

Top service and quality earns business from Hykeham DIY

Aladdin's Cave by name and Aladdin's Cave by nature – that's exactly the right description for Hykeham DIY Building & Leisure Supplies. The Lincolnshire 'emporium' is a serious DIY-ers or outdoor enthusiast's delight and to emphasise the point, staff have even got the Aladdin branding on their sweatshirts.

Entrepreneur Richard Whiteman set up the 14,500 square foot business in North Hykeham only six months ago based on the business model of a small shop he bought locally six years previously and the business is flourishing. The shop was formerly a furniture showroom and must be one of the very few hardware stores that are carpeted. It's a family-run affair as Richard's son and even the two family Labradors Dizzy and Jazz are behind the counter!



Geographically, North Hykeham is based just south east of the elegant cathedral city of Lincoln and at the last census figures available from 2001; it then had a population of 11,538. Over the last decade, hundreds of new homes have since been built in the village.

For shoppers to travel into the city centre from Hykeham is at least half an hour by car and there's the added problem of parking and carrying heavy or bulky goods. And so servicing a population of this size plus business from the surrounding villages and the Lincoln suburbs, makes a retail outlet of this magnitude a viable business proposition.

So how did the whole retail idea come about? Necessity being the mother of invention, Richard had struggled on a daily basis to buy locally all those small odds and ends of hardware that are needed to keep his expanding portfolio of rental properties in good condition. He thought that if he was struggling to keep on top of his properties without at least an hour's round trip to the nearest DIY outlet, then so would other local residents and so Mr Whiteman's hardware shop was born.

Today, Hykeham DIY Building & Leisure Supplies is an accredited BIRA Retailer. It stocks all manner of DIY SKUs from timber to tacks and if you like the great outdoors, there's a fantastic array of all things leisure, including 20 tents that are erected and on display in the first floor showroom!

Every business has a Unique Selling Proposition and Richard's USP lies in packeting. He recognised that people don't want large quantities of goods such as nails and screws and so he set up his own 'packeting' department. It's been a canny business move as he buys up liquidated stock and re-packets goods into small quantities for sale. He says that he can supply as little of anything that you'll need in Hykeham's own-branded packet and stocks an impressively broad range. He estimates that he's got at least 80 different types of 'O' rings and offers exactly the right washer for every conceivable plumbing repair!

Hykeham DIY Building & Leisure Supplies boasts the largest range of outdoor and camping equipment in Lincoln, ranging from tents and BBQs to towing hooks and bikes. He also stocks workwear and wellingtons, electrical goods and even pest control items to keep at bay those creatures we'd prefer to live without!

Richard has a keen eye for traditionally popular and reputable brands such as Blackfriars and Rustins. His customers also come in for hard-to-find heavy duty cleaning products e.g. a highly effective mould spray.



Wood is a core product at Hykeham and from it Richard's team can retail a raft of other lines from fixings to ironmongery and paint and varnish finishes. The timber supplier is Masons Timber Products of Nottingham. They supply the store with a broad range of products including PSE, mouldings, and rough sawn and tanalised goods.

Service is a key issue and Masons' representative visits around once every three weeks. Richard is gradually increasing both stock levels and the range of timber products which are housed in Masons-supplied merchandising units.

Orders are normally placed face to face in-store or occasionally over the phone. Richard says: 'While everyone else is moving towards online ordering, I'm sticking with good old-fashioned service and I like their personal One-Stop-Shop approach. I give them top marks for service and for the quality of goods that are delivered!'

Masons Timber Products are BIRA Supplier Members to the buying group. The company believes in supporting its retailers and recognizes that correct merchandising does boost sales. Pauline Morrison head of sales and marketing at Masons says:

'We recognise timber is a bulky product to store and our aim is to provide a choice of compact POS systems that are good on the eye and minimise floor space in store. We support our retailers with six different types of timber merchandising racks which are supplied on free loan with complete rack deal orders.

'The *Timber Store* rack system is the most popular at just under 2.5m long, 1220mm wide and 2440mm high. It stocks 98 different product lines including mouldings, planed timber, sawn wood, cladding, white melamine, laminated pine, MDF and plywood and hardboard in just one free-standing unit (total area 3.46m²). It comes complete with point of sale for easy pricing and identification of products in the rack and is perfect for smaller merchant/DIY outlets where space is at a premium.

'Masons' upright moulding store holds 26 different profiles. The merchant can choose from 280 mouldings or we'll suggest a range of popular mouldings. The rack is free standing but can also be bolted to another to create an island selling area displaying 56 profiles.'



The company sees itself as a customer-focused manufacturer of a broad range of timber products. A member of the Timber Trade Federation, it has both FSC and PEFC Chain of Custody certification. This means Masons can remain competitive and source the quality required for its product range.

So what's next in store at Hykeham? Customers can expect to drop in for a coffee and cake as well as picking up all their DIY needs at close quarters. Richard's wife runs a catering business and there's plenty of room back of store to get the tea room open - when time allows for this busy entrepreneurial family of course!

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