

RETAILER SPOTLIGHT



Small store enjoys big success

Relaunching during a recession may seem risky, but a store in Derby has increased sales by 25% since converting to the Premier Express fascia. **Beth Phillips** reports

On a quiet street in an inner city suburb of Derby sits a trail-blazing convenience store.

Nalin and Maheshwari Gohill's Premier Express is the first to be opened by wholesaler Booker Cash & Carry as part of the relaunch of its symbol group fascia, which allows stores under 800 sq ft to take on the Premier name.

The Gohills and their son Barry jumped at the chance to relocate from Essex to open the 650 sq ft store, and become guinea pigs for Booker's new Express format. The store previously traded under the Happy Shopper fascia and it had seen better days.

"When we took over the store we needed to change everything," explains Nalin. "It was too old and needed new flooring, lighting, shelving, EPoS, everything. We chose Premier because we had heard good things about them - the way they help out and the good network they have."

The store reopened under the new fascia at the end of March. Despite its size, it stocks 2,000 lines - 50% more than before. These include Booker's 500 bestselling lines, identified using the new Premier Range Builder tool, which ranks products

depot. The tool selected nine essential lines, 35 Euro Shopper lines, 210 must-stock 'green ticket' lines and 246 other bestsellers.

Relaunching during the recession has not hampered sales, which are now 25% higher than before the refit, says Steve Fox, director of retail and Premier development at Booker. "The location is ideal for Premier Express," he says. "There's a lot of competition around, but when we heard that Mr Gohill was planning to invest in his store, we knew he had the commitment and we could offer him the support he needed."

Beyond the bread and milk you'd expect to find, the store stocks 11 choices of toi-

let roll, four types of kitchen roll and seven coffee brands. There's a wide selection of Polish, ethnic and Caribbean products to reflect the local community.

Newspapers and magazines are now stocked and the store also offers Pay-Point, Payzone, the National Lottery, Western Union and a cash machine. Yet it doesn't feel crowded. Elderly customers can manoeuvre mobility scooters around the store and mothers with young children don't have to leave pushchairs outside.

"New people are coming in every day," says Nalin. "Two elderly ladies told me they didn't realise there was a such a good store nearby. They came back and spent £16."

What makes the Gohills' achievement all the more impressive is that there are c-stores within 500 yards and a Somerfield five minutes away. When Somerfield closes at 8pm, however, Nalin claims customers turn to his store, which is open until 11pm every day except Sunday.

According to Fox, the store's success has been noted and more than 40 retailers have contacted Booker to enquire about the Premier Express format.

Booker will continue rolling out the new format throughout the year. Fox adds, So



Nalin and Maheshwari Gohill inside their new Premier Express store, the first opened under