



Comment, p24

RETAIL LIFE COMMENT

The importance of start-up spirit

New businesses and job creation will be driven by entrepreneurs, says **David Wild**

In this economic downturn a lot of hope is being placed on the wealth-creating potential of the private sector. New businesses particularly are seen as an engine of growth and job creation. This is a time to encourage entrepreneurship and start-ups and retailers have a significant role to play in the process.

The Government recognises the importance of developing a vibrant small business sector. In March, David Cameron announced StartUp Britain, an initiative that promised a grant to new firms.

Research supports the logic for doing this, as entrepreneurs and high-growth small businesses create some 60% of new jobs.

Research from economic consultants CEBR also speaks to the potential of the sector. They forecast almost 300,000 start-ups will be launched in 2011.

A gauge of this is the popular BBC TV show *Dragons' Den*, which demonstrates the numbers of inventors who believe their product could be the next big thing.

Retail is driven by the same spirit of entrepreneurship. High street brand names are testament to the thousands of people who have literally "set up shop". Some established many years ago, like Fortnum & Mason, whose logo proudly claims 'Piccadilly since 1707'. There are also a host of new entrants like the 99p Stores, a family run business founded in 2001, which now has 140 stores and aims to have 600 in the next 10 years. All are businesses

that spotted a gap in the market and invested resources and energy to bring a different proposition to customers.

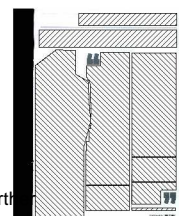
The dotcom boom has sparked a wave of entrepreneurial retailers. From Amazon to home-grown names like Net-a-Porter and Asos, as well as the thousands of smaller pure-play sites.

The retail supply chain is also alive with entrepreneurs. Innovation in products is a way that we can create value for customers in the current climate. At **Halfords** we encourage it from suppliers and are constantly on the look out for new ideas. This brings us into contact with many new businesses.

A good example is Trunki, the brainchild of designer Rob Law. His initial idea was for a ride-on suitcase for children. He went on to develop a range of products around that theme, like the BoostApak, which is a rucksack that converts to a child's car seat. Five years from launch he now has a team of 21 employees and stockists, which include Halfords, in 62 countries.

Another very small start-up is Flo's Fancies cupcake car air fresheners. They were developed by mum Emma Hewitt. Her research showed that the smell of an iced cake was one of the best-loved aromas. We believed that they would be a great addition to our range and now her products ensure that motorists are never without their favourite flavours.

Our biggest success has been our partnership with Olympic Gold medal cyclist Chris Boardman. He came to us with an idea for a new bike range based on his reputation for detailed



Source: Retail Week {Main}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Friday 21, October 2011
Page: 23
Area: 491 sq. cm
Circulation: ABC 8142 Weekly
BRAD info: page rate £5,985.00, scc rate £35.00
Phone: 020 7728 5000
Keyword: Halfords

technical development and performance. Five years ago we launched Boardman cycles and since that time the range has become the UK's fastest-growing premium bike brand with annual sales of over £20m.

The tough economic environment is clearly set to go on for some time.

What is clear though is that in that period, retailers will be at the forefront of the entrepreneurship that will drive the development of many small businesses, and in so doing, creating jobs on the path to a recovery.

► **David Wild is chief executive of Halfords**

Source: Retail Week {Main}
Edition:
Country: UK
Date: Friday 21, October 2011
Page: 23
Area: 491 sq. cm
Circulation: ABC 8142 Weekly
BRAD info: page rate £5,985.00, scc rate £35.00
Phone: 020 7728 5000
Keyword: Halfords



PETER SEARLE

www.retail-week.com