



The Store Experience Creators.

Key steps to making a high performing Builders' Merchant Outlet.



Key steps to making a high-performing Builders' Merchant Outlet.

David Wolfenden from Ripple explains how the physical merchant environment can boost a merchant's business, influence their brand image, improve the customer experience and increase sales.

For builders' merchants and retailers alike, the prospect of improving, changing or re-imagining the physical environment is an exciting one amongst the complexities of operating a modern business. Changing the look, feel and function can deliver a step change and increase market share and bottom line.

Creating a vision for the future state of a merchant's physical environment is a fascinating subject and a key part of a successful business model. It influences the customers' experience of your business, your staff's ability to service their needs, your business image, brand values, communication, product and range offering. In a nutshell, your environment impacts your business's prospects, market positioning, resilience and profitability.

Later in this article, I'll mention some examples of design work for merchants across the UK. But first let's consider what the starting point is to a satisfying, well-designed physical merchant or retail environment.

David Wolfenden

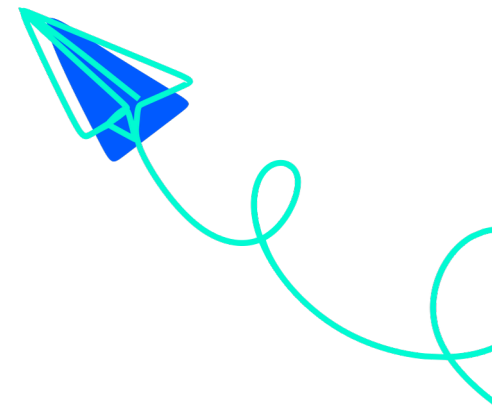
Managing Director Ripple



Where do we start?

You may have an idea of what you want to achieve - but where you start depends on where you are currently. To begin to scope a brief there needs to be an understanding of the current state; where your business sits in the market, how it is perceived, how up-to-date it is and whether it clearly differentiates itself from competitors etc.

How do your aspirations for the physical environment fit with your business's strategy and objectives? Do you want to increase market share, product offer or services?



So, let's consider these factors:

Your Employees.

How can physical change assist their roles and needs? And how can they contribute to the process to help engender a sense of ownership?

Customer experience and service.

How much better could it be? How efficient are your transactions and how accessible are your staff for customer enquiries or complaints?

Brand image.

What do you want to change and what do you want to say to customers about your values and your proposition? Does it help differentiate your business?

Interior and exterior spaces.

How do you want to use these? Consider customer flow, interactions and how about some theatre?

Format design.

What, ideally, would you like to do with your product range? Is your present offer equal to, or better than your competitors? Think about the implications to your customer-journey and experience.

Multiple outlets.

Do you have consistency and alignment across your estate? And, what would that mean to your business efficiency?

Navigation, communication and merchandising.

How efficient is your business currently? Can customers find what they're looking for? Do they understand the products or applications? Are they inspired? Do you always have the products they need? Can you raise your average transaction value with add-on sales or special orders?

Longevity and flexibility.

Business never stands still so how do you minimise the cost and impact of range reviews? Can you easily change your product ranges, ratios and reflows? You may have created a fabulous environment - but can it change like a chameleon? That is important.

Your Businesses DNA.

These are just some of the key headlines to develop your design brief, a formula to convey your business's DNA and shape its future. Once you have a better understanding of what you want to achieve, you can then focus on aesthetics and operational efficiency.


I believe a good starting point is to consider what you ultimately want your customers to experience. If significantly changing this is the essence of your business mission, it drives a complex series of planning, processes and interactions to get the right product in the right place at the right time - and to maintain this. After all, what happens for customers from arriving to leaving your premises will influence their loyalty, what they spend, and whether they are or become life-long advocates.

Taking great care about the appearance and arrangement of products as it can make a powerful contribution to your brand. What distinguishes the most-admired merchants and retailers is the sensation that someone is controlling the environment to make shopping a more agreeable experience.

It's about having a place for everything and everything in its place. The merchant's mission should be for the customer's journey to be intuitive and pleasurable, every time.



Improving the design of your premises is proven to enhance customer experience and increase sales. Some key factors are on the next page.



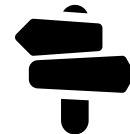
Key Factors to Increase Sales & Enhance Experience.

Decompression Zone.



This is the area immediately inside the entrance. It should be uncluttered and allow visitors to acclimatise and pick up on navigation cues. Important products or offers placed just beyond the zone (at least three metres away), clearly and simply communicated are more likely to then attract them.

Navigational Signage.



Keep it clear and logical, directional and zonal signage combined with tidy efficient merchandising, easy-to-read product descriptions and prices will let customers find what they're looking for without stress. Display information next to products highlighting features and benefits.

Sightlines.



Make it easier for customers to see across the store or have an unobstructed view between their position and the positioning of a feature area or hot spot. It creates a sense of order and helps them gain their bearings and spot the navigation cues.

Communication.



You are an expert in your trade, so display information about the use, application and techniques of specialist or unique products to help inform and engage your customers.

Storage.



Keep backrooms, stockrooms or hidden storage areas to a minimum through good design, make your stock work but don't over-face or overload!

Ripple x Norman Piette.

My business, Ripple, specialises in designing and manufacturing of interiors and display solutions for merchants and retailers.

One useful example of Ripple's work with merchants is Norman Piette in Guernsey, its heritage dates back to 1740, making it one of the oldest builders' and timber merchants in the British Isles.

Today, Norman Piette's products include building materials, joinery; fixings, ironmongery and electrical; flooring, kitchens, bathrooms and bedrooms; landscaping, painting and decorating, plumbing and heating, roofing and ventilation, eco and sustainable products, LED lighting; timber, tools and safety equipment. The company now accounts for around 65% market share in Guernsey.

When Paul Rogers, Norman Piette's chief executive, joined the business in 2013 one of his key challenges was the need to completely modernise and transform the business. He and I were introduced by Akzo Nobel with the intention of revamping their paint department, this led on to us working together for the transformation of the entire site.

Ripple's services for Norman Piette included initial design intent, creative visualisation and modelling, format development, extension of their corporate brand style across different categories, and display and fixturing to achieve consistent merchandising principles across the operation.



Paul Rodgers from Norman Piette Commented:



We had a successful Building Centre before the refit, but it had become fragmented through time and evolution. The refit gave us a chance to take a holistic fresh look at everything and as a result we modernised the whole site putting related products together and introducing a new modern brand image

The result was visually-stunning and operationally-effective.

The departments all look as fresh today as they did when they were first complete. Our staff have had merchandising training and take a pride in looking after their areas, particularly the hot spot features which they change regularly to stimulate interest and improve sales.

The motivation and sense of pride our staff felt and still feel is worth a great deal.

By significantly improving the layouts, functionality and merchandising standards we have been able to fend off the increasing competition on the island and keep our turnover and profits up. Without the help from Ripple to transform the space and create capacity for new products we would have been showing reduced volumes; instead our sales figures have improved in that time.

Ripple had the ideas, drew up the designs, made most of the product and then fitted it on-site.... that is like an architect actually building the house; the ultimate package!

In Summary.

There is no single magic formula to creating a highly effective merchant environment, simply because your business is unique. Ground-breaking designs and solutions must be formed around individual and specific business criteria.

Hopefully, this short guide will give you a great starting point to help you realise what it takes for your business to create a brilliant environment for staff and customers alike.

We are Ripple, specialists in display & interiors.

Working with brands across the U.K. for over 35 years. Creative and technical design coupled with a 25,000sqft in-house manufacturing facility, meaning your project is in the hands of our internal experts at every stage.

No outsourcing, no confusion. We make your objectives a reality.

Simply put, we create bespoke furniture for retail and corporate spaces. From a simple POS stand to full interior design. We're focussed on driving outstanding results and deliverables, alongside a stunning finish.



A process like no other.

The way that we do business is what sets us apart from the rest. We offer a fully managed solution, truly end-to-end. From the brief and concept stages of your design, all the way through manufacture and installation, it's all under one roof.



Design

A thorough brief and creative development of a unique concept to meet your requirements.



Deliver

On site and on brand. Your project successfully delivered and generating results.



Detail

Technical specification and prototyping supported by our manufacturing unit and taken into full-scale production.

How can we help with your next project?

Whether you require an end-to-end and solution encompassing, creative design & concepts, technical design manufacture or installation, or just one of our services, our teams at Ripple are on hand to help make your vision a reality.

Contact us now for a no-obligation chat with an expert on any of our services.



Call Us.
0161 624 820

Email Us.
info@ripple.co.uk

Find Us.
Greenacres Road, Oldham, OL4 2AD