

national office week

Bryony Taylor investigates how dealers can help customers make their lives gorgeous.

There are 1.8 million office products buyers in the UK, and getting a slice of this action is becoming harder and harder. The consumer is presented with a vast range of products offering choice from the high cost branded bunch to their lower cost, own brand cousins. In these situations, when a consumer is simply purchasing on price, own brand products are often seen as the best choice. More margins can be made on their branded siblings, but they are harder to sell. However, it doesn't always have to be this way. In an effort to kick the own brand market into touch, big brand manufacturers have clubbed together to launch National Office Week (N.O.W.), a marketing platform aimed at helping dealers sell.

"When a consumer goes into a supermarket, and reaches for a bottle of tomato sauce, it is likely that they have already been exposed to a multitude of marketing messages to help influence their purchasing decision," said Debi Arnold, organiser of N.O.W. "Messages from TV, radio, loyalty coupons, outdoor advertising, shelf position, and even the label on the product will influence the consumer's selection."

A customer who knows exactly what they want before hand is much less likely to be swayed by price, or market choice, and is therefore a valuable asset. N.O.W. is aimed and consistently promoting the branded message of its sponsors in a multitude of ways direct to the consumer, making the sell substantially easier for dealers. "In the office sector, the buyer does not get exposed to the opportunities that can help their selection or purchasing process," explained Arnold. "They have a dealer website or a dealer catalogue,

along with the dealer sales presence, and it is generally accepted across the industry that most dealers favour promoting an own brand range over and above the brand leading equivalents."

BIC's marketing manager, Emma Lawley added: "The week is an opportunity to raise the profile of stationery products and promote some of the leading brands that are strong promoters of quality and value for money. The campaign positions stationery products in a fun and friendly manner, making it easy for dealers and consumers to relate to, and gives dealers a further opportunity to generate excitement and buy-in from their customers. They can use the materials available in mailers and online to promote the purchase of stationery."

The 'make life gorgeous' campaign aims to take over major cities in the build up to N.O.W. week which runs in conjunction The Times' Crème show at Olympia on May 12-16. Over 100,000 sandwich bags will be used by those in the postcode where more office workers are based than any other places in the country. Radio stations will have office hit squads standing by to help make lucky listeners have a gorgeous office during that week, and sticky note squad will sticky some of the busiest areas about the campaign. Added to this mix, will be giveaways from the sponsors during the build via the campaigns' website. Big brands are taking big steps then, and there's a lot for the dealer to capitalise on.

Sarah Noye, marketing manager, Swan Stabilo, said: "For both dealers and their staff N.O.W. is a campaign for everyone to get their teeth into and talk to customers in a new and



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more exciting way about stationery. N.O.W. celebrates brands and offers consumers that little bit extra, be it extra value, high quality or tips on how to improve office life. For Stabilo, and everyone who is involved in the N.O.W programme, it has revived our passion for our industry.”

Showing customers that when they pay for a brand they receive a higher level of quality, performance and reliability, is how manufacturers will promote their products. “Building trust is key to branded products,” said Stephen Vail, M-real’s regional sales director. “For many consumers it is important to know they can rely on the products they use, whether it is product performance or environmental track record. With N.O.W. M-real hopes to show that with manufacturer brands, consumers can see exactly who is producing the products, what their track record is, and how they act as corporate citizens.”

“The leading brand manufacturers are responsible for developing cutting edge technology which result in the best performing products with real benefits for the end user,” added Yvonne Partridge, Rapid’s regional director UK and Ireland. “For example, we have pioneered new stapler technology and reduced the volume of stapled documents by over 40%, saving valuable filing and storage space. This kind

of innovation is only found in the big brand products and gives dealers products which offer real user benefits to sell. These benefits give dealers the opportunity to sell added value at premium prices.”

With many areas of the stationery market at risk of commoditisation, N.O.W. is an opportunity for dealers to create a higher cash margin. “It’s a win-win situation,” said Jane Rowe, marketing director, John Dickinson Stationery. “Branded products help dealers support their customers CSR policies without compromising on quality. They offer a better cash margin, ensuring that dealers benefit from the financial aspects too. In addition, brand owners often offer promotional support for the brands giving the dealers’ customers another reason to choose brands over own label products.”

Dealers can publicise N.O.W. on their websites, run blitz days, customer promotions and competitions promoting the brands sponsoring the event. “Although N.O.W. has been developed to invest in our brands and ultimately to help us sell more products, it is a fun campaign too which, through its high profile marketing and presence at the two key Crème secretarial shows, will appeal to all office workers and stationery buyers,” explained Juliet Tipton, marketing manager, Esselte UK. “The theme of the campaign, ‘making office life gorgeous’, is what it’s all about these days.”

As people spend more of their time in the office than at home, making life gorgeous is all about making that space more attractive. Where’s the harm in that? ●