

Shop doctor inspires retailers

Retail marketing specialist and Shop Doctor Diane Jackson recently delivered two 'surgeries' for independent businesses in Swadlincote and Melbourne on different aspects of marketing – and delegates are delighted at the inspiration and help they received.

The programme from the popular series "Retail Survival" and "The Shop Doctors" has been running throughout Derbyshire during 2009. It was devised by retailing specialists Main Marketing & PR Limited and presented by MD Diane Jackson, on this occasion at the Sharpes Pottery Museum in Swadlincote.



Aimed at supporting local businesses and creating prosperous towns, the programme is part of Derbyshire County Council's Market Towns Initiative, funded by the Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership (DDEP). The programme explores different facets of retail marketing, including injecting great customer service ideas into business, advertising and promotions and visual merchandising.

The course contains some significant insights into the psychology of retailing and 'Doctor' Di shares some of the secrets and tricks of the trade that many retail giants use – to great effect.

Varied experience levels

There is inevitably a mix of business owners at the workshops with a variety of experience – but there's always something for everyone.

Sheila Cunliffe, owner of Shumart in Swadlincote has lots of experience but said, "I'm so pleased I went. The course was very well presented, easy to follow and I've learned an awful lot. I've been in retail for over 20 years and I didn't think I would learn too much, but I really did. I'm so glad to have made the effort after a long day's work – you always wonder if it'll be worth it, and it really was."

Jo Kucharzelsska, manager at the Yard Bar and Cafe in Swadlincote was really enthusiastic "I very much enjoyed the course", she said. "I found it very inspiring on a number of levels. It was a good reminder of things I knew but maybe had forgotten to do for a while; I certainly feel I have ways to move the business forward. I was motivated and inspired personally to help me in my work, to pass on to my staff, to improve the customer experience here – and to learn ways to encourage more people to the town."



Melbourne business owner Yvonne Robey from Firm Figures echoed Jo's sentiments. "I thought the programme was very useful – it made you more aware of how you do business and the service levels you offer. I now see things so much more from the customer's point of view."



Ann Booth, who runs Phoenix Pet Foods commented, "I've got a master's degree, but it still made me examine and assess everything that we do in an objective way. It refreshed lots of things I knew already and brought them to the forefront of my mind, which was very useful."

Penny Tempest, Penny's Accessories, Swadlincote and Ashby was equally enthusiastic,

"I learned lots of useful tips and things about advertising, databases and customer situations. It was good to meet with other retailers and get to know them - we really should be working together more.

"I'm now thinking about having a database and displaying more of my stock and using the space I've got better. I've been in retail for a few years and still I'm ready to listen and take advice. It was brilliant, and 'Doctor' Di was very supportive."



Well worth the effort

All independent retailers are invited to attend these free workshops and predictably some feel that after a long day's work, they don't want to make the extra effort to go along. Those that do go, find their effort is rewarded and come away with more than just updated knowledge.

The reaction from **Linda Ferriday, owner of Ashbourne's soft furnishing business Linda Elaine, is quite typical:**

"Initially it's hard to commit to taking time out for two full evenings, but I'm so glad I did it because it was excellent. It gave us the confidence we needed – it was a real boost. Diane has certainly given us ideas on finding a competitive edge, but the most significant benefit is the new found confidence we've got now."



Independent survey

After every series of workshops Diane commissions an independent survey of delegates to establish their reaction. There is always an overwhelming majority who feel the timing and the content of the sessions is absolutely right.

Further workshops in other parts of Derbyshire – and in other parts of the UK – are also scheduled. For more information about the rest of this series in Derbyshire, or other similar programmes, contact The Shop Doctor on 0845 129 9948 or by Email to shopdoctor@retailsurvival.co.uk.