

The convenience sector is ever-changing, so it is essential that retailers modify their stores to keep up with modern trends, and even more important that they plan their refits to ensure their investment pays off

# REFIT & RARING TO GO

## SIMON BANKS

Whether it's expanding, streamlining, or a complete redesign, most c-store retailers have contemplated a store refit. But before

you can peel back the cellophane on the spanking new store equipment, or cut the brightly-coloured ribbon at re-opening celebrations, there are plenty of necessary processes to go through first.

Before you can welcome contractors and development teams through the door, a substantial level of planning and consultation must take place.

"For us the process was much lengthier than usual. It took us six years to prepare for our refit," admits Justin Whittaker, owner of MJ's Premier, Royton, Greater Manchester, which had a full refit in September 2015.

"This refit was six years in the making, because we had to apply to the council to extend the size of the store and buy the land it was on in order to expand. The main driving force behind the refit was my opinion

that a store of 700sq ft couldn't compete in the modern market, so after going through the process of buying the land from the council, we expanded to 2,000sq ft.

"Our ideas were well founded and we did all the groundwork way in advance because we had had so long to think about it. We were able to build a store that fits our requirements 100%. It will also mean that we won't have to carry out any extensive refits again for quite some time."

Baz Jethwa, owner of two Costcutter stores in Farnworth, Bolton, agrees that these things can't be rushed. He has just carried out a refit at his Plodders Lane store, after refitting his Campbell Street outlet in 2014. "It took us about three to four months to get

**“It took us about three to four months to get the planning just right before we changed anything inside the store”**

Baz Jethwa, Costcutter Plodders Lane, Farnworth, Bolton



the planning just right before we changed anything inside the store," he says, adding that it is important to get plenty of advice from the start.

"I don't think some retailers realise the support and help that is available to them," he says. "We went through a long consultation process as we thought it was important to get the advice and opinions of our customers, staff, contractors and symbol group first. Costcutter offered us amazing support, from design and merchandising ideas and more."

Justin also benefitted from symbol group guidance. "I don't think retailers could survive without being a part of a symbol group today; the support and guidance they provide is invaluable," he says. "I would recommend that retailers consult their symbol group thoroughly before they embark on carrying out a refit."

"I am part of the PDG [Premier Development Group] at Booker and being a part of the group was highly beneficial as I was able to implement ideas from top retail minds. Some key ideas were put forward, which I combined with my own vision of what I wanted and what I knew customers wanted.