

WANT MORE SALES? TIME TO REVISIT YOUR STRATEGY

In the first of a series of articles on sales and marketing in the home improvement and DIY industry, **Kate Newton** from home enhancement marketing agency Brookes & Co, encourages readers to start over, revisiting what they want to achieve and how they want to achieve it.

Whatever the situation, there's always a tendency to find the outcome more interesting than how it was achieved. Unless you're a purist, the score at the final whistle is more important than how the teams got there, the weight of the fish is more exciting than how it was caught; and the sales results are more important than the strategy used to achieve them.

It's the same in marketing. If you have ever worked in an agency, you'll know how some clients suddenly sit up and take more notice when the pictures are revealed. It's human nature – for most people the whys and the wherefores just aren't so exciting.

While there's never any point in trying to change facts like these, the times dictate that it's crucial for anyone and everyone in the DIY sector to take stock now and revisit why they are doing what they are doing and whether that's going to be the right thing going forward. Why? Well, consider a comment from one of leading market analysts, Mintel: "The DIY sector is experiencing major changes... B&Q and Wickes have launched more inspirational store concepts. Meanwhile, consumer spending on DIY is becoming increasingly fragmented as a growing number of non-specialists find they can capitalise on the simpler needs of a growing population of renters," said Thomas Slide, retail analyst, as quoted by Mintel.

Here are a few more statistics from Mintel's most recent DIY report:

- Consumer spending growth slows
- All change at the market leaders
- Out-of-town losing out to the high street
- Non-food discounters taking the

high street share, rather than specialists

- Virtual reality tool for hands-on DIY training
- Painters/decorators like to visit stores
- Buyers of window furnishings like to shop around
- Stores are essential when shopping for flooring
- Shopping around important for garden projects
- Store visits are essential for fitted kitchens and bathrooms
- Quality is most important when shopping for DIY products
- 35-44-year-olds prioritise price
- Fragmented priorities of younger shoppers

There are a plenty more facts where those came from and, OK I've been selective, but the above is representative of the way our industry is changing. My point is that there is no time like the present for reviewing your approach to sales and marketing. No matter how good you think you look, it may be that your look is no longer right for the fluid nature of today's market.

So, how should you go about it? First is the brief. What do you want your business to do and how long have you got to achieve those objectives? Only you know what you want, but the next few moves will ideally involve some independent views. If only because, everyone believes they know everything there is to know about their own business and it's a certain fact that they don't. Most things maybe, but not everything there is to know.

Desk research is a logical start. Where is the market going and why? Are there new audiences with new motives? In the the DIY market, yes, more than likely. Targets are important, but the big



picture needs to be qualified the feedback of actual customers – retail channels, professional users, and DIY consumers. Talk to them in that order and then go and review again at the beginning to see if the feedback from down the line is practical.

Ideally, have in-depth conversations (qualitative research) plus a level of mass survey (quantitative). However you approach research, the key thing is to share the findings. If you have marketing or sales teams, or store staff, convene a session to review and discuss. Research is great but no good if all you do with it is read it, file it, and forget about it.

Given the massive shifts in our market – so massive that we have new words to learn like craft and upcycling – new routes to consumers online and instore, new consumer expectations in

terms of same day, home delivery, professional intervention and hobbyist enthusiasm, it's likely that research will confirm the need for a new strategic approach. How are you selling and to whom? What is the role of online? And home delivery? And how quickly? What's the best product mix? What are you known for and can you leverage that – or do you need reinvention? Where to start and with what spend?

It's quite hard work this strategy thing. But it is the right time and, in the long run, it will save wasted time, money, and angst.

And tackling sales and marketing strategy will at least mean you become immune to random opinions from staff, customers, sales people, agencies, management and friends in the pub or at the match.... You will just know that you are on the right track.