

# Boosting the bottom line

**We regularly urge our drycleaning readers to 'think outside the box' but this time we're inviting you to consider what might be in the box, and much more beside.**

With high streets struggling it's often the shops people used to love to browse for bits and bobs, odds and unusual gifts which have disappeared. Independent, usually small family businesses like bookshops, haberdashers and ironmongers, have borne the brunt.

Meanwhile, a man who undoubtedly sees opportunity in all kinds of markets, Dragons Den star Theo Paphitis, has been cleverly sailing against the tide, building a portfolio of specialist stores. He bought stationers Ryman from the receivers nearly 25 years ago and it's now a thriving chain of stores plus online sales, with a turnover of more than £125m. Then there's Robert Dyas, the homeware brand which he took over in 2012, and lingerie business Boux Avenue. Paphitis's retail group has around 350 stores nationwide, selling the things we need and those things we didn't know we need but like the look of so head to the tills.

That might seem a long stretch from your drycleaning shop but the philosophy of running Paphitis's business as local

## Janice Raycroft reports

shopkeepers, not just shops, is a big key to success. People coming through your door aren't arriving to browse, but to collect or deliver garments and linen. But, just like those wandering the aisles of Robert Dyas, every single one is a potential customer for much more.

Look at how the one-stop shop is a boon for those with busy lives, and of course a lucrative market for store operators – 'express' supermarkets, for instance, pack in a lot of choices and impulse buys alongside grocery 'must-haves' such as milk.

For drycleaners, promoting and offering personal and home care add-ons can also provide an easy boost to profits from existing customers calling in with their garments and linen.

After all, they can't buy services such as key-cutting or shoe repairs online. Include an attractive array of items like clothes care products or carpet cleaning machines and many will sell themselves. You might choose a theme such as eco-friendly goodies which will be appreciated by your customer base.

As we head into autumn and then on to Christmas this is an excellent time to review

all the 'little extras' and how to maximise profits from them. Rather than just putting in the standard re-order to your regular supplier of chemicals, hangers and packaging, take a few minutes to visit their website pages covering counter products and promotional material.

If you know your market, and you should, you may well spot something new to add to the easy revenue producers. You may not have room for a Christmas tree, but the outlay can be minimal to spruce up your shop and give the appearance of a new look and additional products and services for customers to consider. Eco-friendly packaging, perhaps a bespoke design, can do the trick.

Take a look at the promotional posters offered by suppliers such as GRPPS and think about whether eye-catching signs pushing services such as UGG boot cleaning, expert alterations or same day service will swiftly pay for themselves by bringing in new customers, or regular ones who spot that you can solve another problem.

For instance, you might have stopped promoting carpet cleaning machine hire as

wooden floors became far more fashionable, but the past year has seen a resurgence, often with vibrant designs used as the focal point of rooms where walls and furniture are plainer.

Satpal Kaur of laundry and drycleaning products supplier Superhanger says: "We sell floor cleaning machines which handle everything from carpets to wood floors. They are popular with drycleaners as they know that all the profit on hiring it out is theirs, no commission comes to us. The machines pull in a lot of bookings before Christmas as people have spare rooms that need cleaning before guests arrive and want to have their whole homes looking their best."

This is definitely the season to make sure your duvet cleaning and moth control promotions are reaching the biggest audiences possible. On bedding there is the switch from lightweight to winter duvets, and clothing moths are finding their way into more and more homes and discovering new places to leave their voracious larvae.

Our favourite 'Moth Man', Graham Warren of Caraselle, says: "The national press regularly features moth problems and Giles Smith wrote a really good piece recently in The Sunday Times in July on how he ignored the holes

he was finding in his jumpers but really took exception when he found his piano was also under attack – most people will never even think their pianos are subject to moth damage – they eat the green felt under the keys and thereby render the piano useless.

"Many drycleaning customers will receive lovely cashmere sweaters as Christmas gifts. Sadly, cashmere is also the favourite fodder for the dreaded clothes moth which will be ready and waiting to lay her eggs in that

gorgeous new sweater."

He recommends Acana Moth Killer Sachets and a Caraselle Peva Sweater Bag to protect such treasured pressies – an excellent promotion for counter and window displays.

**Taking up minimum counter space: a handy choice of moth products, pet hair removers and fabric cleaners from Caraselle**



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## Fancy Footwork

**F**ootwear care is another lucrative market. Not only does the best footwear – particularly trainers – come with a high price tag – but owners like to keep their shoes and outdoor wear in decent condition.

Caraselle's new Shoe and Trainer Wash Bags are really strong ribbed bags that allow shoe and trainers to be placed in the washing machine. The ribbed design reduces noise in the wash and protects both the shoes and the drum of the washing machine.

Look out too for the outstanding Nikwax range, available through suppliers such as Lynx. Developed by committed peak and fell walker Nick Brown, the first Nikwax lines came about because he wanted to waterproof and preserve his boots without softening them or losing their supportive features.

The business has gone from strength to strength and that's likely to continue as Brown was at the forefront of seeking to avoid using harmful and flammable solvents long before environmental issues reached the

# The Giftbox

**N**ow here's an idea which could well delight your customers hunting for a special and unique Christmas or birthday gift – make a 'hamper' of clothes and home care products, put a price tag on it that provides you with a good profit and immediately solves someone's pressie hunt. It might contain Colibri shoe fresheners and Dylan lingerie renovators from a supplier such as Clean Supply, maybe fuzz bricks or even an electric fuzz remover from Lynx, some pretty Colibri lemongrass wool protectors... and even perhaps



Eye catchers: some bright colours and bright ideas, this time available from Clean Supply

a book! Yes, it might not have quite made the bestseller lists, but Caraselle's "What's Eating You 2?" Mothmageddon, first published in 2013, has been upgraded into an 80 page, A5 sized book full of up to date information about moths and how to get rid of them.

It's a handy guide for drycleaning staff, of course, on the £1 billion worth of damage to clothing and carpets every year in the UK. Recent additions to the Caraselle range include

'Acana Hanging Moth Killer & Freshener Pack' and 'Acana Moth Killer and Freshener Sachets'.

The book is also a good talking point as you sell the little extras to customers, and there's nothing like having something to talk about while making a sale.

Don't forget the pets. Products which help collect up pet hair are always good sellers and the major suppliers offer good value 'fluff collectors' which are easy to sell at a decent mark-up. Pet hair removal never goes away, so keep a demo roller on the counter to show customers what it can do if you are thinking of offering



Beautiful containers from The Empty Box Company: ideal for birthdays and Christmas, or you might fill them with homecare products

gift boxes of personal and home care products it might be an idea to allow customers to pick some of their 'hamper' contents so they can build a personal choice set including, if required, items for cleaning furnishings or where pets leave their mark.

Another possible ingredient is Caraselle Plug Pulls – an innovative British designed and manufactured product which makes it easy for the elderly, or those suffering with arthritis and

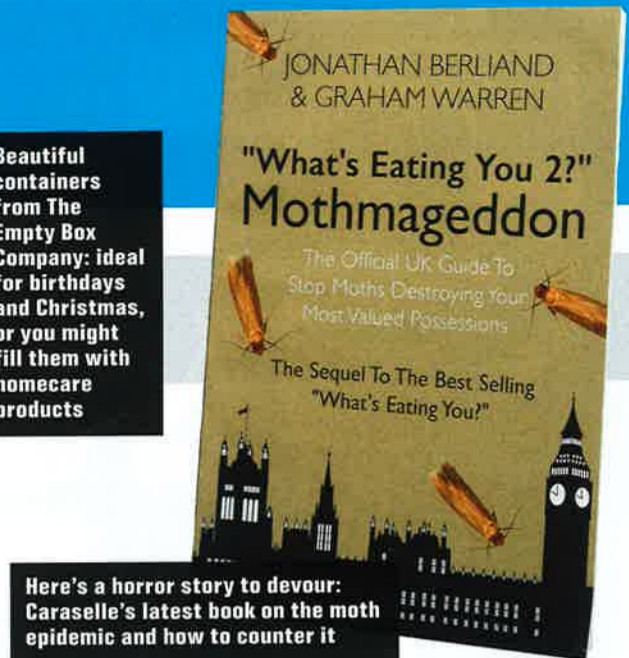


rheumatism, to remove plugs from wall sockets.

You can 'box clever' here with gift boxes from businesses such as **The Empty Box Company**. Did you know that their boxes, all hand made in England, are often seen on TV (most recently in the BBC's *Killing Eve*), and that Empty Box turns about 100 tonnes of recycled board per year into their pretties?

As well as producing boxes which might be ideal for your own Christmas giftboxes, they offer a Children's Party Box to fill with items such as party keepsakes and birthday cake. For adults there are

A fluffy cutie: but that fur can be left on furniture, carpets and bedding... and then there's the muddy paws! Photo: Tim Walker, flickr.com



Here's a horror story to devour: Caraselle's latest book on the moth epidemic and how to counter it

boxes ideal for a bottle of wine, champagne, port or whiskey. Or how about the Christmas Eve Box - a beautiful, memorable Christmas Box to fill with 'The Night Before Christmas'. Goodies such as new pyjamas, a story book or Christmas film to watch. We particularly like their Mini Trug for containing gifts such as chutney, marmalade, or small plants – of course drycleaners could fill it with clothes care products.

The boxes have also entered

the world of interior design, with clever stylists using them, particularly the hat boxes, to transform or finish off rooms. Eye-catchers perhaps for your shop window too, and the boxes can be bespoke designed using a client's wallpaper for the ultimate décor match. If you are based in an upmarket area where residents follow the trends this could be a great add-on service.

A cashmere scarf like this from Kent Wang might set you back around £100 – now you wouldn't want the moths to get at that, would you?

public conscience.

Nikwax was the first company in the world to produce a range of water-based products for restoring waterproofing in the home.

And he's still at it – Nikwax has just linked up with Swedish trail runner Erik Ahlström to launch #PlogForPlastic. Ahlström founded the concept of Plogging – simply picking up plastic litter

We're reaching muddy boots season again – it's time to get out the Nikwax.

Photo: Stephani Li



whilst jogging. Events in the UK have started with joggers of all ages just adding gloves to their

running kit. You don't have to be a runner to take part and many participants are dog walkers and those out for a stroll along beaches or open spaces.

Posters promoting #PlogForPlastic are available via links at the Nikwax website. For drycleaners operating in areas where recycling and plastic usage is a big issue, this is a fine campaign to support while selling Nikwax products. See [plogforplastic.com](http://plogforplastic.com).

For customers who care about their appearance it's top to toe, so this is the perfect place to look for sales from great impulse pick up items. Whether it be replacement laces, adding comfort with an insole, or to cleaning and storing away your favourite shoes, **Victor de Banke Market Harborough** have been selling bespoke shoe care since 1989. Their lines include the No.1 shoe care brand Kiwi, Woly or Famaco, and of course that UK laces favourite, Shoe String.

Woly packaging has evolved,

Victor de Banke Market Harborough offer a range of footwear care products in stylish packaging likely to boost impulse buys



Nikwax footwear cleaning gel from a range which is kind to the environment.

Photo: Stephani Li



to be non-specific to footwear, making all products multi-purpose and suitable for use on clothing, handbags, shoes and furniture, and therefore a great addition to any household cleaning cupboard. This means the products can be targeted to a larger demographic.

So drycleaners, while we know you don't look down on your precious customers, this could well be the time to at least look down at their feet – they could be walking out of your shop after collecting a suit or shirts, but without that extra sale that could really boost the bottom line.

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