

Surprisingly Stylish at 140 - How can a family business compete in modern retail



Southwick, May 7, 2019 ([Issuewire.com](http://www.issuewire.com)) - It just takes a glance at the headlines to see something dramatic is happening to our shops. Retail is changing and it is hard for many businesses to keep up the pace.

Knees Home and Electrical is an independent, family-owned business that has this year reached the impressive milestone of 140 years of retail. Knees may be one of the oldest stores around, but they are not a business that stands still.

Knees were founded by Henry J. Knee in 1879 as ironmongers and it has evolved dramatically over the decades. The original store expanded to become a large and much-loved department store at the heart of Trowbridge town centre, whilst other smaller Knees shops also opened across the local area.

Local development, the rise of large supermarkets and online shopping in more recent years has seen the business streamline and redevelop, particularly over the last decade. The most dramatic change came 5 years ago when Knees left their large town centre premises and relocated to an out of town Retail Park. Knees recognised that only with complete re-invention would it survive the dramatic changes that the retail sector is experiencing.

Moving to a smaller out of town location offered the business an opportunity to overhaul its customer offering, which it has wholeheartedly embraced. The shop has been transformed and now offers a true destination for modern home interior design, with a focused range of home products.

Knees' new look showcases a range of beautiful room settings, allowing customers to immerse themselves and reimagine their own home style. In store, you will see the larger hand-picked pieces of furniture such as sofas and beds, beautifully accompanied with inspiring colour schemes and chic accessories such as cushions, throws and occasional chairs. The electrical offering of the business is focused on large kitchen appliances with brands such as Miele, Rangemaster, Neff and Bosch. The working kitchen and appliances in-store allow staff and regular expert guests to demonstrate the latest product features.

Several developments have been key for Knees to help make this change: investing in new staff, the creation of an ecommerce website, re-imagining the customer shopping experience, and an overhaul of their pricing strategy. However, one aspect of the business that won't be compromised is keeping customers at the very heart of the business.

The most important part of this is that the change is working. Bucking the trend of other retailers, Knees is seeing growth, there are new customers in-store and a steady rise in online sales. With a new MD driving the business forward, Andy Pickford moved up from his Financial Director role last year and he is quietly determined to maintain the legacy of the Knees name.

There aren't many family-owned shops that manage to reach 140 years old, and at Knees you'll find a re-invented, beautiful retail business, holding strong to their much-loved family values. There is a reason that this shop has been around for so long.

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