

EYE ON DESIGN



Cris Beswick, managing director of **Beswick Design**, fails to find any innovative twist in the presentation of three of the UK's largest carpet and flooring retailers



Allied Carpets ▶

This store sits in a just out-of-town retail park, right next to Carpetright in an identical warehouse unit. Each unit has its own double doors, with 6-9m of floor-to-ceiling window space alongside. Both are missing a trick by covering this area with posters screaming about promotions, wasting an opportunity to show something more seductive. Inside, Allied has created a pleasant environment with painted ceilings and soft lighting. Fixtures and merchandising are kept low enough to allow the light to flow and give full vision across the store. The hanging P-O-P is promotional, repetitive and verging on the excessive. Large lifestyle imagery features dated product choices, adding ambience but failing to inspire purchasing. In the centre sits Allied's premium Domestic Collection. It's a great idea, but swamped by its surroundings. The store's own carpet is poor and the floor is only used in a wooden-style area where strips are badly fitted, leaving a squeaky, bouncy, weak advertisement.



This has a typical department store feel and, in true John Lewis style, minimal signage with departments blending into each other. Within the carpeting area, the back wall serves as an instant visual beacon, devoted to representing the current carpet trend, with an extensive display of 200 to 300 natural-look swatches geometrically spaced between vertical timber dividers. The in-store display is immaculately neat, with discreet, identical-sized P-O-P tickets. The environment relies on assisted purchase and is entirely conducive to it. It works on the basis that John Lewis knows its customers

John Lewis ▼

and its customers know John Lewis. But despite being the most engaging of the three, the overriding sense of 'Where do I start?' pervades. The choice is daunting, with no inspiration and book after book of samples. Category management is neither explicit nor self-navigable in any of these stores. At least in John Lewis you feel more inclined to seek assistance. Equally, none of the stores practises what it preaches and considers using its own floors as natural signage.



John Lewis

Carpetright ▼



This is a very similar product to Allied. However, the message is simply 'pile 'em high, sell 'em cheap', and gives an unjustified, inferior feel. The strip lighting does the environment no favours, while skywards-reaching rolls of carpet block the flow of light and any wider vision of the store. The warehouse has plenty of space, but poor use of it leaves some dark, dreary corners. Even if you do know what you're looking for here, it's hard to find. And it's swarming with more P-O-P than I have ever seen in one place – Carpetright's printers must be laughing.

Again, the material is entirely promotional, overwhelming, and focused on the cheap-as-chips aspect. Staff know that the considerable majority of customers are buying the natural look, yet there is no attempt to highlight or focus on its location. You can see 'Where do I start?' etched on peoples' faces here. The store leaves all the effort to the consumer. And to top it off, its own carpet is a nasty pink affair.

