

THERESA CUTTS

Nutritional and Marketing Consultant

Each issue, the Grafter takes a look at an individual working in the natural health trade. This issue, we catch up with Theresa Cutts as she marks 45 years in our special industry.



It's often the case that people come into our industry and never leave, but there are few who have offered the kind of service as Theresa Cutts, a nutritional and marketing consultant who supports a number of industry brands but also works with the HFMA.

Theresa is marking an impressive 45 years in the trade, yet came into the industry by accident at the age of 17, when she got a job in the original Food For Thought in Guildford.

"I was at college, not really studying a mix of art and social sciences, my mum was Assistant Manager of the store and said they were looking for temporary Christmas staff to weigh up the own label products," Theresa recalled. "Within six months, I had a regular part time role, which led two years later to managing the Leatherhead branch that the owner had acquired from Ray Hill (I love how 'connected' this industry is). I stayed for nearly 10 years and by then was totally in love with the industry."

From retail she moved to Quest Vitamins as a trainer, commenting: "At that time, in-store training was groundbreaking, and the two of us covered the whole of the UK. I then moved to Lanes as a Nutritional Consultant and eventually PR Manager."

A decade later, she joined Tom Moses at Country Life and Desert Essence, and today, still works closely with Tom and his team at Natural Trade Brokers. Later, Theresa set up her own business.

She explained: "When Tom's business changed to Re:Action Sales and Marketing and we were working with lots of different brands, I set up my own consultancy that allowed me to work directly with many of the brands we were dealing with. From that point, I have been lucky enough to work with some amazing brands and importantly, fantastic people."

This also led Theresa to the HFMA.

"In 2021, I joined the HFMA team initially to support the HealthyDoesIt programme set up during Covid to support retailers and encourage consumers into the store. When this was handed over to Health Stores UK, I was asked to stay on as PR and Marketing Consultant," she advised. "The opportunity to be involved with the industry's trade body and to connect with so many people and brands, as well as be at the forefront of what goes on in the industry, was just too exciting to resist."

Theresa believes having started her career in a health food store, she is well-placed to support retailers.

"I feel all those years on the shop floor gave me a good grounding in understanding what a retailer needs when it comes to information and training. I know what it is like dealing with the everyday ups and downs of being in a store," Theresa explained. "I fully believe this experience helps me deliver information the retailer needs. Lots of science information is great as background knowledge, but when you have a few minutes to convey a product to a customer, you need to be able to deliver the key facts in a relevant way."

"The independent trade has a special place in my heart; had I not spent 10 years there, I wouldn't be here now. Independent stores don't have it easy on the high street, but I also feel there are lots of opportunities to make the store an important part of the community with activities, offers and the skills of staff. I love the innovation we still see and the fact that so many things that were considered a bit out there such as fermented foods and vitamin D are now everyday topics."

The time spent in the industry is impressive, so what is it that Theresa enjoys about the nutrition world?

She advised: "I came into this industry by accident and have literally learnt on the job. The field of

nutrition has changed so much over the years that I firmly believe you never stop learning. One of the reasons I stayed in this trade is there is always something new. I always say I was temporary Christmas staff that stayed!"

The list of brands she has worked with over the years is impressive, and includes Lanes, Quest Vitamins, Natural Trade Brokers, Waverlex, AOR, SC Nutra and others, as well as the HFMA. And so to today, and what is Theresa's role?

She advised: "Every day is different! It could be a sales meeting with the NTB team, preparing a seminar for health professionals, PR activity with the HFMA, writing a training manual, zoom staff training, and more. This year, it has been events such as the HFMA's 60th anniversary."

So, after so many years in our trade, is Theresa still motivated in her work? And what would she pinpoint as her biggest achievements?

"I love variety and I have that every day, but perhaps the biggest driver is that I get to work with some incredible people. This industry is filled with not only great characters, but inspiring people that you can always learn from. I still get excited over a new product or discovery. I am so lucky to do a job that I love, a privilege and motivational," she commented.

"When I look back at the journal entry I made on my first day at Food For Thought I wrote, 'I started a new job today, if I get to know a bit more, I think I might quite like it.' I have gone on to learn a whole lot more and the fact that I now get asked to speak at events outside of the industry about food supplements is to me, a massive achievement. I also still get a thrill when I see a product on the shelf that I have had a hand in developing. Setting up my own consultancy was a bit of a risk and rather scary at the time, but I'm proud that so many of my clients have come through recommendations and word of mouth. Hopefully that means I am doing a good job." **hfb**

Quick questions

What is the best thing about your job? Variety and the fabulous people I get to work with.

What is the worst? Bad Zoom connections!

Describe yourself in three words: Enthusiastic, excitable, creative, (i.e. great at making a mess with fabric and glue!).

Musical tastes? So many! In a day, I could listen to Leonard Cohen, Bruce Springsteen and Dolly Parton. Then mix it up with a bit of classical.

What's your greatest ambition? To build on the perfect work-life balance to allow me to keep doing what I do and at the same time, sew, bake and grow things.