

The Retail & eCommerce Directors' Forum 2017

April 25th, The Belfry Birmingham

What an exciting year for the 9th annual Retail & eCommerce Directors' Forum; our biggest yet with over 400 retail professionals in attendance and a new venue – the spectacular Belfry hotel in Birmingham.



As we take the time to reflect on the forum, we wanted to share with you some of the key take-outs from the day.

The theme was *"retailing in the era of engagement, experience, and entertainment"* - a topic chosen by our conference chair, Neil Saunders (MD, Global Data) recognising the changes to the rules of Retail. It is no longer enough to just provide a shopping space, in order to survive Retailers must engage with their customers and excite them in order to entice them in-store.

Opening Keynote – Justin King, Former CEO Sainsbury's & Head of Business portfolio, Terra Firma

The day began with a lively and exciting opening keynote speech from Justin King, who addressed questions taken from the delegate audience.

Justin was very clear that, whilst it is important to embrace and incorporate new technologies into our retail business it must not be at the expense of the fundamentals of retail, as forgetting these could be a route to failure.

He continued to explain that retail remains, at its root, a straightforward business that comes down to setting clear objectives, being operationally effective, and empowering colleagues to do the right thing for customers.



I found it useful to spend time networking and discussing issues and potential fixes, I always come away with new ideas/contacts etc.

-Ecommerce Director, Greenhous Group

Great opening session, thought provoking and informative presentations. Good selection of meetings based on criteria given and contacts made that will help drive my business forward.

- Head of Retail, Natural History Museum

With over **160 senior level Retailers and eCommerce professionals in attendance** the opportunity to share ideas and challenges was invaluable. Below is just a small selection of those who attended:

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|---------------------------|--|
| Aldi Stores Ltd | Group eCommerce Director |
| Astley Clarke Limited | Head of eCommerce |
| Bacardi Global Brands | Global eCommerce Director |
| Bloom & Wild | Co-Founder & CEO |
| BMW (UK) Ltd | GM Aftersales & eCommerce Development |
| Charlotte Tilbury Beauty | Head of Ecommerce - UK & EU |
| Cotton Traders Ltd | Marketing Director |
| Cute Nutrition | Director |
| Cycle Republic (Halfords) | Head of Commercial |
| delonghi group | Group eCommerce Manager |
| Dixons Carphone plc | Head of e-commerce Applications |
| Dreams plc | Head of eCommerce |
| Galvin Green | Marketing Manager |
| Gant UK Ltd | Head of Retail UK & Ireland |
| Hasbro | European eCommerce Director |
| HMV Retail Ltd | Head of eCommerce |
| Intersport UK Ltd | Head of Marketing |
| Jaguar Land Rover | Digital Customer Experience Director |
| John Lewis plc | Head of Retail Analytics & Insight |
| Ladbrokes plc | Head of Omnichannel Operations |
| Lidl UK | eCommerce Director |
| L'Occitane | Digital & CRM Director |
| Marks & Spencer | Head of International Trading |
| Matalan Retail Ltd | Senior eCommerce Trading Manager |
| Meadowhall | Retail Director |
| O2 UK plc | Head of Online Sales |
| Soak | eCommerce Director |
| Specsavers | Director of Productivity & Efficiency |
| Ted Baker Plc | Head of Retail - UK |
| The White Company | Head of Multichannel Trading |
| Toys R Us | Head of eCommerce |
| Victoria Beckham | eCommerce Director |
| Virgin Media | Head of Retail Environments & Operations |
| WHSMITH.CO.UK | eCommerce Director |

“Very useful to be able to cover relevant business topics. Good opportunity to be able to source new suppliers if you are needing new partners.” **Head of Retail, Ted Baker**

“It's a fantastic and original concept for bringing people in the industry together.” **MD, Tatty Devine**

“ found the event a useful and productive use of my time. I met some interesting people, made some good contacts and have the potential for business as a result.” **Head of Multichannel, Lifestyle Sports**

"I was very happy to attend the Forum! I think it's a great opportunity for networking and getting in touch with some of the main players of the industry, in order to share ideas and create potential business opportunities." **Marketing & Partnership Director, Lastminute.com**

Retail Service Companies

The Retail & eCommerce Directors Forum was well organised, relaxed but formal when required and well attended by the seniority expected. The venue and format worked well for retailers and partners.

- Kevin Sparks, Factfinder

Due to popular demand from retail service companies we increased the number of suppliers attending the event this year to a total of **76 Retail & eCommerce service suppliers** in attendance on the day.

This gave delegates more choice and variety when selecting the type of companies they wanted to meet with.

A handful of the companies represented include:



'Very good, well run event with some very good delegates at a high quality, suitable venue.'
Steve Turner, iAdvize

'Very worthwhile event where I was able to make a lot of relevant, new connections.'

Brad Blake, Quidco

'It was a packed day with many good conversations.' Mathieu Lavedrine, Tiny Clues

Networking on the Brabazon.....



As the forum was being held at The Belfry, we were delighted to be able to offer attendees the opportunity to play a round of golf on the World famous Brabazon golf course. Over 30 attendees participated in the activity, starting the forum with some informal networking!

Not forgetting those who would prefer to relax, we also offered delegates a chance to attend the spa at The Belfry and receive a treatment of their choice after the busy business day.



"Retailing in the era of engagement, experience, and entertainment" – Conference 2017

Delegates were also able to attend a series of break-out sessions throughout the day, each of which echoed Justin's optimistic outlook on Retail.



Rosie Wolfenden (MD, Tatty Devine) & Aron Gelbard (Bloom & Wild) spoke about breaking into a saturated Retail market by 'breaking the mould' of traditional Retail. They emphasised the need to differentiate from other players, bring something new to the market and be passionate about what you're doing. The example of their businesses shows that there are enormous opportunities in retail, for both big

and small firms.



With consumers being more comfortable than ever to buy online, there is increasing pressure on eCommerce companies to provide quick and seamless delivery.

Ian Gilmartin (Head of Retail & Wholesale business, Barclays) chaired a panel session with Fred Bassnett (Retail & Sector specialist, Department for International Trade) and Peter Scott (MD, Sprint Connect & Dixons Carphone Warehouse) addressing the effect that this subsequently has on the Retail Supply Chain.



Ian noted that the rise of online and other factors like the falling value of the pound and more changeable weather meant that supply chains needed to be nimbler than ever. He examined a number of solutions to shorter production runs, bringing production closer to home, and vertically integrating manufacturing capacity into the organisation.

Martin Squires, who heads Walgreen Boots Alliance's customer intelligence and data steam, focused on how loyalty programs needed to be reinvented for the omnichannel era. One of Martin's key themes was using data from loyalty schemes effectively so that this could be used to personalize experiences, make intelligent decisions



about how to best serve customers across channels, and to drive understanding of the needs of modern shoppers.

A whole host of other sessions explored topics including; how retailers can make use of emerging technologies such as virtual reality; the barriers and challenges facing foreign retailers coming to the UK; how shopping centres can remain relevant; and the outlook for the consumer economy.



Eddie The Eagle

As is traditional at The Retail & eCommerce Directors' Forum, we finished the business day with our Networking Gala dinner, giving attendees the chance to catch up and reflect on the day. To close the forum, we were delighted to welcome 'Eddie The Eagle Edwards' who delivered an inspiring after-dinner speech.

Eddie discussed his own personal achievements in the face of adversity, delivering the message that with passion and perseverance comes success; a message that resonated with many of the audience who are striving for success in today's challenging retail environment.

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The Retail & eCommerce Directors' Forum 2018 will be taking place on the 24th April at The Belfry hotel. If you would like further information, please contact me on the details below.

Kind regards,

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