



ANYONE FOR COFFEE?

Muscle in on some nice cleaning fun, then have a cuppa!

It has become a bit of a cliché in the office products industry with the ‘old timers’ saying – who would have ever thought we’d be selling coffee. Well believe it or not we are – loads of it – thanks to Viking, if I remember correctly.

BY JANE SMITH

When you stop to think about it, it makes complete sense. Just like at home (for those who do run a household). We need consumables like, bread, butter and milk every week but we buy our loo rolls and washing powder every so often and ouch! – When we add that to our supermarket bill we feel it. So why should offices be any different? The truth is the majority are not - they are all buying some – the question is are you getting the orders.

From your company's point of view, if you're delivering the stationery, then your van will be going there anyway so why not pack it to the gunnels with anything the customer will buy from you. The cost of the delivery stays virtually the same. Equally from the customer's point of view, why

receive your paper, envelopes and pens free and then spend your lunch hour buying your biscuits, coffee and tea etc.

What you have to do is identify the opportunity. And if the customer already has an account with you this is just a way of adding value for them and growing profitability for your company. Whether you're talking about the catering or the janitorial area.

I WANT MUSCLE

We spoke to just one leading supplier for this category SL Group. From the research they have done, most offices spend 10% of their indirect costs on these types of products. So how do you Mr Muscle in on the action (forgive the pun)? Here's a barrage of questions to get you thinking! >>



>> HOW MANY PEOPLE WORK ON THE PREMISES?

Take the catering first. Are there departmental or central tea and coffee making facilities? Who pays? What about entertaining. Meeting and boardrooms? Who looks after that aspect (wouldn't be at all surprised if it was the very person you're dealing with!). And surely they'll be offering their important clients tea/coffee AND biscuits!

>> IS THERE A COMMUNAL KITCHEN? How is it 'kitted out'?

Do they need a fridge or microwave? Do they have communal cutlery, serviettes and plates?

>> DO THEY HAVE VENDING MACHINES? Can you compete

against the incumbent supplier for the vending cups business? Go on give it a try.

>> WHAT ABOUT THE JANITORIAL SIDE OF THINGS?

Can you supply the loo rolls cheaper than the contracted cleaning company?

>> DOES YOUR CUSTOMER NEED WASHING UP LIQUID, GLOVES AND TEA TOWELS TO COMPLEMENT THE COMMUNAL KITCHEN SUPPLIES?

>> WASHROOM SUPPLIES. WHERE IS YOUR CUSTOMER BUYING FROM? Can you give them a better deal? Make sure you ask to use the facilities before you see your customer next time. Do they have towel dispensers on the wall and centrefeed dispensers in the toilets? Be nosy! Apparently it makes for a good salesperson.

And the beauty of all of this is that there is margin in there too! So don't be afraid to 'stretch' the boundaries of the categories you offer. ■