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Difference - Locally charities, and was very recently elected to the Nisa-Today's board.

Despite all, he has agreed to visit our retailer's store and will report back. I'll bet there are a lot of post offices out there that could do with some guidance.

### Lady luck isn't shining for these two retailers

Remember those horrendous floods in 2007? **GRO** who run Toll Bar Post Office in Toll Bar, Doncaster, will never be able to forget. During that drenching summer their store was ruined.

Nine months later, during preparation for re-opening, **GRO** contacted Camelot to ask if it was possible to have a terminal. They had previously sold scratchcards and had been told that they had one of the highest sales for that size of post office. Her request, however, was refused, she thinks on the basis that the area was sufficiently covered. She says: "Imagine my surprise, anger and disgust when I passed a store, which is around nine-tenths of a mile from my

**Remember those horrendous floods in 2007? Jenny and John Jackson who run Toll Bar Post Office, Doncaster, will never be able to forget. During that drenching summer their store was ruined**

store and only two-tenths of a mile from a store already with lottery, and had now been given a terminal. I think I have been discriminated against."

She set out her points in a letter to Camelot and has sent me the company's reply. It says it has reviewed her enquiry carefully in order to respond properly. But in the end it reverts to its party line that "each selection is made using a wide-ranging list of criteria including: geographical demographic; density of population; footfall; and sales, among others".

It cannot be that her shop is not good enough. She is short-listed as one of nine regional winners in the Blakemore/Landmark/Lifestyle National Retailer of the year competition.

**GRO** says: "We did have to rebuild the store, so we took the opportunity to knock walls down and modernise the store/post office. Prior to the flood we were receiving deliveries from Blakemore, but not as a member of the symbol group Lifestyle Express. As part of our plans to reopen 'bigger, brighter, better', we thought the business needed the professional image of a symbol group. Lifestyle Express came top as far as we were

concerned. Landmark/Lifestyle did help a lot in preparation for the opening. They advised on shop layout, merchandised stock, fitted window vinyls and signage. They also supported and helped with our grand re-opening day, in providing raffle prizes, samples and tastings."

I wonder if she'll have any luck if Richard Branson winds up as major Camelot shareholder (as rumoured)? There is an 80% stake up for sale.

### A question mark over Horizon's IT

There is just room here to report that *Computer Weekly*, which has been closely following the problems subpostmasters claim to be suffering over their Horizon accounting system, says that "a sub-postmistress accused of theft from the Post Office has had her case postponed to allow experts time to investigate the accounting IT system at her branch".

The report adds: "Seema Misra, postmistress at the West Byfleet Post Office in Surrey, is accused of one count of theft of £74,000. She claims the IT system may have caused the account deficit."

### think tank

## Make a change for the better



### Have your say...

Are you going to alter the way you do business in 2010? Tell us at [www.thegrocer.co.uk/independents](http://www.thegrocer.co.uk/independents)

### **GRO** from HIM Research & Consulting has some new year tips for retailers

The start of a new year gives businesses a great opportunity to take stock, and HIM Research & Consulting's feedback from its interviews with 20,000 convenience store shoppers provides a good starting point.

- **Health** - 22% of c-store customers told HIM that they would use a particular store more if it offered more healthy options, while 20% would like to see added low-fat options and 12% would like more low-salt products.
- **Breakfast** - This remains a huge untapped opportunity as 21% of c-store customers are there to buy items to eat

immediately. Of those customers on a food-for-now mission, 50% were buying items to eat/drink for a snack between meals, whereas only 8% were buying something for breakfast. Offering bakery products, fruit salad pots, yogurts and so on could be a way to capture this market.

- **Going green** - 34% of shoppers said they would be encouraged to reuse their carrier bags if a store charged for its single-use bags.
- **Basics** - newspapers, bread and milk are essential basket items, yet we are still seeing slippage in these categories. The most important thing to a

c-store shopper is availability so it is crucial that these items are available at all times.

- **Fresh** - being credible in fresh will improve your customers' overall perception of your store. It will also help to attract women on a top-up mission and lead to sales in categories such as household and health and beauty.
- **Meal for tonight** - only 4% of c-store shoppers are on a meal for tonight mission and one in three of these do not know what they're going to buy, so try making some suggestions.
- **Events** - make the most of all sporting and big calendar events by planning ahead.

- **Speed of service** - this has become even more important to shoppers, significantly jumping up 9% from 2008. Yet as almost one in five sales staff would like to receive more training, most notably in improving sales and security, it's important to ensure they have the skills for the job.
- **Value messages** - 34% of shoppers are encouraged to buy at rounded price points compared with 8% who aren't. Customers say they help keep track of their spending and get rid of loose change. Pricemarks also appeal as they give a reassurance shoppers aren't being overcharged.