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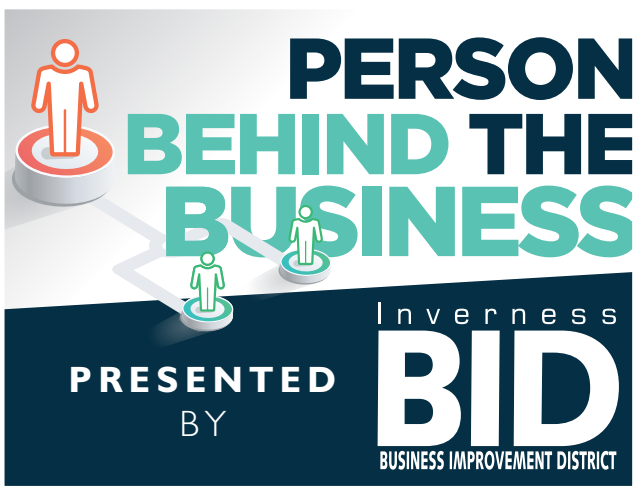
‘Give local firms a try first before shopping online’

Fancy a challenge? Then get into retail says **Keith McCaffery**, founder and owner of Cafferys, which is marking its 20th anniversary this year



Keith McCaffery is the founder and owner of Cafferys.

Q How would you describe your business?

A Cafferys is an independent shop specialising in high-end men’s clothing and this year we celebrate our 20th anniversary. Our designer brands include Hugo Boss, Armani, Belstaff, Paul & Shark, Norse Projects, Fred Perry, Barbour and many others.

We display a large stock in our spacious ground floor store in the Eastgate Shopping Centre where customers can buy trousers, shirts, jumpers, coats, shoes, underwear and hats – all displayed in easy-to-browse sections. We stock quality garments from top brands known all over the world and our prices reflect that. We buy for each season from the leading companies, so our stock changes four times a year and keeps us bang up to date with the latest trends and fashions.

We complement the major brands’ national advertising of products by highlighting what we have available in Cafferys through our social media outlets, website and direct mailings to our database of clients. We are on Instagram and Facebook.

We are a destination store in many respects and have a loyal customer base. We also have a high footfall from passing trade, tourists and visitors. We attract a high level of tourists in the summer season especially and they recognise the global brands in store.

Q What led you into the business?

A I used to run sports clothing shops for national businesses in Inverness and Elgin and for a while worked in local newspaper advertising. I went back to retail to work for an independent clothing shop for a year and in September 2002 decided to go it alone, taking over the business and creating Cafferys.

I moulded the business over the years into what it is now.

I started with a shop in Baron Taylor’s Street and after four years opened a second one in Union Street and then moved the original shop to Drummond Street. I decided to bring both branches together and in 2018 moved everything under one roof into the Eastgate Shopping Centre.

Q What is your greatest achievement?

A While it is great to win awards, I think my greatest achievement is that I am still here and doing all right. Custom has thankfully picked up to pre-pandemic levels.

The Covid crisis was difficult, especially the second lockdown when we were told to shut on Christmas Eve and closed for four months with the delivery of £100,000 of January-March stock just around the corner. We were grateful for the government financial help we got, but it didn’t cover it and showed all small businesses that were grouped together for assistance were not the same.

Q Who do you admire in business?

A I admire the people who do what I do as retail is a struggle just now. Our business has changed in the last five years because of big organisations. Independents are getting fewer. Shopping local is really important versus online as it helps our local economy. If you can’t get it locally, fair enough go online – but give us a try first.

Q What’s your advice to budding entrepreneurs?

A If you want a real challenge. then retail is it – with all the challenges and decisions that must be made, and issues that arise you need broad shoulders. However, it is a lot harder now than it was 20 years ago and much more difficult to get finance. Building customer loyalty is vital. Our customers are our most important consideration.

Q Tell us more about yourself?

A I am a keen cyclist and supporter of local charities. In recent years I have managed to combine both by taking part in challenging charity cycle events with friends and acquaintances such as the Everest Highlanders’ North Coast cycle in aid of the Highland Hospice in 2015 and the Maggie’s 500 last year which raised £405,000 when 40 of us cycled 100 miles a day for five days in the Cairngorms.

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