



## Seen = Sold. The Merchant Still Rules!!

*If you want to influence trade buying decisions, forget digital-only campaigns and abstract buyer personas – focus instead on the customer’s relationship with their local merchant branch. And by merchant, we also mean wholesalers, distributors, and trade counters – the real-world touchpoints where attention, trust, habit, and purchase intersect.*

### 1. Trades rely on merchants more than any other channel.

According to the last \*Hamerville Readership Survey:

**83.3% of tradespeople visit a merchant branch at least once a week:**

- 9.5% go daily
- 17.5% go 4–5 times a week
- 36.5% go 2–3 times a week
- 19.8% go weekly

**This makes the merchant the most consistent, in-person trade touchpoint** – far more than websites, social media, or printed literature. Even online or phone orders often link back to the branch – via phone-ahead requests, trade account ordering, or click-and-collect after assessing on-site needs.



### 2. The point of sale is the point of influence.

Tradespeople regularly make on-the-spot purchase decisions in the branch. Many of these are impulse-driven – especially when it comes to:

- Consumables
- Tools
- Fixings and fasteners
- New or promoted products

**This makes in-branch marketing a prime sales opportunity.**

High-impact tactics include:

- Eye-level point-of-sale displays
- Product samples or demo areas
- In-branch promotions – to drive both stock-in and customer sell-through (sell-in & sell-out)
- Counter mats, floor decals and branded signage – simple, but in-your-face effective
- Merchant staff recommendations, which remain one of the most trusted sources of advice.



### 3. Merchants are media channels too.

Beyond product stocking, merchant branches act as real-world media hubs:

- Free trade magazines are picked up at the counter
- Branch newsletters and emails promote supplier offers, launches, and news
- Demo mornings and contractor days not only give brands direct face time with the trade, but also give tradespeople the chance to raise questions, flag concerns, and offer feedback that brands can act on.

**This creates a mini marketing ecosystem** – combining visibility, advice, physical media, and brand interaction.



### 4. Why the trades use multiple merchants.

Most tradespeople don't stick to just one supplier – they hold accounts with several. While stock variety and convenience play a role, credit flexibility is a key driver.

Each merchant typically offers a trade credit limit – often £1,500-£2,000. By opening accounts with different merchant chains or independents, trades can effectively access £8,000-£10,000+ in working credit – crucial for managing materials, job cash flow, and day-to-day costs.

**For brands, this behaviour is critical:** with purchasing activity spread across five different merchants, you can't afford to appear in just one. To stay in the running, your brand needs visibility and presence wherever the customer is buying – *because if you're not there, you won't be chosen.*

### 5. Merchant relationships shape perception and loyalty.

Unlike faceless online platforms, tradespeople know and trust their local counter teams.

**People do business with people they trust** – and in many cases, those counter staff become trusted advisors, shaping what gets tried, specced, or bought.

**Brands can build on that trust by:**

- Offering training or cheat-sheets for merchant staff
- Creating exclusive product bundles or promotions
- Ensuring availability at the counter, not just online



### 6. Buying decisions are made incrementally – and in context.

Often, they don't know exactly what they need until the job is underway. Even when materials are pre-ordered, they'll frequently return to the merchant to:

- Pick up missed items
- Buy extras discovered mid-job
- Replace broken tools

**This reactive, real-time decision-making is why presence in-branch is so valuable.** *It's where gaps get filled – and choices get made.*

Local Merchant  
OPEN ALL  
HOURS!

## Final Thought

**One of the biggest mistakes brands make is assuming customers place them top-of-mind.**

In reality, many tradespeople walk into a merchant branch needing a product – not a brand. Unless they're locked into a loyalty promotion, the decision is still up for grabs. That's where visibility matters most: the brand that's in their face is often the brand that ends up in their basket – either online or in-branch.

**The merchant branch isn't just a sales outlet – it's a behaviour hub.** If you want to influence trade purchases, be present where decisions actually happen: at the counter, in the aisles, and in the van parked outside. *The closer your product is to the moment of need, the more likely it is to be chosen.*

\*Source: Professional Builder's Readership Survey 2023

**Need help getting your brand noticed at the merchant? Let's talk!**  
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## Oil The Wheels — A Streetwise Approach to Industrial & B2B Marketing

We're a seasoned marketing duo with big agency experience — without the big agency costs. Oil The Wheels works with industrial and B2B brands when sales need a lift, marketing needs to deliver more, or something just feels off.

We bring an experienced outside perspective, work collaboratively with in-house teams to identify what's getting in the way, then turn that into creative, integrated marketing that better supports sales.

Because it's not just about being seen.

***It's making sure your brand gets chosen!***

