



A major expansion and extensive refit last year has put satisfying customer missions at the heart of Justin Whittaker's Premier MJ's Store in Royton, Oldham.

## MISSION TO SERVE

### SIMON BANKS

With its tall windows and shiny bright fascia, you can't miss MJ's Premier on Richmond Avenue in Royton, Lancashire.

Externally, the shop epitomises everything you would expect of a modern convenience store, with digital screens in the windows and LED backlit signs. But what also stands out on the store's exterior is its commitment to the local community, with a humble message either side of the entrance's automatic sliding door stating: 'Proud to serve Royton'.

Even though a lot has changed at the former 700sq ft store since an extensive refit and expansion into a modern 2,000sqft store last September, the key focus has stayed the same. The store's number one priority is its customers and how to best serve them.

Because of its location in the centre of a residential area, the store attracts a lot of top-up customers who visit on a regular basis, sometimes even more than once in the same day. So it is no surprise that so many of the customers are familiar with its

seven members of staff and owner, Justin Whittaker.

Justin has run the store since he was just 17 years old, when he took over the family business from his father. His vision to transform the store took six years to realise, but in 2015 he finally got planning permission after buying the land to enable expansion.

Since the store underwent the refit last year, it has seen sales go through the roof, up 20% year-on-year, while also attracting new customers.

The driving force behind the refit was to make the store larger so that it was better equipped to compete with some of the more innovative stores around and keep up with the ever-changing retail landscape. As the market continues to see the lines that separated the discount, convenience, supermarket and food service sectors blur into one, customers' missions have changed.

Justin has a very clear ethos with his store: he wants to offer his customers big deals on big brands, while he has also designated areas targeting the most popular shopper missions: food-to-go, big night in and meals for tonight.



### STORE FACTS

#### MJ's Premier, Royton

**Size:** 2,000sq ft

**Trading for:** 27 years under current management

**Opening hours:** 6am - 9pm everyday

**Year-on-year results:** Frozen +44%, Confectionary +36%, Grocery +34.6%, Pet Care +18.7%, Dairy +12.9%, Alcohol +10.6%

**Awards:** Booker's Premier Independent retailer of the year 2015

On first entering the store, this philosophy is immediately clear, with shelf-ends tipped with 'Amazing Value' messaging fronted with big brand products and a small food to go area with 'Grab A Bite To Eat' signage welcoming shoppers.

#### Food to go

The food to go area includes a hot food zone aimed at breakfast and lunch times and is restocked with freshly-prepared food in the morning and midday. The area is complemented by a Jack's Beans coffee machine. As