



From Paper to Card: Gifting Made Easier

If you're still not sure about selling the new National Garden Gift Card, then have a look at how Abercorn Garden Centre, a small retailer, is getting on. They had concerns and some teething problems, but now see Gift Card as the way forward.

David Norman, Director of Abercorn Plant and Garden Centre, Chelmsford, Essex, is a big fan of the new National Garden Gift Card, despite some initial concerns: "We were concerned initially that the costs of running the scheme would be higher than for the Gift Vouchers. The original scheme to 'redeem only' was more expensive to administer. This is now not the case – the cost is exactly the same as the current Gift Vouchers."

He says that the cards have lots of advantages and benefits over the paper vouchers.

These include:

- > **They're simple to process**
 - > **The stock of unused cards has no financial implications, as there's no cost to buy them**
 - > **They provide a simple, effective and attractive display at the point of sale**
 - > **Customers regularly choose to load higher amounts than the set values of the paper vouchers**
 - > **There's no opportunity for theft – either by customers or by staff**
- There's no need to post accepted vouchers back to the HTA for payment – it's all done via direct debit**

"What I particularly like is the simplicity of the activation process and the variable activation amount," says David.

"They provide several advantages and benefits to our business, such as no upfront costs, no security or theft issues and the speed of transaction."

"My staff also like them because they're simple to sell. There's no time-consuming fiddling about with paperwork, stamping names, finding envelopes, reminding the customer to choose a card... it's also a very easy sales pitch for the team – customers can have any value they desire – and they don't need to check for 'use by' dates."

"And, very importantly, our customers like them. They are a modern form of gift, which is widely accepted, and they can use the Card in increments without incurring the hassle of receiving credit notes or vouchers as change. Once the network of redeeming outlets is as large as those for the Voucher scheme, I'm sure the Gift Card will be equally universal throughout the country."

"The compact counter display also means that the Gift Card is great at selling itself, particularly as people are now very comfortable with electronic gift cards from other industries. It also has the potential to be more attractive to a younger spender; this may then have an impact on increasing the footfall from younger people, who otherwise may have gone to a multiple or shed for their horticultural needs."

David was also impressed with the installation and set-up of the system. "Using EPOS systems, the set up was very simple and only needed a software update by the EPOS provider. Once the software was installed, only a small amount of testing was done to confirm it was all working.