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Public Health (Alcohol) Bill: Where is the evidence it will work?

Every retailer selling alcohol, whether they are holders of full (wine, spirit and beer) or wine-only licences must be concerned at the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill introduced in the Oireachtas in December. If this bill is enacted, retailers in the convenience and forecourt sector would be obliged to:



The CSNA believes the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill will not hurt the multiples but will hit small and medium retail businesses which sell alcohol

- Confine the sale of all alcohol products to a single area in the premises, through which all alcohol products are not visible, and to which customers do not have to pass through to buy "ordinary" products; or
- Contain all alcohol products in a closed storage unit (or units).

The Minister for Health is of the view that reducing visibility of inanimate objects (bottles, cans etc.) will reduce consumption while drinkers consuming vast quantities of alcohol at tables full of beer glasses, shorts and shots in pubs, clubs etc. are not considered to be worthy of restriction. There is no evidence that

would suggest that our sector is any more culpable than any other sector currently licenced to sell alcohol. We repeat - no evidence of increases in public order or public health offences can be laid at our specific sector.

These attempts to de-normalise alcohol by making it next to impossible for your business to achieve these new restrictive criteria is one more assault upon the small and medium retail business sector - it won't hurt Tesco, Dunnes, Lidl or Aldi but it will hurt you. We urge you to contact your TD today expressing your opposition to this bill.

A valuable lesson on how to hit the social media jackpot

Following on from our piece in the October edition of *ShelfLife* on the benefits of social media to our businesses, here is an example of how it's done.

Rocketmedia.co.uk reports that in the space of just 24 hours, one Facebook post from a Scottish retailer recorded nearly 200,000 'likes'.

Ralston's of Paisley, Renfrewshire, posted a photograph of a ticket for the Euromillions draw, with a none-too-shoddy jackpot of £133 million. Ralston's then said that every person who "likes" its post, could claim a share of the winnings - with the proviso that they hit the jackpot of course!

The odds of scooping a massive Euromillions win were of course slim, but there is a lesson fellow retailers can nevertheless gain. People love feeling there's a possibility they could win something; however remote their chances may appear. Why not use this as inspiration for your own Facebook page or Twitter feed and potentially become a winner in terms of gaining greater social media traction.

A New Year's resolution to live by: Shun suppliers who would make you 'busy fools'

It's that time of the year when we have probably made a few New Year's promises and already some are broken by the time you get a chance to read this page. Maybe as shopkeepers we should make a few promises to ourselves and particularly ones that protect the health of our business.

What's clear out there is that aside from the amount of ill-conceived dribble that's shovelled out from our own government, are the amount of companies that have little respect for the significant role we play in creating profit for their often large balance sheets. Standards that are applied in terms of margin return and customer care leave a lot to be desired. They wouldn't even be tolerated as adequate by the companies that hoist them on us.

As shopkeepers we need to be a lot more cognisant of what suppliers do for our business, especially the long-term effects. Make every effort to promote the good ones and shun any attempt by any supplier to make you and your staff busy fools. Be particularly wary of any attempt to transfer your business out of the shop, be it into the street or onto the internet or indeed out of reach in any form, where you and your families do not directly benefit.

Make it a New Year's promise to become more vigilant of those in the trade that would prey on your livelihoods. Pick up the phone or send e-mails and let them know your feelings but make a clear New Year's resolution that enough is enough - we all have to earn a crust and shopkeepers are no exception.

Black Friday? Local shops offer value all year round!

While Black Friday has become another opportunity for large retailers to drive sales, a post by Kelly's Newsagents of Monasterevin on their Facebook page, points out that successful local stores work hard to offer their loyal customers strong value throughout the year.

On Black Friday, 27 November 2015, the Kelly's Facebook page pointed out: "It seems Black Friday has become a thing here in Ireland whether we like it or not. It's true that there are some great offers to be had out there over the weekend but remember that when you shop local your money stays in the local community and supports local jobs and families. That's real people who live and love in our little town.

"We are not making much of Black Friday here in Kelly's because all

year round we strive to bring regular special offers and discounts, great value and excellent customer service. To each and every one of you who have kept it local this year and have supported our business, a massive, heartfelt THANK-YOU. Thanks for supporting our jobs and families; Here's to another 40 years in business."

This message chimes with statistics reported by ISME before Christmas which show that every €10 spent locally on Irish products generates €24 of benefit to the local community. The organisation also stated that 45 cents of every euro spent is reinvested locally in comparison to only 15 cents for the foreign multiples. ■



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