

All across the country Partners are limbering up in their different ways for our crucial peak trading period. Kirsty Bennett and Katy Perceval report on the various operations coming together



Marketing moves

Weeks before their debut, you'll hear chatter about the Partnership's Christmas ads among Partners and the press. But there's more to the campaigns than the small screen and, once they've aired, both divisions continue their ad stories in shops. This year you can buy everything from plush versions of John Lewis's cast of animals – Buster the Boxer, Hallie the Hedgehog and co – to bags, mugs and more bearing Waitrose's robin (*news*, p4). They've racked up record sales so far.

The ads' stories are also immortalised in book form with *Buster's Christmas* and *Coming Home* (by award-winning author Michael Morpurgo) now available to buy.



Order, order...

Peak is already well under way at Herbert Parkinson – John Lewis's textiles and filled products factory in Lancashire – as Partners have spent the last few weeks producing thousands of items for Clearance.

Last week was a record one for the Made to Measure 7-day team of 120-plus Partners, who between them made more than 1,920 pairs of curtains for customers. "Our peak runs from October to January and our average order numbers jump from around 600 to anywhere between 1,000 and 2,000 in our busiest weeks," says Immy Hussain, Section Manager. And the curtain style of 2016? "Velvets in rich shades of gold, silver and purple," he says. "It's a high-end look!"



Gemma Barnes runs up some curtains



Beauty at JL Chelmsford

Categorically speaking

For Partners working in our business's buying offices, Christmas is often packaged up as early as January. John Lewis's Gift Food and Seasonal Events team takes on the task of 'reinventing' Christmas each January, making decisions on the products to invest in. Peculiar but popular treats for 2016 range from Geraldine the gold dachshund to a 15ft faux Christmas tree with a £995 pricetag!

The pressure's on in Beauty, too, as it's a category that's a big draw for shoppers, says Justine Burgess-Hume, Beauty Counters Buying: "We've invested heavily in our Beauty offer this year, adding new brands such as MAC, Charlotte Tilbury and Marc Jacobs to more of our shops, which will really help us attract more people."

In Waitrose, it's the Christmas pudding that's in the spotlight this year. Reinventions include a Persian-themed Heston version and an all-savoury 'Turkey Christmas Pudding'.



“There's already a buzz around Christmas here, with everyone working hard on our preparations for peak. We're getting ready for our first delivery of Christmas trees and I'm looking forward to gaining first-hand experience of branch life during the festive period!”

Kiran Samra, Graduate Trainee, Waitrose Lichfield



“Our challenges include our winter weather plan, driver resourcing and the increased volumes to be delivered in a short window. There's also the traffic (and roadworks!) and planning collections on Boxing Day and New Year's Day. And, of course, the turkeys!”

Mick Stock, Section Manager, Transport, WR Aylesford RDC

