

26 Retail Week October 30, 2015

the conversation Your views on the week's retail stories

YOUR COMMENTS

M&S's Sparks is refreshing, but do not forget mobile

I write with reference to your recent article about Marks & Spencer's new Sparks loyalty scheme ('Marks & Spencer unveils Sparks 'membership scheme' to better connect with customers', *Retail Week*, October 16).

With the myriad loyalty schemes on offer, it's perhaps unsurprising that M&S is keen to position this as a non-traditional scheme as it looks to develop more personal interactions with shoppers.

While it is refreshing to see a big retailer rewarding customers outside of spend value alone or simply seeking to price match against the competition, retailers in general shouldn't forget the value customers place on mobile. Our recent research shows 25% of customers would like to get loyalty points on their mobile either through an app or sent direct to their phones.

Consumers are promiscuous by their nature, so loyalty schemes must be relevant to them while at the same time adding value for the retailer, not simply eroding margins, but providing valuable data that can be used to make better business and customer engagement decisions.

Richard Kolodynski
Senior vice-president,
iVend Retail



How Alibaba could disrupt the British retail industry

The short-sighted greed and naivety of any retailer who has 'fed the hand that bites' continues to amaze and disappoint me. Michael Ross is right – who in their right mind wants to increase costs and reduce retention?

Stuart Isbitzer

Ian Middleton: I support the living wage, but it could spell the end for some smaller companies

Small business owners do have the right to make a living themselves, and indeed they should be paying their employees fairly too. If you aren't able to do this though as

a small business, then there is something wrong with your business model.

Anonymous

Ian Middleton, Founder of Argenteus, responds: Such businesses may be viable if overhead costs weren't constantly being pushed upwards by outside agencies.

There would be more in the pot to pay both the owners and the staff higher salaries if landlords and the Government weren't constantly picking the pockets of small retailers.

Who sets the bar of success these days? Many small businesses are doing fine until they hit the next rent review or rates revaluation.

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Avoid a 'sell, sell, sell' approach on Facebook

Facebook's new ecommerce features represent an interesting development for the social platform (Facebook tests shipping sections on its mobile app, *Retail-week.com*, October 14) but it's important to remember that the network is first and foremost a place to socialise.

Retailers and brands using Facebook must ensure that they don't fall into the trap of adopting a 'sell, sell, sell' mentality, compromising their brand message and undoing the hard work of building an engaged social following.

There's a risk that the new features will encourage brands to deviate from what's important: creating compelling content that tells memorable stories, rather than becoming all about price. It's far better to win consumers over with content – just

ask anyone currently using an ad blocker

Our lives are littered with direct sell messaging and Facebook offers brands the opportunity to do so much more, particularly given the platform's sophisticated data driven, people-based targeting capabilities.

Even if ads are relevant, if they are poorly executed or disruptive it's a huge turn-off. Facebook has the power and clout to influence how people use its platform, but brands need to stay focused on the behavior of the audience most valuable to their business to ensure a relevant and useful experience for their consumers.

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