



INDEPENDENT
Achievers Academy

HOW TO ASSESS, COMPARE AND IMPROVE YOUR SHOP

BENCHMARKING GUIDE

#IAA20

**“Benchmarking
has helped me
a lot. I wouldn't
have got where
I am today
without it.”**

Ferhan Ashiq
Day-Today Redburn Road,
Prestonpans



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RETAILER SUCCESS STORIES

EFFECTIVE RANGING

112%

increase in spirit sales by adding a premium range
Justin Whittaker
MJ's Premier Store

DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

+79P

basket spend by using EPoS data during range reviews
Jodi Pritchard
Londis Oaktree Road

SHOP LAYOUT

16.5%

sales increase by improving category adjacencies
Avtar Sidhu
St John's Budgens



"The IAA makes you feel good, but it also makes you want to do better. It really has benefited my business."

How the IAA connects me to success

I've been benchmarking with the Independent Achievers Academy (IAA) for five years now, and it's the learning aspect that keeps me coming back. It really has benefited my business.

I've always been impressed with the calibre of retailers taking part. It's great to see what they're doing in their stores. I love that I benefit from their wisdom and, over time, can impart some of mine.

Before I got involved in the IAA, all the store structures were in my mind. My team didn't fully understand them. As a result of taking part, the processes have been written down and are in a folder with everything my staff need to know, and can be referred to easily. It's taken a lot of pressure off me.

The IAA is different – putting

yourself and your store forward for recognition makes you feel good when you see how much you're achieving, but it also makes you want to do better.

Benchmarking is a checklist, it's brilliant. It asks me, "Do you do this?" and I think: I've always thought I should be doing this, I can and it's not difficult to do, I just need to put it in place. It helps me to identify what needs improving.

The IAA has helped me a lot, I would never have got to where I am without having benchmarked. So, if you haven't benchmarked yet, I advise you to – it'll really benefit your business.

Ferhan Ashiq
Day-Today Redburn Road,
Prestonpans

WHAT IS THE INDEPENDENT ACHIEVERS ACADEMY?

The Independent Achievers Academy (IAA) is a learning and development programme helping independent retailers grow sales and profits through benchmarking and expert advice.

The IAA is shaped by top retailers and leading suppliers to give you a framework for success you can trust. It's built on the small, smart things which, when done consistently, produce results.

Benchmarking helps you assess where you are by asking simple questions about how you operate. You can also compare yourself with like-minded retailers across the UK. Most importantly, you'll improve your offer by identifying your strengths and opportunities to move forward.

Why benchmark?

Benchmarking is designed to help you continuously improve and look at your store from a different perspective – allowing you to assess, compare and improve your business. By taking part, you will:

- 1 See how your store is performing**
By benchmarking, you could be visited by an independent assessor and receive an in-depth report on how you're performing compared with the UK average.
- 2 Identify and celebrate your strengths**
Benchmarking highlights where you are performing well and could mean being named as one of the UK's Top 100 stores – something worth celebrating!
- 3 Find opportunities for improvement**
Benchmarking helps you understand the areas where you can make improvements and provides you with focused advice to help you do so.
- 4 Connect with like-minded retailers**
Taking part in the IAA connects you with a support network of hundreds of forward-thinking retailers that want to discuss ideas and share advice.



What retailers say about the IAA...



"The IAA was a huge eye-opener for me. I completely reviewed and improved my back-office operations. Now I can concentrate on other things."

Amit Puntambekar
Ash's Shop Fenstanton (Nisa Local),
Cambridgeshire



"I didn't have the network before I took part in the IAA, but now we all help each other – like sharing advice on where to get better deals, which is invaluable."

Simon Dixon
Premier Lower Darwen,
Blackburn, Lancashire



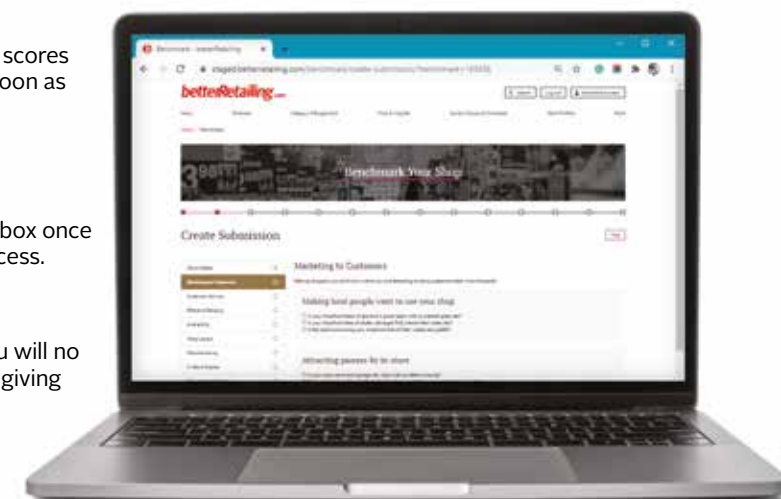
"I took part for the first time last year. I don't have a boss, so I wanted to check how I was doing. It's a great tool to assess yourself in a very real and honest way."

Samantha Ackland-Jones
The Village Deli, Storrington,
West Sussex

What's new for 2020?

We've listened to your feedback and made a number of changes, making the benchmarking process more straightforward than ever:

- 1 Immediate comparisons**
You will now be able to see how your scores compare with the 2019 average scores as soon as you have completed a category.
- 2 Faster feedback**
Your results and suggested areas for improvement will be sent directly to your inbox once you have completed the benchmarking process.
- 3 A simplified process**
If you took part in the IAA in 2019, you will no longer need to re-enter your shop details – giving you more time to focus on each category.
- 4 A new area of focus**
New for 2020 is the environmental sustainability category. A vital area where many retailers are excelling, and all need to focus on.



"Benchmarking is a great way to boost morale. My staff were so excited to be shortlisted, and the local newspaper picked up on it, which was great for footfall."

Anita Nye
Premier Eldred Drive,
Orpington, Kent



"Since benchmarking, I have completely changed how I use the space in my store. I have better displays and signage, which have made a real difference."

Maz Amin
One Stop Canterbury Stores,
Kent



"This is the fifth time we've been in the Top 100 and it's such a boost. It gives you a great sense of achievement and gives customers confidence in your store."

Meten Lakhani
St Mary's Supermarket (Premier),
Southampton

Timeline

30 NOVEMBER 2020
BENCHMARKING
CLOSES

JANUARY 2021
IN-STORE
ASSESSMENTS
TAKE PLACE

01 MARCH 2021
TOP 100 LOCAL
SHOPS RECOGNISED

15 MARCH 2021
SHORTLIST
ANNOUNCED

29 MARCH 2021
CATEGORY FINALISTS
ANNOUNCED

MAY 2021
IAA GALA
DINNER



“Benchmarking has enabled me to make improvements across my store because I’m constantly asking myself: what’s my customer thinking?”

Amrit Singh
Nisa Local High Heath, Walsall
IAA 2019 Overall Best Shop



NOT READY TO BENCHMARK YET?

We know you might not be ready just yet, so why not register at betterRetailing.com/IAA/register and we'll remind you!

This guide was written by Samantha Gunston.

We would like to thank all the IAA trade partners for their support in developing the Benchmarking Guide this year and for providing feedback on the benchmarks for each category over the past year. The content and benchmarks have been developed with support from Neli Dicheva, Kate Daw, Parin Gohil, Louise Banham, Chris Dillon, Jack Courtez, Tan Parsons and Steve Denham. We are indebted to independent retailers Ferhan Ashiq, Dave Hiscutt, Harj Dhasee, Atul Sodha, Mo Razzaq, Sue Nithyanandan, Amrit Singh, Sophie Towers, Trudy Davies and Adam Hogwood for testing the benchmarks and sharing their ideas and suggestions for improvements. Finally, our thanks go to the 2019 IAA stars and finalists for sharing their secrets of success, and to our Academy in Action retailers for sharing what they have gained from taking part.

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START YOUR JOURNEY NOW

Success is only a few steps away...



GET INVOLVED Visit betterRetailing.com/IAA and:

1 Be inspired by the best

Learn from the changes retailers involved in the IAA have made in their stores to be more successful.

2 See how we help retailers improve

Follow the Academy in Action visits to see how we support retailers and what you can apply in your store.

3 Engage with us and our partners

Follow @IAAcademy and our partners on Twitter for inspiration, and visit partners' websites for ideas.

4 BENCHMARK YOUR SHOP online, on mobile or by phone

Head to our website to use our online tool, email iaa@newtrade.co.uk to request a call back or contact us direct on **020 7689 0500**



RESOURCES

JTI Sustainability
jti.com/sustainability
@UKJTI

CCEP
cokecustomerhub.co.uk
@CocaColaEP

Mars Wrigley
gbr.mars.com
@MarsUK

BAT
bat.com
@BATPress

betterRetailing.com/IAA

Mondelez International
deliciousdisplay.co.uk
@MDLZ

Post Office
runapostoffice.co.uk
@PostOffice

JTI
jtiadvance.co.uk
@UKJTI

Suntory Beverage & Food GB&I
suntorybfe.com/gbi
@SuntoryBF_GBI

@IAAcademy

RN
@ThisIsRN

Retail Express
@RetailExpress

Vape Retailer
@Vape_Retailer

betterRetailing.com
@betterRetailing

STEP 1:

Marketing to Customers

Make an impact to attract new customers and encourage repeat visits

Marketing to customers is about standing out. What message does your shop give? Will your shop appeal to your target customer? Stand at the front of your shop and think like a customer. You need an appealing shopfront and signage that makes consumers want to go inside.

Plan for success by setting a marketing budget. Keep track, and record what works so you can make your investment work harder. Footfall is driven by making passers-by want to buy from you.

Advertise what makes you different. Do you have the new product everyone's raving about? How about a loyalty scheme? Think about implementing one, as it will encourage customers to come back, but be sure to capture contact details so you can get in touch with offers or special events.

ACADEMY IN ACTION

86%

increase in sandwich sales by using stickers to highlight meal-deal products

Following the visit, we put stickers on meal-deal items. It was really simple and had a massive effect, almost doubling sales. Getting my team to alert and upsell customers on meal deals generated a really positive response. Placing staff recommendation cards around the store was also beneficial, as customers enjoy them and this contributed to sales. The changes were simple to implement and worked really well.

Amit Puntambekar
Ash's Shop Fenstanton, Huntingdon
2019 Academy in Action Retailer

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- 1 Post videos of new and interesting things in store to build an online community.
- 2 Ask for shoppers' opinions on new introductions and tailor your choices accordingly.
- 3 Use leaflets to communicate new services you're providing. Not everyone is online.



PARTNER ADVICE

Walk your store as if you are a new customer to understand how and where shoppers instinctively go to look for what they want. By understanding shopper missions, you can influence purchases at key moments and really drive sales growth, attract new customers and increase basket spend.

Jemma Healy
Category Controller
Suntory Beverage & Food GB&I

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In association with

SUNTORY
BEVERAGE & FOOD GB&I

BENCHMARK YOUR SHOP

Benchmark online at betterRetailing.com/IAA

to see how your store compares

Tick all that you see evidence of below

Making local people want to use your shop

- ☐ Is your shopfront clean, bright and in good repair with no cracked glass etc.?
- ☐ Is your shopfront clear of clutter, damaged PoS, handwritten notes etc.?
- ☐ Is the area surrounding your shopfront free of litter, weeds and graffiti?

Attracting passers-by in store

- ☐ Is your shop name and signage etc. clear, with no letters missing?
- ☐ Does your signage clearly tell potential shoppers what you sell and how you're keeping them safe?
- ☐ Is your signage well-lit so it's easy to read at night/in poor weather, with all lights working?

Communicating your offer to your target shoppers

- ☐ Do you send out leaflets, texts or emails to locals with details of what you offer?
- ☐ Do you advertise in the local paper, community newsletter or website etc.?
- ☐ Do you send leaflets or emails to locals more than once a month and advertise every three months?

Promotions and loyalty schemes to encourage spending

- ☐ Do you have a way for shoppers to keep up to date with offers or news in store?
- ☐ Do you tailor your offers based on what your target shoppers respond to?
- ☐ Do you have a loyalty scheme and use it to gain contact details for customers?

Planning for success and measuring it

- ☐ Do you have an up-to-date plan for the marketing you will be doing this year?
- ☐ Do you have a marketing budget detailing costs for things such as advertising and print?
- ☐ Do you record what works and make changes to your plans based on this?

Your notes:

STEP 2:

Customer Service

Consider your customers' needs at every step of their in-store experience

Customer service is about more than being friendly. It's about ensuring customers feel welcome. It keeps shoppers coming back.

First impressions matter. When you enter your shop, what do you see? A bright shop sets a positive tone. Do your staff smile and make eye contact? Do they look smart? Make sure you talk to shoppers and ask staff to follow your lead.

Standards need to be clearly written down, so staff remember them. They also need regular updates on products so they can help shoppers find the items they need. Do you remember repeat customers' usual purchases? Deal with any complaints professionally so customers know they're being considered. Tell shoppers when you've made changes based on their feedback – it'll make them more loyal.

ACADEMY IN ACTION

15%

footfall increase since improving till lighting and introducing uniforms

“We had regular customers that we knew, but they didn't know us. After the visit, we added uniforms and name badges and created a professional look, and our customer bond increased. Staff are more aware of customer service practices and have more conversations now, meaning new customers return. Improving the lighting means customers can see products clearly, and sales have increased.”

Riki Mhatre
Todays News, Newcastle upon Tyne
2019 Academy in Action Retailer

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- 1 Set, clearly display and train staff on the customer service standards you expect from them.
- 2 Consistency is key. Use mystery shoppers to test and maintain your standards.
- 3 Reward staff for great service. Customer service is at the heart of our bonus scheme.



PARTNER ADVICE

“Good customer service is about making a positive first impression with a well-presented store and welcoming staff. You can create a lasting impression by being knowledgeable and helpful, and exceeding your customers' expectations. Have a set of customer service standards the team can follow including how to act on suggestions and handle complaints.”

Nigel Parry
Retail Operations Manager
Post Office

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BENCHMARK YOUR SHOP

Benchmark online at betterRetailing.com/IAA

to see how your store compares

Tick all that you see evidence of below

Presenting your staff and shop professionally

- ☐ Is your shop floor clean, presentable and well-lit, with clear floor signage for social distancing?
- ☐ Are you and your staff dressed professionally, with easy-to-read name badges and the relevant PPE?
- ☐ Are your aisles clear of clutter, stock waiting to be put on shelves and rubbish?

Engaging with customers so they feel welcome

- ☐ Do staff greet customers with eye contact and a smile?
- ☐ Is your queuing system clearly communicated and managed so customers are served quickly and safely?
- ☐ Do staff get to know customers' names and engage in conversation with them?

Setting the standard and sticking to it

- ☐ Do you have customer service standards in place?
- ☐ Are your customer service standards written down and shared with staff so they know your expectations?
- ☐ Do you check to ensure standards are upheld and staff are going the extra mile?

Handling suggestions and complaints

- ☐ Do staff apologise and try to make things right when a customer complains?
- ☐ Do you have a process to record customer suggestions or complaints, including when to escalate them?
- ☐ Do you make changes based on what customers suggest or complain about?

Anticipating and exceeding customer expectations

- ☐ Do staff get to know customers' needs by asking for feedback?
- ☐ Do staff openly offer help to customers with things like packing their bags?
- ☐ Do staff know what you sell so they can advise and show customers where something is?

Your notes:

STEP 3:

Effective Ranging

Satisfy target shoppers by stocking a mix of bestselling, core, niche and new products

Think about your target customers and ensure your range encourages return visits.

You need an attractive product mix. Start with a core range that gives shoppers choices that suit their budgets. Balance growth with margin. A good range may comprise 80% bestsellers and 20% new lines.

Analyse sales data to identify slow sellers, but check for a reason: is it the location, price or something else? Think carefully before delisting: is there a high-spending customer who will stop shopping with you if you don't stock it? Whatever you replace it with should have a margin that meets your long-term goal.

Look for new products by visiting other shops and work with suppliers to ensure they're successful. Consider each product you stock. Always think: will it sell?

ACADEMY IN ACTION

5%
year-on-year increase
in soft drinks sales
since reviewing
the range

The visit was insightful, and CCEP worked with me to analyse my EPoS data. We identified our bestsellers and tweaked our range, which led to a year-on-year increase. I added a multibuy promotion on CCEP low- and no-sugar 500ml products, and used social media to shout about new lines, such as Coca-Cola Energy. As a result, social media engagement went up by 20%.

Ranj Hayer
Hayes Meadvale, Weston-super-Mare
2019 Academy in Action Retailer

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- 1 Drill into your EPoS data to understand sales by price range. It's helped us range far better.
- 2 Always look out for new trends that fit your demographic. They give your store a USP.
- 3 Carry out a range review every three or four weeks. Scrutinise it and delist slow sellers.



PARTNER ADVICE

To meet shopper demands and drive sales, retailers need to get their core, bestselling range right, while also adding excitement through stocking the right NPD. For example, zero- and lower-calorie soft drinks and new flavours of popular brands should be stocked alongside regular varieties to offer clear choices to shoppers.

Heidi Vossen-Barnes
Senior Manager, Convenience & Wholesale
Coca-Cola European Partners

In association with



BENCHMARK YOUR SHOP

Benchmark online at betterRetailing.com/IAA

to see how your store compares

Tick all that you see evidence of below

Ensuring a strong core range and reviewing it regularly

- ☐ Do you have a list of everything in your core range?
- ☐ Do you review and update your core range at least six times a year?
- ☐ Does your core range give shoppers three choices, e.g. value, own brand, known brand?

Analysing sales data and deciding when to delist

- ☐ Do you have a way to understand your best and worst sellers?
- ☐ Do you measure the overall margin on best and worst sellers?
- ☐ Do you check why or what is brought with a product before delisting?

Identifying new and niche products to stock

- ☐ Do you look for new or niche products to stock in trade magazines?
- ☐ Do you visit other retailers to spot new products to stock?
- ☐ Do you have a minimum percentage margin on a product before deciding to stock it?

Understanding customer preferences

- ☐ Do you have a comments box or similar for shoppers to suggest new products?
- ☐ Do you have a process to decide when to introduce a requested product?
- ☐ Do staff ask customers if there is anything you don't sell which they'd like you to?

Planning and measuring success

- ☐ Do you encourage your team to upsell on key items to ensure their success?
- ☐ Do you measure the stock turn of the products you sell?
- ☐ Do you have a long-term plan for how you will increase your sales and margins?

Your notes:

STEP 4:

Availability

Monitor sales and stock to have the products customers want, when they want them

Availability is the result of good processes. Research shows getting it right grows sales.

It starts with a written target. 'Ninety-five per cent' means having fewer than one in 20 products out of stock at any time. Your staff need to know it to ensure you hit it regularly.

Look at your shelves – are there gaps? If there are, consider the reasons behind them and what measures you have in place to avoid them. Learn from past events and think: could you do more?

Gap checks and minimum stock levels are the next step. Fresh categories need extra attention to avoid waste. Learn patterns of demand and work with suppliers so they alert you to opportunities. Plan for seasonal events and weather changes to ensure the right products are there when customers need them.

ACADEMY IN ACTION

5%

increase in sales since introducing daily gap scans

“ Since the visit, we have started carrying out daily gap scans – so we can identify bestsellers and order out-of-stock items immediately – which has resulted in sales increasing by 5%. Using shelf labelling has also helped to identify low stock levels during gap scans, and my sales have increased due to this. Staff have more responsibility and are more vigilant, and we're getting in new customers as a result.

Rana Ali
Spar Store Errol, Perth
2019 Academy in Action Retailer

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- 1 Identify risk areas and constantly check the integrity of your stock file to improve ordering.
- 2 Don't be afraid to override the system, depending on weather or local events.
- 3 Have backups in place if a product is out of stock or you need an urgent refill.



PARTNER ADVICE

“ Availability isn't simply about stock levels – although that's also crucial. Consumers make purchase decisions based on what they can see and what appeals to them most. Having the right range in store will boost impulse sales and strong availability will drive sales in every store.

Lauren George
Brand & Trade PR Manager
Mars Wrigley

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In association with

MARS WRIGLEY

BENCHMARK YOUR SHOP

Benchmark online at betterRetailing.com/IAA

to see how your store compares

Tick all that you see evidence of below

Setting availability targets and monitoring success

- ☐ Do you have an availability target?
- ☐ Is the target 95% or higher?
- ☐ Do you regularly (five days or more each week) hit or exceed your target?

Day-to-day management and checks

- ☐ Do you have minimum stock levels for items in your core range?
- ☐ Do you have a way of identifying your core range in store to make checks easier?
- ☐ Do you do gap checks every four hours to find any out-of-stocks?

Avoiding overstocking and waste

- ☐ Do you have a process for rotating stock so the oldest products sell first?
- ☐ Do you analyse data and adjust your orders so perishable items aren't overstocked?
- ☐ Do you perform a stock take on every category once a month and check it corresponds with your records?

Managing suppliers and deliveries

- ☐ Do you have a calendar of when you need to place orders and when deliveries are expected?
- ☐ Do you have backup plans in place in case what you order is out of stock or doesn't arrive?
- ☐ Do you book everything in and persistently follow up with suppliers to get the items you need?

Planning ahead so new and seasonal items are available

- ☐ Do you plan ahead so seasonal items are available in good time?
- ☐ Do you use previous sales to help plan what you will sell and order accordingly?
- ☐ Do you monitor events and the weather so you have the items you need in time?

Your notes:

STEP 5:

Shop Layout

Design your store and coordinate categories to make it easy to shop

Creating the right feel and highlighting key categories will make shopping a better experience and drive sales. Stand at the entrance to your shop: is it easy to work out where to go?

Have you considered the shopper missions you want to offer? Categories need to be arranged to guide customers. But signage, layout and lighting should entice them to visit sections.

Does your layout help staff? Tills should give an all-encompassing view of the shop. It will help anticipate queues. Aisles need to provide easy access for restocking without getting in the customer's way. Shoppers should be able to buy what they want without feeling overwhelmed or confused. Create a realistic shopping list and test how easy it is to navigate.

ACADEMY IN ACTION

20%

increase in alcohol sales since improving the fixture's lighting

“After the visit, we highlighted our frozen meal deal with PoS, which customers now take advantage of. They also notice our alcohol more now we've improved the fixture's lighting. We moved our gin selection to a higher shelf, making it more visible, and experienced a 30% sales increase, and we reviewed the shopper journey, introducing new lines to encourage customers to explore the store.

Steven Mahal
Arnold Road Stores, Nottingham
2019 Academy in Action Retailer

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- 1 Review your layout every few months to ensure you're keeping it relevant.
- 2 Position what you're known for in eye-catching locations to ensure products get noticed.
- 3 Think about what your customers want and come up with solutions to suit them.



#IAA20

In association with

RETAIL EXPRESS



2019 IAA Category Star Ferhan Ashiq
(below with friend Rascia and Brad Burton),
Day-Today Redburn Road

PARTNER ADVICE

“When thinking about shop layout, it's important to consider it through the eyes of your customer. It's vital to ensure they have enough space to feel safe. Making their life easier by grouping complementary categories together makes shopping with you a better experience and encourages them to spend more.

Megan Humphrey
Editor
Retail Express

BENCHMARK YOUR SHOP

Benchmark online at betterRetailing.com/IAA

to see how your store compares

Tick all that you see evidence of below

Ensuring the shop is comfortable and accessible

- ☐ Are all parts of the shop easy to access with social distancing guidelines in place to ensure safety?
- ☐ Do you have space for shoppers to dwell so they feel comfortable?
- ☐ Do you signpost areas of your shop to guide customers on their journey?

Arranging categories to guide shoppers through their journey

- ☐ Do you place complementary categories next to each other to guide shoppers?
- ☐ Do you have offers such as meal deals to encourage additional spend?
- ☐ Do you have sales targets for each category and record your progress against them?

Making your layout work for you

- ☐ Does your till area give your employees a good view of the entrance and shop floor?
- ☐ Do you have a storage area for deliveries so boxes don't have to be stored on the shop floor?
- ☐ Do you have a plan for the journey you want customers to take around your shop?

Equipping your shop with appropriate fixtures and lighting

- ☐ Do you have the right type of fixtures for the products you sell?
- ☐ Are all of your shop fixtures and fittings clean and working?
- ☐ Do all of your lights work and do they showcase your products?

Reviewing and improving your shop layout

- ☐ Do you have an up-to-date drawing of your shop layout?
- ☐ Do your staff walk your shop as a customer with a list and check how easy it is to navigate?
- ☐ Do you review your layout at least twice a year and implement improvements?

Your notes:

STEP 6:

Merchandising

Promote and price your products consistently to increase sales

Merchandising is about making buying decisions simpler for the shopper. Stand in front of a display: can you make a decision easily? The better your items are displayed on the shelf, the more you will sell.

Imagine you have come into your shop for the first time. If you quickly find footfall-drivers, and your high-margin items are at eye level, then your merchandising is working.

Facing-up products regularly helps shoppers find what they want. The way you group items, secondary sitings of products on offer and cross-merchandising, will influence impulse purchases. This is underpinned by clean shelves, clear pricing and labels. Get ideas and planograms from suppliers, but watch what shoppers do. If you spot a pattern that presents an opportunity, tweak it, but don't lose your discipline.

ACADEMY IN ACTION

£300

monthly saving in wastage by facing-up products

“ Since the visit, we reviewed all categories and delisted lines that weren't selling. By grouping meat and salad products together in the same chiller, salad sales increased by 50%. We also gave staff more responsibility for merchandising, like facing-up and checking sell-by dates. This has decreased the number of out-of-date products on the shelves, and saves approximately £300 a month in wastage.

Marty Uppal

Fixby Stores, Huddersfield
2019 Academy in Action Retailer

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- 1 Increase facings on bestselling items and adapt planograms to suit your customers.
- 2 Cross-merchandise products to provide a complete meal solution for shoppers.
- 3 Make the most of promotional dump bins, especially for seasonal events like Christmas.



#IAA20

In association with

Vape Retailer



2019 IAA Category Star Chris Tomes (below with Brad Burton), Costcutter & The Food Shop, Swanage, Dorset

PARTNER ADVICE

“ Great merchandising is all about consistency. Clear labels help customers to locate the products they want, and clear pricing gives them confidence in purchasing from your store. Attract additional spend through cross-category promotions and put high-margin products at eye level to encourage trading up and increase profitability.

Chris Dillon
Editor
Vape Retailer

BENCHMARK YOUR SHOP

Benchmark online at betterRetailing.com/IAA

to see how your store compares

Tick all that you see evidence of below

Arranging products on the shelf to guide purchasing decisions

- ☐ Do you group products so shoppers can make quick decisions on what to buy?
- ☐ Do you use planograms or guidelines to ensure you have the right products in the right places?
- ☐ Do you put high-margin items at eye level to maximise profit?

Ensuring everything is priced in a consistent way

- ☐ Does every product in your shop have an easy-to-read price or shelf-edge label?
- ☐ Are price tags up to date, professional and tailored to your customer base?
- ☐ Do you have a strategy to ensure every price makes sense to shoppers?

Promotions to encourage additional purchases

- ☐ Do you use supplier promotional materials to highlight offers?
- ☐ Do you have secondary sitings for items on promotion?
- ☐ Do you cross-merchandise categories to gain linked sales?

Having appropriate checks in place to ensure excellence

- ☐ Do your staff face-up products and check sell-by dates at least once a day?
- ☐ Do you have merchandising guidelines for staff to follow?
- ☐ Do you or a supervisor conduct checks so you know standards are being upheld?

Research, review and improvement

- ☐ Do you watch what shoppers do in store and adapt displays to grow sales?
- ☐ Do you adapt the number of facings you allow products based on sales reports?
- ☐ Do you check which adjacencies are working and make adjustments?

Your notes:

STEP 7:

In-store Display

Use imaginative product displays to inspire customers to pick up extra items

Walk your shop and note what you see and sense: does it make you want to buy? Think like a customer: do your displays make you want to pick up more items?

Add interest by creating eye-catching displays in high-traffic areas such as aisle ends and at the front of your shop. You want customers to pick up items as soon as they enter. Displays can support local events, new seasons or new products, but can't make it difficult to walk your shop.

Make the most of suppliers' marketing initiatives and rotate promotions to give shoppers a more exciting experience. Set targets and measure results.

New products can fail because people don't see them. Consider running trials, tastings and product giveaways to attract customers' attention, but be disciplined about how many items you promote.

ACADEMY IN ACTION

5%

sales increase in confectionery and biscuits since remerchandising

“After the visit, we placed a sign highlighting locally sourced products and used word of mouth to promote the category to help drive sales. Working with Mondelez to redesign my chocolate and biscuit category by placing bestsellers at eye level and stocking a wider range of market-leading products created a bigger impact. Relocating bestsellers increased sales by almost £200, with customers noticing the display more.

Rahul Odedra

Upton St Leonards Post Office, Gloucester
2019 Academy in Action Retailer

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- 1 Work with your suppliers to provide provenance stories and tasting notes in store.
- 2 Create meaningful theatre, like product giveaways, so customers can touch and taste the product.
- 3 Group products in aspirational displays, e.g. 'Everything you need for a curry night'.



PARTNER ADVICE

“Great displays are essential because many purchase decisions are made in store. There are two key principles – make your display easy to shop, so customers can quickly and easily find what they are looking for; and inspire consumers to buy through displays that stand out.

Susan Nash
Trade Communications Manager
Mondelez International

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In association with

Mondelez
International
SNACKING MADE RIGHT



BENCHMARK YOUR SHOP

Benchmark online at betterRetailing.com/IAA

to see how your store compares

Tick all that you see evidence of below

Arranging products in impactful point-of-purchase displays

- ☐ Do you have impulse displays at the ends of aisles or by your tills that change each month?
- ☐ Is the signage around your promotions simple to read and attention-grabbing?
- ☐ Do you rotate promotions around the shop after two weeks, and change them after four?

Using theatre in displays to grab customers' attention

- ☐ Do you have inspirational displays in high-traffic areas?
- ☐ Do you use sensory prompts, such as aromas, special lighting or sound, to entice shoppers to buy?
- ☐ Do you highlight specialist products e.g. 'Try me, I'm new!' or 'Sourced locally'?

Planning in-store opportunities to maximise results

- ☐ Do you create excitement by running trials, tastings or product giveaways?
- ☐ Do you have a record of the events (e.g. World Cup) that are important to your shoppers that you plan to support?
- ☐ Do you have a budget to support planning and creating in-store theatre?

Working with suppliers to maximise impact

- ☐ Do you coordinate your displays with supplier promotions/activity?
- ☐ Do you find out from suppliers what works and doesn't work?
- ☐ Do you ask suppliers about products so you can give shoppers extra information?

Recording what works and using it to improve

- ☐ Do you set targets for your displays?
- ☐ Do you keep a record of results and what has worked?
- ☐ Do you use the results to decide what to do with future displays?

Your notes:

STEP 8:

Responsible Retailing

Protect staff and shoppers through standards, legislation and reducing crime

Compliance with legislation and regulations is important. Think about the legal and ethical side of your business – are you doing all you can? Walk your shop and check all your signage is up to date. It shows staff you run a reputable business and customers that they can trust you.

It's important to take a stand against crime and to do what you can to improve the safety of your community. Know your local MP and police officers, be a part of neighbourhood watch schemes and link up with nearby businesses to respond to crime together.

Give staff the tools they need and be relentless in setting a good example. Report illicit sales in nearby shops. Train staff to spot and deal with thieves to protect them in the event of an attack. Continually remind and test your team about following regulations such as age-restricted sales.

ACADEMY IN ACTION

18%

higher rate of refusals following staff training

“After the visit, we implemented a log demonstrating all our refusals, which is now kept up to date and checked weekly, making us more organised and aware of underage sales. We started using supplier websites to read up on new and upcoming legislation, and we started talking to customers about the upcoming menthol ban. Becoming more responsible helped us become a better retailer.”

Alan Mannings

Shop on the Green, Chartham, Kent
2019 Academy in Action Retailer

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- 1 Staff training includes post office and age-restricted products to protect staff and shoppers.
- 2 Help people with disabilities feel safe by closing the store for them while they shop.
- 3 Lower food waste by recording and learning what stock is reduced and wasted.



PARTNER ADVICE

“A key aspect of successful independent retailing is ensuring it is carried out responsibly. From providing thorough staff training on legislation and ensuring age-restricted goods are sold correctly, to reporting illicit tobacco activity and antisocial behaviour – retailers play an important role in supporting their community.”

Sarah Connor
Communications Manager
JTI UK

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BENCHMARK YOUR SHOP

Benchmark online at betterRetailing.com/IAA

to see how your store compares

Tick all that you see evidence of below

Eliminating underage sales using the Think 25 scheme

- ☐ Do you have signage around the shop about the sale of age-restricted products?
- ☐ Do your staff ask for proof of age, keep a log of refusals, and do you check and sign it weekly?
- ☐ Do you carry out refresher training for your team every month and have a signed log of this?

Minimising theft and ensuring staff feel safe

- ☐ Do you keep high-value products in secure or highly visible locations?
- ☐ Do you have visible CCTV or a robust security system like security tagging?
- ☐ Do you train staff on how to spot thieves and have records to support this?

Working with the police to report and reduce crime

- ☐ Do you know your local councillors and MPs?
- ☐ Do you have a written plan in place for how staff should deal with and share details of different crimes?
- ☐ Do you have meetings at least twice a year with your local MP to discuss crime and issues including illicit sales?

Obeying legislation so staff and customers are protected

- ☐ Do you only stock certified and/or food safety approved products?
- ☐ Do you have a food hygiene rating (if you are not exempt) of four or more?
- ☐ Do you have written records of the regulations you comply with, like accident books?

Improving safety in your community

- ☐ Are you part of a local neighbourhood watch scheme or similar?
- ☐ Do you share details of the antisocial behaviour you experience with the police and other local businesses?
- ☐ Do you host crime prevention events to educate your community on improving safety?

Your notes:

STEP 9:

Staff Development

Create a thriving team by training, developing and rewarding staff

Happy, empowered staff means happier customers that spend more. Think about how you manage your team – are you encouraging their best efforts?

Things can go wrong when staff don't understand what's expected. Prepare a staff plan with everything that needs to happen each day. Detail who's responsible for tasks so everyone has a purpose.

Share your vision and challenge poor performance. Teach staff how to handle complaints. Develop an induction plan to give new staff what they need to be successful. Your team are the face of your business, and need to know and uphold your values.

Good people are motivated by responsibility and need to be developed to get the best out of them. Set a framework, but give them the freedom to make it their own.

ACADEMY IN ACTION

2

new team members hired by staff playing a bigger role in recruitment

“After the visit, I empowered my store manager to take responsibility for the IAA benchmarking and finding improvements. By involving him more in recruitment, he found two new team members through people he knew, telling them about the range of skills learnt working in a shop. Now, I'm working on implementing a rewards scheme for staff who have taken accountability for the sales performance in their areas.

Anil Pankhania

Nisa Local Craven Road, London
2019 Academy in Action Retailer

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- 1 Performance-linked bonuses and monthly appraisals make staff happier, reducing staff turnover.
- 2 Creating supervisor roles and paying a little more means I have time to focus on the business.
- 3 Embed a culture of continuous learning, with regular training, to increase buy-in and productivity.



PARTNER ADVICE

“Excellent customer service combined with a fantastic shopping experience delivers growth and ensures customers keep coming back. Staff are the most valuable asset any store has, driving sales and giving customers the experience they deserve. The importance of encouraging and truly investing in staff cannot be overstated.

Frederik Svenson
General Manager
British American Tobacco UK & Ireland

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BENCHMARK YOUR SHOP

Benchmark online at betterRetailing.com/IAA

to see how your store compares

Tick all that you see evidence of below

Having the correct paperwork so staff know what's expected

- ☐ Do you have rotas to assign staff to general tasks around the shop?
- ☐ Are basic processes like temperature checks, cleaning schedules, cashing up etc. documented?
- ☐ Do all staff have up-to-date job descriptions that your staff buy into?

Training and inductions to ensure staff can fulfil their roles

- ☐ Do you teach staff the importance of things like body language and creating conversation with shoppers?
- ☐ Do you train staff on your range, bestselling products and the needs of your typical customers?
- ☐ Do you have an induction plan covering health and safety (including social distancing), age-restricted sales and food hygiene?

Rewarding and recognising staff to get the best out of them

- ☐ Do you watch staff so you can notice things they do well and praise them?
- ☐ Do you have a process to reward staff for great performance or customer service?
- ☐ Do you encourage staff to come up with ideas, and introduce the best ones?

Reviewing and developing staff to fulfil their potential

- ☐ Do you review staff performance and provide feedback every six months?
- ☐ Do you have development plans in place for staff so they learn new skills?
- ☐ Do you invest in professional training such as NVQs so staff can progress their career?

Day-to-day processes to ensure smooth operations

- ☐ Are your rotas planned with four days' notice for staff?
- ☐ Do you cross-train staff so you have cover in periods of absence?
- ☐ Do you have daily check-ins and handovers between shifts?

Your notes:

STEP 10:

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Service to the Community

Contribute to your local area to increase awareness and drive loyalty

As an independent business, you need to be there for your community. It will increase awareness of your store.

Think about how you support your community: are you doing the things they want? Ask shoppers what matters to them and support things that fit your passions.

Do you offer helpful services and is this information online so new people can discover your shop? Can you support local events or find a way to thank your customers? Consider supporting a local school or organisation by donating product or time.

Have a plan, work with suppliers and write down objectives to ensure success. Keep track of what gets the biggest response and learn from it. Share your hard work with local press to get free coverage, and put photos and videos on social media.



ACADEMY IN ACTION

£2k

per week sales increase by posting about community and store activity

Following the visit, we donated fruit, snacks and water for a school trip, and have worked on ways to continue our support. Regular posts on Facebook about our work in the community helped us get noticed and has increased sales by £2,000 a week. We also trialled a free delivery service to elderly customers, which helped us understand them on a more personal level, which we will be continuing.

Arjan Singh Rhoud

Morley Convenience Store, Leeds
2019 Academy in Action Retailer

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- 1 Create a space for your community to meet and help tackle issues important to them.
- 2 Offer your time – we offer a tradesmen advisory service, to give a second opinion on quotes.
- 3 Confront key issues, we're tackling intergenerational understanding through joint litter-picks.



In association with

RN

YOUR SHOP

Benchmark online at betterRetailing.com/IAA

to see how your store compares

Tick all that you see evidence of below

Offering services to make you a one-stop shop

- ☐ Do you offer helpful services such as mobile top-ups, bill payments or home delivery?
- ☐ Do you offer premium services such as bag packing or a free-to-use ATM?
- ☐ Do you work with other businesses to offer services such as parcel pick-up/drop-off or dry cleaning?

Being generous through charity work and fundraising

- ☐ Do you collect donations for local charities/good causes?
- ☐ Do you or your staff take part in community fundraising events like fun runs or virtual charity events?
- ☐ Do you work with suppliers to organise or donate product to local events or organisations?

Supporting and promoting local initiatives or campaigns

- ☐ Do you promote local initiatives through a community noticeboard or social media posts?
- ☐ Do you regularly support a local school, food bank, club, society or organisation?
- ☐ Do you or your staff volunteer their time to help local organisations or campaigns?

Planning and budgeting to ensure success

- ☐ Do you have a plan for the initiatives, events and campaigns you will back?
- ☐ Do you have processes in place for how you will contribute to your community?
- ☐ Do you have a budget to support local initiatives, events and campaigns?

Sharing successes so your hard work is noticed

- ☐ Do you share how much you raised in store and thank people for their generosity?
- ☐ Do you share photos and videos of the events you take part in on social media?
- ☐ Do you get free coverage in local papers or websites by sharing what you've done?

Your notes:

PARTNER ADVICE

Ensuring your store is at the heart of the community is vital and its value cannot be overestimated. Start by finding out what local issues and causes are important, and get involved with what you feel most passionate about. This will likely make the biggest impact – both for your community and your business.

Jack Courtez
Editor
RN

Digital Engagement

Use technology, data and digital tools to keep up with the modern consumer

Think about technology: are you using it to enhance the experience online and in store? New technologies will constantly come up and you need to decide what's right for you. Can contactless payment reduce queue time? Would online ordering increase sales? Can electronic labels or staff sign-in systems improve efficiency?

Your shop needs to be easy to find on Google. Information needs to be up to date and give confidence in your shop.

Think of your customers and choose the right social media platform for them. Posts should be engaging – share the benefits of a new product instead of just special offers. Use photos of your team to bring to life your store's experience. Data helps you understand your business. Using and analysing it can help with your strategy and unlock future profits.



ACADEMY IN ACTION

25

Google My Business views in the first week

“While we had a good customer base, the action plan helped us understand how we can use social media to reach a bigger audience. After the visit, we updated and added photos to our Google My Business page, resulting in increased views. We linked our Facebook and Instagram accounts, which saved us time and meant posts reached a bigger audience, and personalising posts meant they had a bigger impact.

Hardev Ruprai

Ruprai Food & Wines, Birmingham
2019 Academy in Action Retailer

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- 1 Use digital tools strategically and really think about how they can drive sales for your store.
- 2 Be imaginative with your social media posts and try to include a way to buy directly from them.
- 3 Simplify the user experience where you can – for example, our app takes just three clicks to pay.



PARTNER ADVICE

“An online presence is vital to being visible to new customers and cannot be ignored. Take control of your Google page and ensure it makes your store easy to discover and worth visiting. Understanding data is crucial to your long-term success. Use it well and you'll be able to see what's working and increase profitability.

Steve Denham
Associate Editor
betterRetailing.com

YOUR SHOP

Benchmark online at betterRetailing.com/IAA

to see how your store compares

Tick all that you see evidence of below

Ensuring customers can easily find out about you online

- ☐ Can you easily find your shop details online, along with opening hours and high-quality photos?
- ☐ Are there positive reviews of your shop from customers on sites such as Google or TripAdvisor?
- ☐ Do you respond to online reviews to show people you're taking their comments on board?

Connecting with customers and suppliers through social media

- ☐ Do you post on sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or LinkedIn every day?
- ☐ Do you post engaging content and photos in order to start conversations?
- ☐ Do you have a strategy of who you want to engage with and how?

Offering alternative options and simpler ways to buy

- ☐ Do you have express payment facilities such as contactless or Apple Pay?
- ☐ Can customers buy online or over the phone with you for collection or delivery?
- ☐ Do you have or use an app where customers can view and buy from your store?

Enhancing the shopping experience

- ☐ Do you offer free Wi-Fi for your customers and tell them about it?
- ☐ Do you use technology like digital screens to showcase products and offers and attract customers in store?
- ☐ Do you use technology like touchscreens or videos to make buying from you a better experience?

Understanding your business and customers with data

- ☐ Do you collect data on your customers and store it responsibly?
- ☐ Do you analyse the data so you can better understand them?
- ☐ Do you use this information to make decisions about the strategy of your shop?

Your notes:

STEP 12:

Environmental Sustainability

Minimise your store's impact on the environment to show you care, and create loyalty

Running a more sustainable business is now an important part of retailing. It's become vital to stand out as a store that does its best to minimise its effect on the environment.

Start by thinking about how you can reduce the amount of packaging you use. If you sell coffee, encourage customers to use their own cups. If you sell fruit and veg, think of what you can sell loose without decreasing quality and whether there are alternative solutions.

Efficiency is a challenge. Consider how you can reduce waste – can you repurpose bruised fruit into a juice drink instead of throwing it out? Is there a way to simplify deliveries to reduce emissions? Are you using renewable energy where possible? Talk to your customers about what's important to them and take steps to reflect this.

ACADEMY IN ACTION

14%

increase in sales of free-from products by highlighting with stickers

“After discussing innovation at the visit, we increased social media posts. Engagement on one summer promotion post was more than four times that on a post earlier in the year and sales almost doubled. Implementing a colour-coded system to highlight free-from products enabled the team to better help customers, and moving our breakfast range closer to the till increased sales by 17%.

Meten Lakhani
St Mary's Supermarket, Southampton
2019 Academy in Action Retailer

SECRETS OF SUCCESS

- 1 Encourage customers to bring in their own containers for products to reduce waste.
- 2 Tackle period and hygiene poverty by setting up a scheme called Bags of Confidence.
- 3 Start stocking a lot more local produce, such as eggs, to reduce food miles.



PARTNER ADVICE

“Sustainability continues to evolve and is now integral to how your business operates.

Whether it's through waste reduction in store, packaging alternatives or looking at ways to reduce emissions, setting an example by minimising environmental impact will play a key role in the future success of independent stores.

Ruth Forbes
Head of Responsible Business Projects
JTI UK

In association with

JTI
SUSTAINABILITY

BENCHMARK YOUR SHOP

Benchmark online at betterRetailing.com/IAA

to see how your store compares

Tick all that you see evidence of below

Limiting packaging and using plastic alternatives

- ☐ Do you separate and recycle all packaging (e.g. cardboard or plastic) in store from any food waste?
- ☐ Do you sell fruit and vegetables loose and/or in recyclable or compostable packaging?
- ☐ Do you work with suppliers to reduce the amount of non-recyclable packaging used in your store?

Reducing food waste effectively

- ☐ Do you have a price-reduction procedure to sell items instead of throwing them out?
- ☐ Are you creative (use as ingredients or donate to food banks/charities) with items nearing their sell-by date?
- ☐ Do you know your waste percentage, and have you worked to reduce it over the past 12 months?

Lowering your store's carbon footprint

- ☐ Do you have energy-efficient equipment like LED lights or fridges with doors?
- ☐ Do you work with your suppliers to ensure deliveries to your store are as economical as possible?
- ☐ Are you using renewable energy sources and taking steps to reduce the use of non-renewable energy?

Helping shoppers to reuse and recycle

- ☐ Do you offer facilities for your customers to recycle things like cardboard, batteries or clothing?
- ☐ Do you urge shoppers to bring their own carrier bags and offer alternatives like bags for life?
- ☐ Do you encourage customers to bring in their own containers for items and/or offer refillable products?

Planning, measuring and shouting about your success

- ☐ Do you share details of your experiences and successes so your community and/or peers can learn from you?
- ☐ Do you assess the effectiveness of the actions you have taken so you can make changes based on what works?
- ☐ Do you have a written sustainability plan in place to help reduce your store's impact on the environment?

Your notes:

JTi
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