Ask the Expert



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Ask the Expert: Cleaning & Hygiene

The BOSS Ask the Expert series provides dealers with practical, commercially useful insight into key diversification opportunities across the workplace supplies industry. This edition focuses on **Cleaning & Hygiene**, helping dealers better understand the breadth of the category, recognise opportunities within their existing customer base and approach customer conversations with greater confidence. The aim is not to turn dealers into category specialists, but to provide clear guidance, useful starting points and an understanding of how supplier and partner support can help them develop sales in this area.

For this edition, we asked **Ross Jones**, to answer our questions and share their perspective on **Cleaning & Hygiene**. Drawing on extensive experience in this area, Ross provides practical guidance to help dealers identify opportunities, have more informed customer conversations and develop their offering with confidence.

Meet the Expert: Ross Jones

Ross Jones has almost 20 years of experience in Cleaning & Hygiene, working with major global manufacturers including Diversey, Clorox and Reckitt. His career has included negotiating multi-million-pound agreements with complex end users, including the NHS and Transport for London, giving him a detailed understanding of customer needs across the industry.

Ross has also worked closely with the Infection Prevention Society and delivered a conference session on electrostatic disinfection, supporting his expertise in technical cleaning and disinfection. Since 2019, he has been actively involved in the workplace supplies channel. He also brings extensive experience in category development, commercial strategy, reseller growth and foodservice, helping businesses identify opportunities and develop stronger, more commercially effective customer propositions within evolving workplace markets.

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Q&A questions

Why should Cleaning & Hygiene be on a dealer's radar as a growth category?

Cleaning & Hygiene has, for the past five years, shown sustained, exponential growth as a category and is forecast to continue right through to 2035. Forecasted CAGR figures range from 6% to 15%*, but our data at RJJ Consulting for the UK's £1.4b Professional Cleaning Products market shows **12% CAGR** through to 2035.

This growth is driven by several factors:



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The pandemic fundamentally changed public understanding of cleaning and hygiene. From hand hygiene to the risks of contaminated surfaces, people educated themselves rapidly in 2020/2021.

The shift to remote and flexible working. We no longer work in the same space every day, and hot-desking has increased cleaning frequency and changed cleaning requirements.

A longer-term factor: the World Health Organisation lists antimicrobial-resistant pathogens as a global threat, heightening awareness of pathogen risks and the importance of preventing harmful bacteria and viruses.

(BBC Article, 2014 ; World Health Organisation, 2025)

** Example sources below. Figures vary depending on how the market is defined—for instance, whether you include cleaning companies (labour) or only the supplies they use, and whether you include retail sales or focus strictly on commercial procurement.*

https://www.fmj.co.uk/bcc-report-shows-steady-growth-in-the-cleaning-hygiene-and-waste-industry/

https://www.astuteanalytica.com/industry-report/uk-professional-cleaning-products-market
https://www.futuremarketinsights.com/reports/cleaning-and-hygiene-product-market

What would you say to dealers who feel this category is too specialist or technical for them?

I think this is the biggest worry for many dealers and, in truth, they're not wrong that it can be technical and complex. However, there's no requirement to be a specialist in order to secure revenue from this category. Talking to a hospital about high-level disinfectants may be out of reach for most dealers – and rightly so, given the consequences of giving incorrect advice – but selling Toilet Cleaner, Toilet Paper, or Dishwasher Tablets is as straightforward as it sounds. You only need a "good enough" understanding of the category to compete with a base range. The one-stop-shop model will secure revenue here.

Where are the most natural starting points for dealers looking to introduce Cleaning & Hygiene to customers?

It can be as simple as 12–15 SKUs in cleaning products plus 6–8 SKUs in paper, and you'll have a viable Category. That gives you the **WHAT** to sell, but when it comes to **WHERE** to sell it, the easiest starting point is your existing customers. It's as straightforward as asking, "Do you buy Toilet Paper and Hand Soap?" – and if they say no, I'd be concerned about what kind of workplace they are if they even have a toilet for staff to use.

Take your core range to your existing customers and you'll quickly win a share of their total spend that you weren't previously able to access. I've given you the WHAT and WHERE; the WHEN and WHY should be self-explanatory: **start now, because this is revenue you're currently leaving on the table.**



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What are the best ways for dealers to uncover whether a customer has an opportunity in this category?

I'll give the simplified version and then something with more substance, because it depends on where you are on your category-expansion journey. If you've never sold the Cleaning & Hygiene category, then approaching an existing customer with "Where do you buy your soap and toilet paper?" can be a powerful question. It opens up the conversation for the whole category, using products you can be 100% confident they are already buying

(assuming they have physical premises).

If you've started to dabble in the category and your thinking is more "How do we scale this?", then developing an understanding of **Solution Selling** becomes important. Selling ad-hoc products for specific tasks is a good starting point, but to drive bigger revenues you need to shift to "How can we take care of all your cleaning and hygiene needs?" This means offering a total solution that covers 90%+ of a customer's requirements and removing the burden of product selection from the customer.

How can dealers move the conversation away from price alone?

I say this a lot, but the number one decision driver in making a Cleaning & Hygiene purchase is **"does it do the job I need it to do."** It's almost a default question before Price, Brand Loyalty, or anything else comes into play. If you want to move the conversation away from price, then learn how to talk about **efficacy** – how well a product performs against the job it's meant to do – and lead with that.

I always use the example of cleaning a toilet: no one wants to clean a toilet multiple times. You want to do the job once and move on. If the product's efficacy isn't adequate and you can't achieve that objective, the customer will never buy it again, no matter how cheap it was.

It also helps to frame this in terms of **labour costs vs cleaning costs**. Labour accounts for around 80% of the total cost of cleaning, so saving a few pennies on the product is a false economy if it increases the time required to clean.

What kind of supplier support can make it easier for dealers to sell Cleaning & Hygiene confidently?

Supplier training and sales collateral should be a "must" in your supplier selection. Without the knowledge and tools provided by the supplier, you'll always have a "me too" offering and ultimately end up in a price battle. You can't lead an efficacy-based conversation if you don't have the knowledge or tools to support it, so don't underestimate its value.

To be specific, ask your supplier for:

- **Product Information Sheets**
- **Cost-in-Use calculations** (how much it costs per person or per application)
- **Samples**, where appropriate, to demonstrate fragrance, viscosity, or quality (especially for paper)



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The good suppliers will also equip you with category information to help you lead customer conversations once you've moved to a Solution Selling approach. If a supplier isn't keeping tabs on the market and end-user needs, I'd question whether they're staying up to date and providing products that will actually sell. You should be asking them for this insight and data so you can tell your own story with confidence.

If dealers take one action after reading this, what should it be?

Make a start. Even if it's just Toilet Paper and Hand Soap, bring some in and start letting your customers know they can buy it from you.

I've spoken to so many dealers over the past 5–6 years who tell me they "really need to look at the cleaning category", and it still amazes me that we're talking about early adopters. The data has been consistent since I first began engaging the likes of VOW, Lyreco and Viking almost seven years ago. The next 8–10 years are forecast for G.O.P to be flat (at best), while Cleaning & Hygiene is expected to outpace most other categories for growth.

The classic adoption model shows Innovators (2.5%), Early Adopters (13.5%), Early Majority (34%), Late Majority (34%) and Laggards (16%). I don't have hard data on this, so this is subjective, but it feels like we're at best in the Early Majority phase. I can't encourage dealers enough to start now.

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*BOSS would like to thank **Ross Jones** for contributing to this Ask the Expert resource and sharing his experience and insight. We hope his practical guidance helps dealers approach **Cleaning & Hygiene** conversations with greater confidence, identify new opportunities within their customer base and take practical steps towards developing the category.*