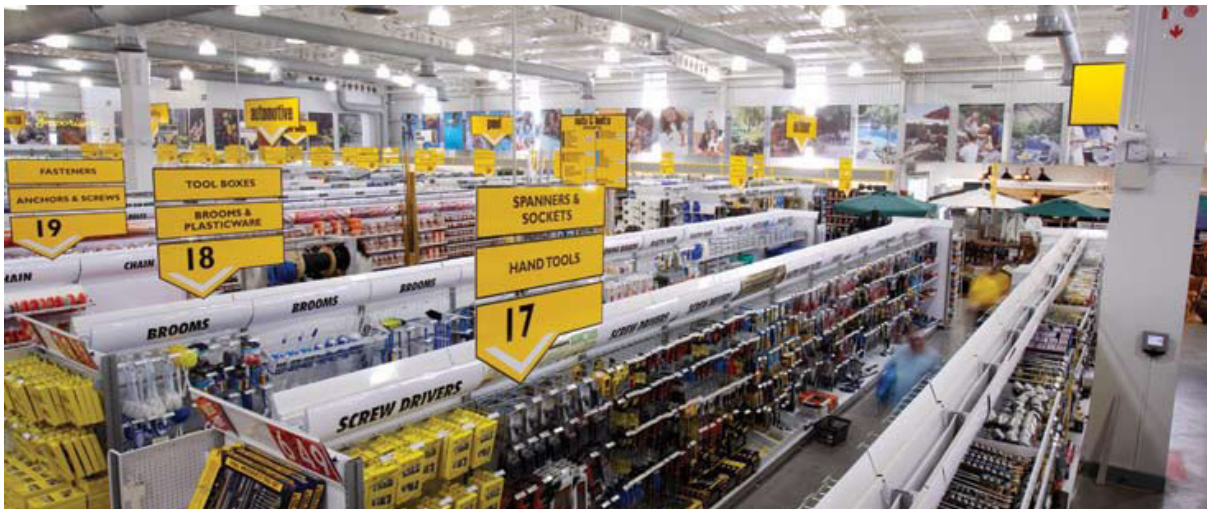




MASSMART

GROUP UPDATE

Massbuild: At the front of the home improvement wave



There are big things happening in home improvement, and Massmart's Massbuild division is sailing ahead. Builders Warehouse, Builder Express and Trade Depot stores are spread across the country, with new ones opening all the time. The local market finally has home improvement stores packed to the rafters with affordable style.

Shopper-driven affordability and style

Not long ago, it was difficult for South Africans to find a wide variety of attractive household fixtures and fittings at reasonable prices. There were few to choose from on the local market, so stylish tiles, sinks, kitchen door handles and light fittings all had to be imported. This made them too expensive for most households to afford, leaving the average family little choice but to buy either from inexpensive, but dusty building supply stores or shop in stylish, but overpriced home décor speciality boutiques.

There wasn't much in between, and there certainly wasn't a one-stop shop where customers could find materials for home improvement across plumbing, electrical,

wall coating and outdoor categories.

The Builders Warehouse, Builders Express and Builders Trade Depot stores have been designed to bridge that gap. The stores are well-merchandised, solution-driven and carry a carefully chosen range in every home improvement category. "Take a look at our range of paints, lighting, outdoor furniture and showers," recommends divisional CEO, Gareth (Joe) Owens.

"Everything we do at Massbuild must provide customers with, above all, affordable style."

"It's really exciting that such beautiful things for the home can be found in all our Builders Warehouse and Builders Express stores. Bulk buying allows us to source a wide variety across all ranges at competitive prices, and the fresh store layout means shoppers can find everything they need."

Mass-built from the ground up

"Massbuild division's ambition is for our stores to be South Africa's leading home improvement destination stores," Owens explains. "The division's chains are designed to be places where everyone from professional builders to homeowners feel welcome. It's a big change from the plain, dirty and, frankly, female-unfriendly environment you used to find in this market."

Home improvement had been an area where consumer demand had far outweighed what the market had to offer. Until now.

“Massbuild is coming of age,” Owens continues, “In 2003, we started out on the acquisition trail to add more stores to the division, beginning with the purchase of Builders Warehouse. In 2004, two Mica stores were acquired, and then the De la Rey chain in the Western Cape.”

Once acquisition of new outlets was underway, focus was redirected at optimising the opportunities that lay before Massbuild. “We started on a plan to consolidate all these stores, since they all catered to the home improvement and building markets, under a single brand,” he explains. The result? The Builders Warehouse chain. As of March there are now 21 Builders Warehouse stores.

Building on the strength of the Builders Warehouse concept, new retail brands were created for other stores. “Servistar was acquired,” Owens goes on, “and these stores were converted into Builders Express in October 2006. Builders Express is the conve-



niently located neighbourhood store offering service excellence.”

These stores carry a smaller, more focused range, and the key departments are paints and the garden centre.

There are currently 15 Builders Express stores. The 27 Federated Timbers stores are in the process of being branded as Builders Trade Depot outlets, catering to contractors and professionals, but with the same pleasant shopping format as the other stores under the Builders umbrella. And,” Owens enthuses, “it’s not over yet. Massbuild is still developing, still growing, and there are lots of exciting new things on the horizon for the local home improvement market.”

Solution-driven shopping

Beyond having the right range, understanding the nature of the market is important in home improvement. Customers who want to re-tile a floor or replace their bathroom taps need more than just the tiles and fittings. They’ll need everything that comes with it, from shifting spanners and washers to sponges and grout. This means shoppers in Builders Warehouse, Express and Trade Depot stores need to be served by knowledgeable staff who are familiar with the products and understand what customers need to complete their projects.

Builders Warehouse also produces specialist catalogues. The first catalogues focused on the paint category and includes information on paint colour and texture trends, plus paint application techniques. There’s also a wall preparation guide and advice on dealing with everyday issues like mould and water damage.

Likewise, Builders Warehouse flyers and leaflets often include advice on caring for and maintain-



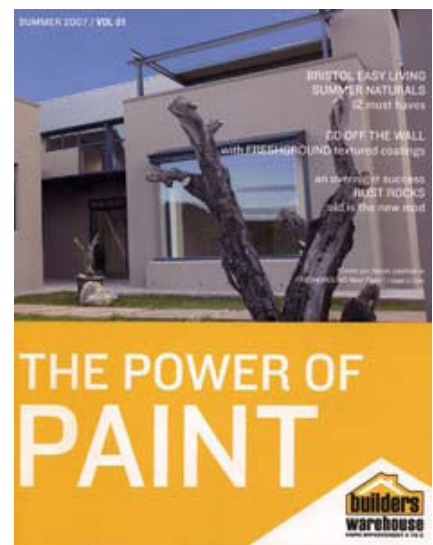
Chantal Isaacs, updater, Craig Jacobs, sales assistant – paint department and Zakieyah Davids, expeditor, from Builders Warehouse Western Cape City Store.

ing products, such as pool care systems and outdoor furniture, once customers get them home. The next phase is to offer customers advice in-store through informative material merchandised alongside products.

Here to stay

With Massmart’s Massbuild division churning out solution-driven Builders Warehouse, Builders Express and Builders Trade Depot stores nationwide, shopable home improvement has finally arrived in SA.

“Everything we have done, and will continue to do at Massbuild,” says Owens, “must provide customers with, above all, affordable style.” ■



Builders Warehouse’s user-friendly paint guide.