

# As easy as falling off a cliff

I'm sorry. What was I saying? It's just that it's been one of those years when you come out the end wondering which direction you were facing when you went into it. There's probably some appropriate Dickensian turn of phrase for it, but I just can't bring it to mind.

I mean, can you remember what you were doing last January? All that talk still of expansion and 'continuing market development' – but it's like the waistbands that you get on M&S jeans – you're doing fine 'til the day your denims end up round your knees and your arse is hanging out in the north wind. Much like 2008. Don't you think?

Anyway, here we are, all ready for a fresh start. Sales directors up and down the country have spent the past couple of weeks seeking wisdom in the bottom of single malt, so here's a few more ideas for all you dynamic sales-types out there.

It's hardly believable that the miners' strike was a quarter of a century ago. Yes, this bright-eyed babe of 2009 will be the twenty-fifth anniversary of the year when Thatcher and her demon-spawn attack dog McGregor destroyed the UK's industrial base (believing that the financial sector was all we needed to guarantee a place in heaven). But we forget what benefits such destruction brought. Mines and factories up and down the country re-opened as heritage experiences, though usually without the noise, smell or industrial output.

Of course, it's important that themed events reflect the current *Zeitgeist*, so here's an opportunity to reignite the flagging fire of the reality genre as well as giving ordinary folk the chance to look inside the madcap mind of the financial sector.

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didn't come up to snuff was poked with a stick and told to liven up their act a bit. Now we have the same opportunity in financial districts throughout the UK. Trading floors will be refurbished, with appropriate lighting – gold and crystal chandeliers, disco mirror balls and lots of colour-changing LEDs around the desks conveying the essence of the working conditions of the poor blighters who worked there.

'Retired' traders will be seen capering at their desks, making 'deals' – though for the safety of the public, the phones and computers wouldn't actually be connected to anything, obviously. Sticks will be issued with entry tickets.

Mega shopping centres will be re-badged as Zombie theme parks. They'll be refurbished with flickering fluorescent tubes and those special fittings that switch off one at a time behind you as you're running down a corridor. Visitors will find their own way into the centre, usually through an unlocked service door around the back of the building, then have to fend off attacks from killer zombies lying in wait for them in specially zoned areas of the malls. Zombies will be played by out-of-work shop staff, who probably won't notice (insert cheap shot at minimum-waged staff here).

And in a last-ditch desperate attempt to save Woolworths (once described by Nanci Griffith as smelling like popcorn and chewing gum rubbed around on the bottom of a leather-soled shoe) the world's output of LED lighting is diverted to the production of cheap plastic torches and flashing birthday badges. But it's a forlorn endeavour and Woolworths will go on to become the latest go-to experience of the burgeoning high street retail heritage industry.

The important thing to remember, boys and girls, as you wake up each morning with a scream on your lips, is that dinosaurs may be extinct but they still pull in the tourist dollar.

A final thought for you. If you see an impoverished city trader shuffling along the pavement in his threadbare Armani suit, please don't pass by on the other side. Walk up to him, with your hands outstretched, crying: "Look! Here's another one of those bastards who's brought this country to its knees."

Happy New Year.

**John Bullock**

Read John's regular blog at [www.lighting.co.uk](http://www.lighting.co.uk)

