



The panel:



Neil Partridge,
director,
NGI Design, Stamford



Laura Gompertz,
owner,
Laura Gompertz
Bespoke Kitchens
and Interiors



Cinzia Moretti,
creative director,
Moretti Interior Design

Extra, extra...

As the kitchen space expands to incorporate nearly all of the downstairs living space, is offering only kitchen furniture enough? Adding living and dining room furniture, flooring and lighting could spice up your designs and help increase order values. **Francesca Seden** reports...

Kitchen design is continuing to evolve and develop beyond simply a practical space for food preparation and is embracing all aspects of everyday living. Many kitchen designers now agree that they are not only putting together kitchens, but designing lifestyles.

As well as wanting a large, open- or broken-plan living and kitchen space, homeowners are increasingly time-poor and want to make their lives as easy as possible. This means kitchen retailers that can offer extra products or services that take the hassle out of their customers' lives will steal a march on their nearest competition.

There are lots of different products and services that kitchen retailers could add to their offering – some are well worth adding, and some perhaps less so – a lot may depend on your geographical area and customer profile.

Interior design elements such as furniture, paint and wallpaper can add value, because you're then offering a service that your customer is unlikely to be able to access easily elsewhere. It's likely also that a customer purchasing a kitchen from you might ask for work on other rooms if you offer a holistic design solution.

And while things like paint, wallpaper and tiles might not offer much in the way of margin, offering those elements, according to interior designer ►



1. One of Cinzia Moretti's finished kitchen designs incorporating elements of lighting, flooring and freestanding furniture

2. According to Insinkerator, its food waste disposers are an easy add-on to any sink, furniture or kitchen sale, generating valuable additional turnover for the kitchen specialist



1.



2.

Laura Gompertz, will make your customer feel really cared-for, have them coming back for more, and ensure a recommendation or two.

Flooring, tiling and lighting can also be a great add-on even if the margin isn't huge, because they're elements that the customer may not be able easily to access elsewhere. And because they're decorative elements, it also could give you an extra element of creative control.

Selling the lifestyle

Freestanding furniture, though, such as armchairs and dining sets, are highly profitable, with margins of up to 45%, according to NGI Design's Neil Partridge. "And it's so easy to cross-sell," he notes. "A customer will come in and buy into that whole lifestyle you're presenting and might purchase all that they see. And even if a customer hasn't asked for it, I will plan in all of the furniture and statement lighting."

He and Gompertz agree that "you can win a customer for life", if you can get them to buy in to the whole lifestyle package that you offer.

The one positive about furniture, tiling, flooring, lighting, wallpaper and paint, is that you don't need very much showroom space to show it off and ►

1. Amtico Form flooring in Mineral and in the Broken Bond laying pattern
2. The Quincy console from the Shine collection by Italian brand Meridiani is designed by Andrea Parisio. It features three drawers, available in various finishes, a metal base with a bronzed brass finish, and a lacquered top
3. Monroe Nightflower wallpaper by Little Greene
4. Chloe three-seater sofa in 'tweedy weave' and Chloe chair in 'vintage velvet' by The Lounge Co



4.

3.

How SBID can help

Vanessa Brady, chief executive of the Society for British and International Design (SBID), offers her advice on how kitchen retailers can best get involved in interior design and outlines some of the courses on offer...



I would suggest that retailers connect with SBID quality-accredited local designers or contact our central office and we will put them in touch. This will develop into a returning buyer for the showroom and it should become a two-way street for the designers and architects.

Design professionals are buying a few times a year, homeowners buy once. So building a repeat business that works for both parties is key to building cash streams and growing a business community.

SBID offers a specific accreditation for a specialist skill (as we acknowledge it) of a kitchen designer. I suppose a simple analogy would be one of a doctor – there are many specialisms, and a doctor who can advise on a heart condition has different skills from a plastic surgeon.

I think the same is true of an interior designer, and we have defined the specialist skills based upon experience and qualification and we also provide various training programmes, including online. Our role is to assist in helping individuals progress their career.

We have a training course set through the measured criteria of the Engineering Construction Industry Association (ECIA). We are the representative in Brussels for the UK and we work with a nationwide education panel, including the Department of Education

to measure the content of a degree course. We also consult with our counterparts in Canada and USA to create a suite of global standards. In this way, a client can approach an accredited SBID member with the comfort of knowing that wherever they are in the world, and under whatever local legislation, they will be consulting with a professional who has acquired a level of learning and ongoing lifetime learning to meet a global standard.

We have been working on this exam for some 10 years and we still have a long way to go but, at least we started and put the UK on the map at last.

We also have accredited CPD courses that we are uniquely accredited to license. Some are free and provide a good mix from online to local, national and conference, we are working on delivering a new set of training tools shortly through a super-platform to connect the trade in a new style of delivery. It will provide links to business as well as industry specific courses and much more.

We also provide assistance to designers when things go wrong, as we recognise they do. We try to encourage more honesty and openness in this area. For far too long, designers have kept their errors to themselves and so the same mistakes are repeated time after time. We are trying to remove that stigma.

Most profitable add-ons

- Freestanding furniture
- An interior design service
- Flooring and tiling



It's so easy to cross-sell. Even if a customer hasn't asked for it, I will plan in all of the furniture and statement lighting

Neil Partridge, NGI Design, Stamford

1. From Adventures in Furniture, the Mason extending table features a ceramic top with solid oak legs and one extension leaf that takes the table from 1,600mm x 900mm to 2,400mm. It seats six to 10 people
2. Designed by Antonio Citterio, Febo is an elegant family of sofas and armchairs distinguished by a back that can be lower or higher or more or less enveloping. They are available in fabric or leather, and feature a visible blanket stitch

you wouldn't have to carry stock as you could order direct from the supplier.

Partridge comments: "If a retailer wanted to sell a limited range of furniture – say bar stools and dining sets, they could find just one manufacturer that makes a range of products across those categories and it would be a really easy thing to sell."

Next, we asked our contributors for their advice on how retailers could add interior design to their businesses and what skills and/or training would be needed.

Their responses varied somewhat, with Cinzia Moretti of Moretti Interior Design suggesting that kitchen retailers either employ, or collaborate with, an interior designer, rather than trying to take on the work themselves.

Moretti, who is solely an interior designer, also has some criticism for kitchen designers. "I think there needs to be strong collaboration between the interior designer and the retailer. I think kitchen retailers should pay more attention to lighting. There have been a few times that I have got involved in kitchen projects where the kitchen designer has installed lighting in the cabinetry, but it doesn't actually work with the rest of the room – the colour temperature will be off."

She adds that kitchen retailers could benefit from offering handles, or a wider range of handles for the kitchen cabinetry to offer more choice for their customers.

However, Moretti also says that if a retailer was determined, it would be possible for them to include interior design as part of their offering and that it wouldn't require too much investment.

"Most retailers will already know about space planning and their raw materials, and they'll know how to use all the [CAD] software, so I just think it would be a case of doing a few short CPD (Continued Professional Development) courses and maybe something in lighting design."

Gompertz, meanwhile, says adding extra services like interior design would involve asking more of your designers, which she admits could be tricky, though she says the rewards are worth it.

Ears to the ground

She advises that retailers make sure they keep their ears open for when their clients talk about things like colours and tiling and just show an interest, or ask where they sourced products and keep a record of the brands. "Then you can have a list of products and suppliers as a resource for your customers," she says.

"Clients do an awful lot of research nowadays,"



3. Farrow and Ball doesn't tend to supply direct to kitchen retailers, however it does offer a Colour Consultancy, so retailers could refer their customers on. A Colour Consultant offers a tailored design advice that is utterly bespoke to the client. Colours shown are Drawing Room Blue and Wimborne White

Gompertz adds, "and you can mine them for information and offer that to your subsequent clients, and then you could team up with some of those suppliers."

Finally on this subject, Partridge adds that provided the kitchen designer actually has an eye for design, then adding some sort of soft furnishings would be as straightforward as choosing the worktop and the colour of the doors. "So they won't need any training and offering furniture is a massive way to increase sales."

So, in summary, our panel of retailers has shown that interior design and freestanding furniture pieces in particular could add significant value to a kitchen business, particularly because the kitchen's function has evolved so significantly in recent years. And with the uncertainty over the UK's exit from the EU and the potential impact on the KBB industry, now might be the ideal time to think about branching out. **kbbn**

