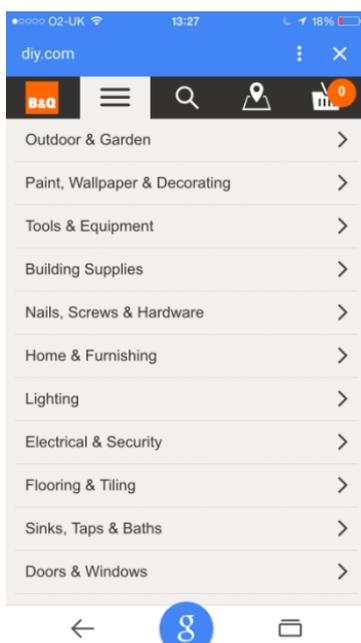
B&Q's renewed focus on using technology to streamline both B2B and B2C processes carries right through to the shop floor. In early 2014 the retailer's parent company, Kingfisher, revealed it had trialled improved in-store experience, with the intention of rolling the changes out to other B&Q stores over time. The company installed kiosks, help and advice desks, issued managers with tablets to assist customers on the fly, enhanced existing reserve and collect points, and introduced customer Wi-Fi.

Unfortunately, in its current iteration, the B&Q website feels like it falls short of earning its hefty price tag. While its interface has been kept intentionally low-key, our browsing revealed content such as video fails to display altogether.

Discovery, Search & Navigation (2/5)

As an industry leader, B&Q is no slouch when it comes to driving traffic to its site, DIY.com, via search. According to SimilarWeb.com, over 60% of site visits are derived from search, with 92% of those from SEO.

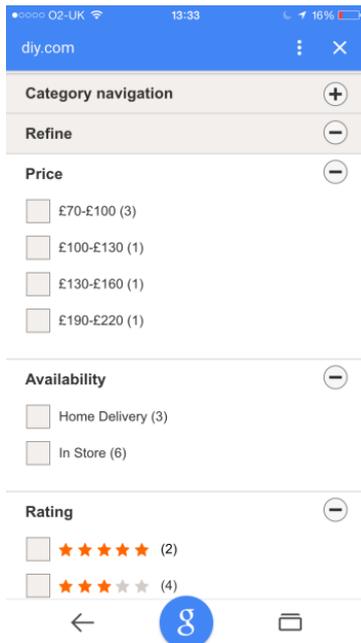
Meanwhile, downloads of the retailer's native apps – B&Q Enjoy, B&Q, and B&Q Magazine – are driven by referrals, email, direct and search.



B&Q's DIY.com mobile homepage: iPhone Users can refine in-site search by price, availability, rating, and other features specific to products.

Given B&Q's massive range of products, the retailer has done a commendable job of keeping the homepage easily navigable and nice big buttons are perfect for our butter fingers. DIY.com's mobile-optimised homepage displays a comprehensive menu minus any bells and whistles – an oil painting it isn't.

The B&Q mobile site's search tool is prominently placed. The predictive search feature no longer appears to be available, which is a shame. Confusingly, our search results displayed a drop-down 'Categories' menu, then a 'Shop departments' subheader below followed by tile images. Identical content populated both sections. Search results also include 'How To' articles where relevant – handy for not-so-handy DIYers.



Visiting DIY.com mobile for customer service information? Happy hunting! No such details can be found on the homepage; instead you'll have to scroll down on individual product listings or enter the relevant postcode/town on the 'Find A Store' page. Listed numbers, when you do locate them, aren't click-to-call.

The B&Q app for Android is visually richer than the mobile site, with a focus on the retailer's latest offers rather than the full online catalogue. For that, users must click on the 'Visit Our Website' option in the main menu, which then loads, within the app, a version of DIY.com that differs to that displayed via browser. In keeping with B&Q's omnichannel strategy, app users can scan a product barcode to find out more information, as well as scan their B&Q Club loyalty barcode to receive personalised content and access to promotions.

Products & Categories (2/5)

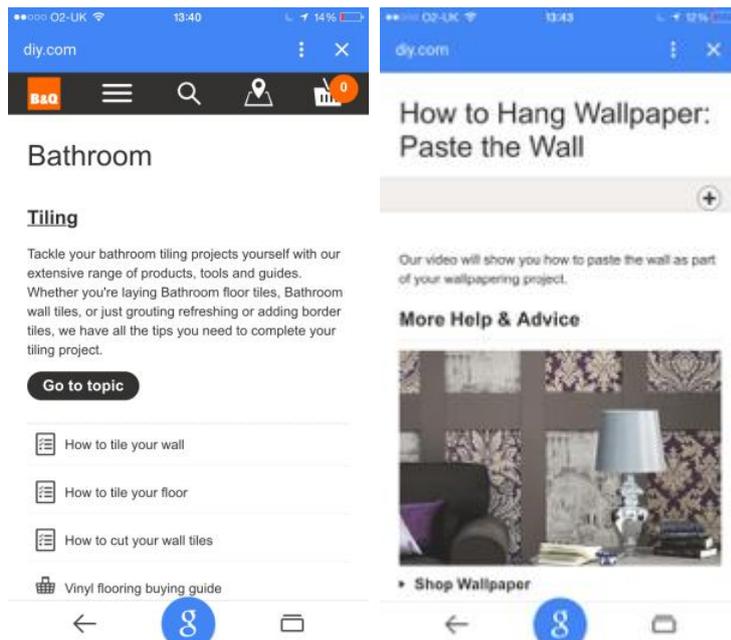
DIY.com's product imagery is no nonsense. Unfortunately, we found the image viewer consistently sluggish to load. Once it had, images are a decent size and can be enlarged.



B&Q we found wrenchBoth 'Categories' and 'Shop departments' sections are populated by identical content. DIY.com search results also display 'How To' articles where relevant.

The pricing on individual product pages is clear, as are the customer ratings, delivery/collection options and product descriptions. However, the 'Add' button appears only once at the bottom of the screen and would occasionally disappear as we scrolled due to our Android's dynamic footer. Before we got the hang of things we did briefly wonder whether the product had sold out. Product listings navigated to via the B&Q app have similar plus points, while the 'Add' button at the base of the screen remained visible throughout as we scrolled to our heart's content.

B&Q has made a concerted effort to incorporate 'How To' content into its mobile site in the form of articles and videos. Unfortunately, despite teasing with 'Most Popular Videos', clicking through to 'How to Hang Wallpaper: Paste the Wall' didn't display the promised video content.



DIYers will find articles, step-by-step images and the promise of videos to guide them through their project.

Payment process and checkout (3/5)

The checkout page is clean and straightforward, chosen delivery can be updated throughout the buying process and the returns policy is brief but clearly stated (a link to the complete returns policy is available via a footer link). Payment is marked as secure.

Customers can apply their B&Q Club membership number, a voucher code, and a discount card number, and can complete the purchase either as a guest or signed in. Next day delivery is available on orders placed before 7pm.

Post purchase (3/5)

Thanks to a smooth payment and checkout process, the B&Q mobile shopping experience ended better than it began. With the volume of products and customers the retailer is juggling, it's little wonder it hasn't got everything right (yet). But for the £60m price tag... ouch.

B&Q Web Effectiveness Review – Score 17/25

Amy McInnes, principal consultant, User Vision [IRDX VUSV]

In late 2014 B&Q launched their new £60m responsive website and upgraded backend system that aligned in-store with online, the main goal being to create a single customer view. Around half a year later, how has the new site fared?

First impressions

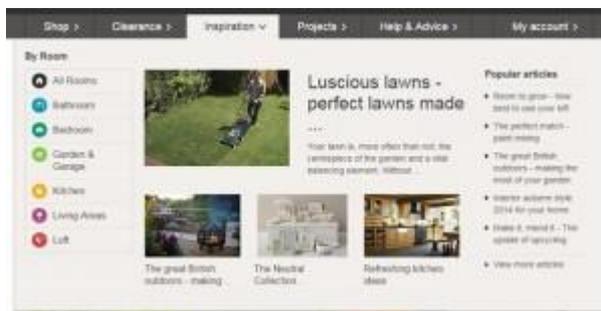
On first glance, the website is bright, bold and promising with plenty of inspirational starting points and visually enticing calls to action. However, the number of intent clusters means, even on a large screened desktop, that extensive scrolling is required. Imagine the amount of scrolling required on a mobile!



Navigation

That aside, B&Q have provided plenty of inspirational starting points. B&Q do this well by providing a primary navigation that caters to all – those knowing what they want ‘shop’, those needing help can seek ‘inspiration’ and those working on a certain room/area have ‘projects’.

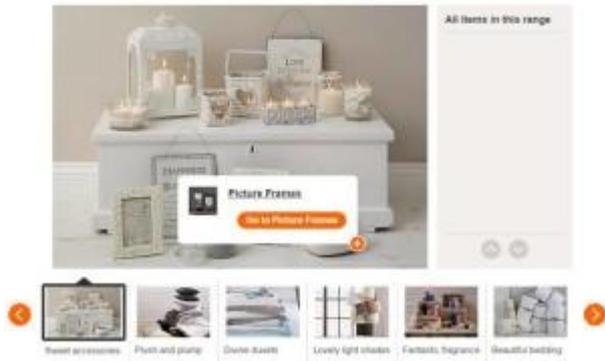
The drop down navigation under ‘shop’ is clearly separated into two starting points – ‘room’ (which is used in all category options) or ‘product’. These choices are much more intuitive than the usual ‘department’. The other categories focus on the ‘room’ option supported by inspirational content options. B&Q use clean crisp imagery that is clearly not stock and thus very inviting to the user:



Inspiration

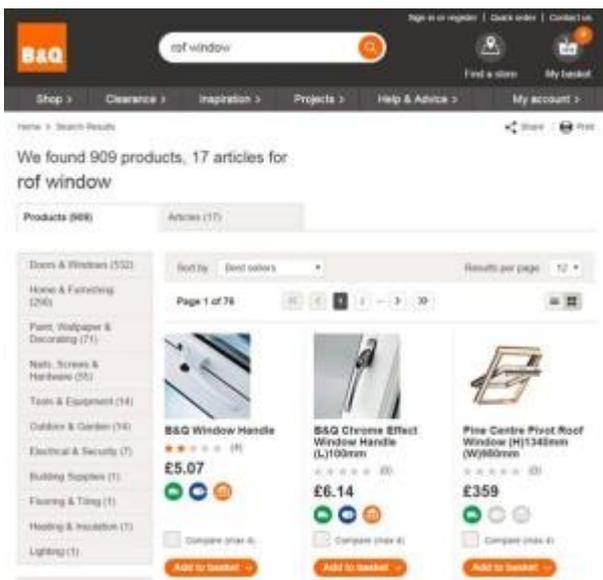
Seeking inspiration I selected ‘The Neutral Collection...’ The resulting page clearly has missing content: the ‘All items in this range’ menu is blank, the informational hot spots (orange +) are showing un-related content (selecting a candle brings up picture frames), and the orange arrows for the carousel are not functioning despite looking active. I am not inspired.

These beautiful basics are fundamental to our style heritage and now we've gathered them into a collection that is easy to apply to your home, to complement your existing schemes or to create a completely new look.



Search

A search query on 'rof window' proves to be flexible, bringing up relevant results. The resulting page provides useful sort and filter options, customer reviews, and a clear separation between products and articles. B&Q could up their game here by supplying predictive search and by supplying suggestions for what I may have meant:



Product pages

The product pages do many things well. Bonus points go to B&Q for allowing users to compare up to four items and to save items into a 'wish list'. Clear icons show how the items can be collected / delivered. Products are clearly displayed with photographs from different angles and in situ shots, ensuring the user can gain a good feeling for the size / dimension of products. Reviews are clearly displayed where available, and can go a long way to helping users decide to purchase.

Checkout

After adding the item to my basket, the resulting page then offers up some 'DIY Essentials', which are confusingly unrelated to my considered purchase. However, it is clear what I am about to purchase and how much it costs, and a supporting visual is a reassuring extra. The user is not left guessing at any stage.



Proceeding to the full 'My Basket' page clearly outlines all details the user requires. Not knowing that B&Q is diy.com may confuse users seeing that 'diy.com is secure'.

A big tick for B&Q in the next step, as they offer new users a 'guest checkout' option – a must for those who do not want to register.



Here users are clearly told they can make an account later if they want and have the option to not receive marketing.

The checkout process serves the user well by clearly highlighting the stages required in a progress bar and at all stages showing the user the items and all costs. Throughout the process delivery cost is bolded (free in this case) with clear visual reminders of payment methods and security logos for reassurance.

Accessibility

Lastly a quick nod to accessibility. B&Q have certainly put some thought into the coding and ensured keyboard access is in place and most images have been alt tagged. There are some that are not and B&Q should consider a full accessibility audit.



Ratings

Navigation and IA – 3/5

Persuasion and Trust – 3/5

Product Page and Merchandising – 4/5

Checkout/Bookings – 4/5

Accessibility – 3/5

Overall – 17/25

B&Q In-store Digital Review – Score 17/25

Sarah Davis, associate partner, and Pete Brown, business analyst, Kurt Salmon.

B&Q is undergoing a major transformational change. It is currently downsizing and closing approximately 15% (60) of its UK stores as new Kingfisher boss, Véronique Laury drives change to create a “single, unified company”. Part of the aim of this structural reform is to focus on utilising the organisation’s digital offer to augment the customer shopping experience.

Here we assess the current in-store digital offer...

B&Q has really capitalised on its click and-collect offer by siting the collection area in convenient, front of store locations, which are more clearly sign-posted. These areas are well organised with short waiting times and act as an excellent example of how to operate this service.

The B&Q mobile app is relatively basic and while it is a good start, there is still a long way to go before it will compete with more sophisticated versions offered by some leading retailers. The location feature highlighted the shortcomings as it failed to recognise us in-store and instead offered the five nearest branches.

However, the app does provide some quite useful features such as the product scanner, which is kept up-to-date, and in-store promotions match those available online, reinforcing B&Q’s brand consistency across channels. There is room, though, for upskilling staff as many didn’t appear to know that the shelf barcode could not be scanned, or simply did not understand its full functionality.

In fact, it is actually the shelf label barcode that offers the most opportunity for B&Q to benefit from digital technology. For example, it allows customers to access product information and complete an “in-app” order when products are out of stock.

B&Q has done well to leverage its digital content (mobile and online) to promote cross and up-selling. When using the website www.diy.com customers can view a range of home design ideas,



similar to the “lookbooks” often seen on the web pages of fashion retailers, and B&Q can benefit from the associated sales.

The in-store “B&Q Spaces” software (not yet rolled out across the estate) allows customers to discuss, design and create a kitchen, bedroom or bathroom all within its in-house planning software. B&Q claims it saves considerable time, turning what used to be a multi-hour development process into as little as four minutes. However, as customers cannot complete the design themselves, there is an ongoing in-store labour investment in the utilisation of this piece of software.

Finally, the inclusion of in-store kiosks would further augment the interactive offering.

The exciting challenge facing B&Q will involve both enhancing the interactive customer journey and then linking it to customers’ preferences, wish lists and past purchases to provide a fully integrated and interactive digital offer.

Link: <http://internetretailing.net/2015/09/retail-review-bq-comes-under-the-spotlight/>