

Customer-focused Screwfix turns up heat in DIY market

Screwfix has won the Financo Speciality Retailer of the Year after developing its multichannel strategy to meet the needs of the white van man. Rebecca Thomson reports on its achievements

DIY retailer Screwfix has become one of the quietly brilliant businesses of UK retail. Screwfix, which started life as a mail order catalogue, is today a multichannel retailer that places its customers at the heart of its operations.

Screwfix's achievements stretch across the channels. It has expanded from one to 300 stores in eight years; it has a click-and-collect service that allows shoppers to order and collect just five minutes later; it has a website that has well over a million unique visitors each week; and it has a live stock-check system.

The judges said Screwfix's dedication to the customer is clear. "It has adapted over time, but it has stayed true to who its customer is and what they want, and the changing needs of that customer."

One judge added: "Screwfix is coming through very strongly and it has stuck to what it does well despite quite a lot of pressure to open big-box stores everywhere."

"It has resisted that and produced a business that is very profitable and very responsive to customer needs."

As Screwfix has grown, it has managed to keep a clear focus on who its customer is. The judges said: "It has got such a clear perspective on who its customer is, and their needs. A white van man is a demanding customer – everything they do in terms of relating to that customer is incredibly joined up."

Its achievement is to make DIY an exciting proposition. "The customer goes right through the veins of the business. It knows its customer and the whole model [of the business] is [constructed] around convenience for that customer."

"Who are they? When do they get up in the morning? It's an exciting business for something that's not that exciting a product."

Screwfix has managed to build a business around its users' unique



Screwfix has made selling everyday DIY products into a responsive business

needs, with a multichannel model that is designed carefully for shoppers who are more likely than most to be on the move. Mobile is a big focus – its app has proven popular, and mobile traffic is growing significantly year on year.

The judges said: "Screwfix has incredible foresight in terms of how it has managed itself through the past few years. The investment it has put into its business now means we will see more exciting things – it is at a point now where

it is more advanced than many other retailers operationally."

The judges forecast good things for Screwfix as the economic environment starts to improve.

"As people invest more and as the economy picks up, there's a genuine excitement about the business. Screwfix obviously enjoys doing it, the whole culture at the business is great," said the judges.

"It's an unexciting product for most of us, but an incredibly exciting business." ★

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