

JOHN LEWIS: *The Service Renaissance*



Figure 1 - The John Lewis store on Oxford Street featured in the Christmas advert (John Lewis/PA, 2024)

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CONTEXT

“Created for Real Life –
With the Everyday in Mind”
(John Lewis, 2025).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across the UK retail sector, customer expectations for personalised, attentive, and informed service continue to rise, yet in-store service quality is widely reported to be declining. Industry analysis from McKinsey (2024) notes that 40% of consumers now cite poor service as a key reason for switching retailers, while Mintel (2023) highlights “staff availability, product knowledge, and emotional reassurance” as the top unmet needs within department-store shopping. At the same time, Deloitte’s Global Consumer Trends (2024) shows a renewed appetite for human interaction in stores as consumers become fatigued by self-service, automation, and untrained staff.

This gap between rising expectations and declining frontline support represents both a vulnerability and an opportunity for John Lewis. While the brand has recently strengthened performance through its Brilliant Retail strategy, research shows that customers increasingly miss the kind of face-to-face care, expertise, and reassurance that historically defined the John Lewis promise. The insight driving this project is clear: real service, human service, is becoming a differentiator again.

The Service Renaissance campaign proposes a refreshed, simplified, and emotionally driven communication strategy centred on what customers say they value most today: guidance, warmth, expertise, and help. The campaign repositions John Lewis as the retailer bringing service “back to the forefront,” championing staff professionalism, human connection, and the joy of being genuinely looked after in-store.

By reframing service as a core value driver, the campaign aims to strengthen customer loyalty, reaffirm John Lewis’s premium-yet-accessible positioning, and differentiate the brand in a retail landscape where service decline has become normalised. The goal is for a revitalised perception of John Lewis as the UK’s leader in expert, human-led retail service, restoring trust, increasing store engagement, and reinforcing long-term brand value.

INTRO- DUCTION

John Lewis began in 1864 as a small Oxford Street drapery shop and grew into one of Britain's most trusted retail brands through a clear promise of quality, care and service. Today, consumers across the retail sector are increasingly frustrated with poor service, limited help and a lack of expert guidance. Expectations are rising while many in-store experiences are falling short.

John Lewis has already taken major steps through its multimillion pound Brilliant Retail programme, which focuses on improving stores, strengthening product ranges and elevating staff training. These investments reflect a renewed commitment to the customer experience.

A service-centered communication strategy, The Service Renaissance, builds on this momentum. It highlights the emotional value of real human help and reconnects the brand with what made it distinctive in the first place. In a moment when service defines loyalty and perceived value, the time for John Lewis to lead with care is now.



Figure 2 - John Lewis store signage at Canary Wharf (John Lewis, 2024).

ISSUE BACK- GROUND

Since COVID-19, the in-store experience has shifted toward speed and efficiency rather than service. Click and collect, self-checkout, digital screens, and AI assistance now allow customers to move through stores without speaking to anyone. PwC (2023) reports a noticeable drop in staff presence on shop floors, and KPMG (2022) confirms that many retailers prioritised automation to manage costs and safety.

These tools are convenient for quick errands, but they do not meet the expectations customers bring to department stores. The National Retail Federation (2024) notes that shoppers buying higher value or unfamiliar products still rely on human guidance for confidence and reassurance. Forrester (2023) adds that customers feel less supported and more frustrated when trained staff are difficult to find.

For John Lewis, a brand built on trust, expertise, and personal care, this shift has created a clear gap between what customers expect and what they now receive. The rise of low-touch retail has made the human side of the John Lewis experience more important than ever, which is why a renewed focus on service forms the foundation of the Service Renaissance strategy.

EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

The current UK retail environment is shaped by economic pressure, shifting social expectations, rapid technological change, and tighter regulations. Consumers are more value conscious yet increasingly seek human guidance after years of automation and reduced staffing. At the same time, competitors are investing in digital convenience rather than service quality.

By Referencing frameworks such as PESTEL Analysis, these external forces reveal a clear opportunity for John Lewis to differentiate through a renewed focus on human service. The Service Renaissance aligns with market conditions and responds directly to what modern shoppers feel is missing in the broader retail landscape.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Through situational review and SWOT evaluation, it becomes clear that John Lewis holds meaningful strengths in brand heritage, loyalty, and customer trust, yet faces growing challenges around inconsistent service and increased competition focused on convenience. At the same time, consumer behaviour signals a renewed desire for human guidance and emotional reassurance in stores, creating a clear opportunity for differentiation. By prioritising a renewed service focus, John Lewis can address key weaknesses, reinforce its identity, and stand out in a crowded and highly competitive retail landscape.

THE CLIENT

John Lewis is a trusted British department store rooted in quality, reliability, and emotional warmth, offering a curated yet wide-ranging selection across Home, Fashion, Beauty, Technology, and gifting. Its brand equity is strengthened by high national recognition, strong emotional attachment, and multi-generational loyalty, as reflected in its CBBE framework. Customers associate John Lewis with reassurance, thoughtful purchasing, and dependable service across life moments.

Recent investments in store experience, curated edits, and omnichannel convenience show the brand's commitment to evolving while staying grounded in its values of care and integrity. This momentum reinforces John Lewis's position as a retailer that aims to be for everyone and sell everything from everyday essentials to premium lifestyle goods.

However, this diverse selection of offerings depends on staff who can guide, inform, and support customers across all categories. For John Lewis to deliver on its full brand promise, service must remain a central strength. A renewed focus on human connection and frontline expertise becomes essential to sustaining trust, deepening loyalty, and ensuring the brand continues to stand out in a competitive retail landscape.



Figure 3 - John Lewis store signage on Oxford Street, 2020 (Stansall/AFP via Getty Images, 2020).



Figure 4 - Union flag-themed John Lewis storefront during the Queen's 90th birthday celebrations, 2016 (Leal/AFP via Getty Images, 2016).



Figure 5 - Man carrying a John Lewis and Partners shopping bag, Oxford Street, 2019 (Rushen/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images, 2019).



Figure 6 - John Lewis Oxford Street store, 2024 (Ratcliffe/Bloomberg via Getty Images, 2024).

THE COMPETITION

John Lewis competes with supermarkets, online giants, fast-fashion brands, beauty specialists, and traditional department stores. Porter's Five Forces show intense rivalry, high buyer power, and strong substitution risk across every category the brand sells. While competitors win on convenience, price, or premium experience, John Lewis stands out for trust, heritage, and lifestyle breadth. To maintain its position, it must elevate service excellence and frontline expertise, using human connection as its key point of differentiation in a market increasingly shaped by automation and efficiency.

COMPETITIVE *POSITIONING INSIGHTS*

Where John Lewis Excels

- Strong emotional trust and heritage
- Broad lifestyle offer across categories
- Reliable quality and consistency
- High loyalty across key life stages
- Warm, reassuring brand identity

Where Competitors Outperform

- Amazon, ASOS: Faster, clearer online journeys
- M&S: More modern everyday fashion and stronger convenience footprint
- Tesco, Morrisons: Price leadership for weekly essentials
- Boots: Superior beauty expertise
- Primark: Ultra low prices
- Selfridges: High-touch experience and cultural relevance

Opportunities for John Lewis

- Reclaim leadership in human service and expertise
- Refresh category identity to better compete with M&S
- Strengthen beauty and tech authority
- Build more emotionally engaging in-store moments
- Sharpen price-value communication while protecting brand ethos

What John Lewis Must Avoid

- Over-automation that erodes its people-first promise
- Chasing low-price competitors
- Inconsistent service delivery
- Diluting premium cues in pursuit of short-term trends

THE AUDIENCE

John Lewis serves a broad but clearly defined customer base, with website analytics indicating that most visitors fall between the ages of 25 and 54, with a slight female majority and strong engagement in home, furniture, technology, fashion, and gifting categories (SimilarWeb, 2024). These behavioural patterns show that customers often arrive with high-intent missions linked to life transitions such as moving home, redecorating, upgrading appliances, or preparing for seasonal events. This audience values reliability, curated choice, and reassurance, favouring retailers that simplify complex decisions and provide confidence in both everyday and significant purchases.

To further understand their needs and motivations, a detailed Customer Journey Map was created, highlighting how this audience interacts with John Lewis across awareness, consideration, purchase, post-purchase, and loyalty stages. The journey illustrates recurring expectations for trustworthy information, knowledgeable staff support, smooth fulfilment, and consistent aftercare. It also identifies key pain points, such as difficulty accessing expert help, overwhelming choice, and unclear service communication, which frequently inhibit decision making.

Across this behaviour, several core audience groups emerge: home-focused adults investing in furniture or decor, lifestyle shoppers exploring fashion and beauty, tech buyers needing expert guidance for high-value items, and gift-givers seeking thoughtful, -



Figure 7 - Passers-by outside John Lewis and Co's Oxford Street store, 1936 (Fox Photos/Getty Images, 1936).



Figure 8 - John Lewis Oxford Street during Christmas shopping season (Clarke/Getty Images, 2013).



Figure 9 - Shoppers inside John Lewis, Oxford Street, 1966 (Central Press/Hulton Archive/Getty Images, 1966).

dependable solutions. While their categories differ, these customers consistently look for a retailer that feels supportive. They want staff who reduce uncertainty and reinforce confidence in their decisions. This consumer insight strengthens the rationale for a service-led communication strategy, positioning human expertise and emotional reassurance as essential components in meeting the expectations of the John Lewis customer.

CONCEPT

“Made to Last – With
quality that stands the test
of time” (John Lewis, 2025).

THE SERVICE RENAISSANCE

“Strip it back. Focus on what really matters.”

Campaign Concept (Core Definition)

The Service Renaissance is a strategic communication and brand-experience campaign that repositions John Lewis through a return to its core strength: human, knowledgeable, emotionally reassuring service. The campaign does not introduce new technology or disruptive formats. Instead, it amplifies what customers already value:

- Real expertise
- Warm, person-to-person guidance
- Trustworthiness in moments of uncertainty
- Emotional reassurance across life stages

Core idea:

By elevating service back to its rightful place, John Lewis strengthens its identity as the retailer people rely on when the moment truly matters.

Why This Concept Works Now?

The Service Renaissance aligns with broader consumer and category shifts:

- Post-pandemic fatigue with automation and self-service
- Rising demand for guidance, reassurance, and expertise in-store
- A resurgence of interest in curated, confidence-building retail interactions
- John Lewis’ real-world improvements under Brilliant Retail (2024–2025), which create a credible foundation for this message

Core Reason: The campaign lands because it meets consumers where their unmet needs are today.

PURPOSE OF THE CAMPAIGN

The campaign acts on two levels: internal culture shift and external brand communication.

Internal Purpose

To rebuild a service mindset across all touchpoints by:

- Reaffirming service excellence as a core brand pillar
- Re-training partners to provide confident expertise and warmth
- Aligning stores, staff, and communication around a shared service philosophy
- Reinforcing that human interaction is central to John Lewis' value proposition

External Purpose

To publicly communicate John Lewis' renewed focus on service, making it visible, tangible, and emotionally reassuring to consumers.

The campaign aims to:

- Show customers that service quality is being actively revitalised
- Rebuild trust in the John Lewis promise
- Signal a shift from transactional retail toward experience-led retail
- Strengthen loyalty through meaningful, human-led interactions

CAMPAIGN TO BRAND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The Service Renaissance moves beyond an internal service improvement initiative and becomes a complete brand communication strategy by structuring how John Lewis translates organisational change into consistent, audience-facing messages.

Phase 1: Internal Activation

Before any public communication occurs, the campaign establishes a unified internal service identity.

Fill and Hughes emphasise that internal communication is essential because employees become “first-line brand communicators,” shaping how customers interpret the brand’s promise in real interactions (2012).

Within John Lewis, this phase includes:

- Partner training on renewed service behaviours
- Internal messaging about the campaign’s philosophy
- Alignment of in-store teams around human service as a differentiator

This ensures the brand promise is lived internally before it is communicated externally.

This approach reflects Fill and Hughes’ position that effective marketing communication must create clarity, consistency, and continuity across all touchpoints so that organisational intent is fully understood by consumers (Fill and Hughes, 2012).

Phase 2: Public Communication

Once internal culture is aligned, the campaign transitions to the external environment. This follows Lea-Greenwood’s argument that fashion and retail brands must create communication that connects emotionally, reinforces identity, and demonstrates the brand’s value in people’s lives (Lea-Greenwood, 2012).

The Service Renaissance does this by:

- Announcing John Lewis’ renewed focus on service through press releases and industry PR
- Using advertising and storytelling to humanise in-store expertise
- Reintroducing reassurance-based messaging across paid, owned, and earned media

The goal is to make the internal service shift visible and credible to consumers.

CAMPAIGN TO BRAND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY (Continued)

Phase 3: Customer Experience Expression

The final stage ensures the campaign is reinforced through customer-facing communication, without requiring environmental redesign or technological change.

Fill and Hughes highlight that communication includes verbal, behavioural, and informational cues that shape the customer's perception at the moment of interaction (Fill and Hughes, 20012).

Lea-Greenwood further argues that consistent tone and narrative across touchpoints help anchor brand meaning for consumers (2012).

This phase includes:

- Service-forward language used by partners (light-touch script updates, key phrases, tone of voice)
- Printed or digital in-store communication materials, such as posters or tent cards that announce the Service Renaissance

- Customer-facing campaign messaging on receipts, email newsletters, social media, or app notifications
- Low-intervention touchpoints such as thank-you cards, service explanations, or point-of-service communication (e.g., "We are here to help")
- Press-facing assets that reinforce the narrative of returning to trusted, human service

None of these require structural changes. They focus solely on communication clarity and emotional reassurance.

Outcome:

Through this integrated communication approach, The Service Renaissance becomes more than a statement — it becomes a recognisable and reassuring brand behaviour.

Why This Structure Matters

By following recognised communication frameworks, the campaign ensures:

- Internal alignment (the message is real)
- Public clarity (the message is communicated)
- Experiential reinforcement (the message is felt)

KEY DELIVER- ABLES

To effectively activate The Service Renaissance, a focused set of strategic deliverables will be developed across internal culture, external communication, in-store experience, PR, and measurement. Together, these assets ensure the campaign is embedded within the organisation and clearly communicated to customers, partners, and the wider industry.

Internal Deliverables

These assets support partner alignment and reinforce a renewed service ethos across all touchpoints.

- Internal campaign announcement for all partners
- Updated service scripts reflecting warmth, clarity, and expertise
- Excerpts from the Service Playbook outlining expected behaviours and standards
- Visuals and templates for a refreshed partner recognition programme



OFFICIAL MEMO

To: All Partners
From: Executive Director, Retail
Date: 14 January 2026
Subject: Launching The Service Renaissance

Dear Partners,

Today we are pleased to introduce The Service Renaissance, a renewed commitment to the standard that has always set John Lewis apart: human service grounded in care, expertise, and trust.

Over recent years, the retail landscape has changed rapidly. Customers tell us they value personal connection more than ever, yet too often they struggle to find it. As we continue delivering on the momentum of Brilliant Retail, this next phase places service at the centre of how we show up for every customer, every day.

What The Service Renaissance Means

1. A refreshed focus on human connection
Customers should feel warmly welcomed, supported, and reassured from the moment they enter our shops.
2. Clearer, more confident expertise
Partners will play an even more vital role in helping customers make decisions through knowledgeable, personalized guidance.
3. Consistency across every touchpoint
Whether in-store, online, or during fulfillment, service should feel recognizably "John Lewis": thoughtful, dependable, and calm.

How You Can Support the Launch

- Lead with warmth in every interaction
- Use your product and category knowledge proactively
- Take ownership of customer moments that need reassurance or clarity
- Share examples of excellent service with your managers so we can celebrate and learn from them
- Provide feedback on what tools or guidance would help you deliver even better service

Together, we can restore service to its rightful place at the heart of the customer experience. Thank you for the care, professionalism, and dedication you bring every day.

Executive Director
Retail

1 DRUMMOND GATE,
PIMLICO, LONDON,
SW1V 2QQ

Figure 10 - Internal memo mock-up (Collier, 2025).

External Deliverables

These materials communicate the campaign publicly and shape customer understanding of the renewed service focus.

- Official press release announcing The Service Renaissance
- Website hero banner introducing the campaign message
- Social media templates for platform-wide consistency
- Customer-facing FAQ explaining the changes and benefits
- Email newsletter announcing the service improvement initiative



Figure 12 - Press release Page 2 mock-up (Collier, 2025).



Figure 11 - Press release Page 1 mock-up (Collier, 2025).

In-Store Deliverables

These assets enhance the physical environment and make the service commitment visible and tangible.

- “Service Promise” signage at store entrances and service desks
- Updated partner name badges emphasizing guidance and support
- Refreshed in-store signage aligned with the campaign’s tone
- Revised copy for appointment booking touchpoints (beauty, home, tech)

Events and PR Deliverables

These tools extend the campaign beyond the store and position John Lewis as a leader in service innovation.

- A press kit containing campaign context, service vision, and brand story
- Executive op-ed outlining the importance of human service today
- Graphics and promotional materials for retail week activations or community events

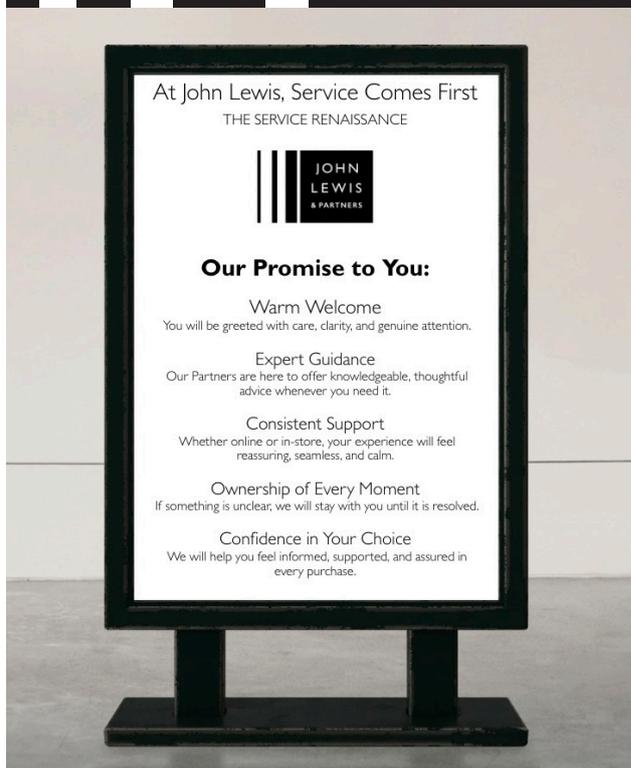


Figure 13 - “Service Promise” signage mock-up (Collier, 2025).



Figure 14 - Executive op-ed mock-up (Collier, 2025, created using Artlist).

Content Series Deliverables

These storytelling assets strengthen emotional connection and demonstrate the people behind the service.

- A stills-based campaign expressing the renewed focus on care
- Partner spotlight stories featuring real employees and their expertise
- Monthly “service wins” content highlighting improvements and customer stories

Measurement Deliverables

These tools track progress, maintain accountability, and inform continuous improvement.

- A service scorecard defining KPIs and success measures
- A dashboard visualising customer sentiment and service performance
- Feedback tools enabling both partner and customer input



Figure 16 - Feedback tools mock-up (Collier, 2025, created using Artist).



Figure 15 - Stills-based campaign mock-up (Collier, 2025, created using Artist).

CAMPAIGN ROLLOUT TIMELINE

PHASE 2 — *Internal Launch (Partners & Store Teams)* JAN 2026

Introduce the movement internally before customers see anything. This builds belief first, execution second.

PHASE 4 — *In-Store Experience Activation* APR 2026 – AUG 2026

Bring the campaign off the page and into real-world customer interactions.

PHASE 6 — *Content Series Rollout* JUL 2026 – DEC 2026

Give the campaign longevity and emotional depth through storytelling.

PHASE 1 — *Internal Planning & Development*

OCT 2025 – DEC 2025

Build the campaign foundations, align leaders, develop service tools, approve messaging.

PHASE 3 — *External Communication Rollout*

FEB 2026 – APR 2026

Begin shifting customer perception by publicly stating the renewed commitment to service.

PHASE 5 — *Events & PR Deliverables*

JUN 2026 – OCT 2026

Reinforce the campaign through cultural touchpoints and earned media.

PHASE 7 — *Campaign Measurement & Evaluation*

OCT 2026 – MAR 2027

Purpose: Capture results, evaluate ROI, and inform future service strategy.

OUTCOME

“Consciously Crafted –
With respect and care”
(John Lewis, 2025).

EVALUA- TION

Evaluating the Service Renaissance campaign requires assessing both the effectiveness of the communication strategy and the behavioural outcomes within stores. As a transformation programme, success is not measured solely by awareness, but by shifts in customer sentiment, partner behaviour, and service consistency. The proposed measurement framework integrates qualitative and quantitative indicators to capture short- and long-term impact.

On the customer side, the introduction of the Service Scorecard establishes a clear structure for tracking satisfaction, interaction quality, emotional reassurance, and perceived expertise. Improvements in these areas would indicate that the campaign is successfully restoring trust in the John Lewis service promise. Digital and in-store feedback tools allow for real-time insight into the customer experience, enabling the business to adjust training, communication, or operational approaches where needed.

Partner engagement is equally important. The internal elements of the campaign, including the memo, service scripts, and recognition assets, aim to rebuild confidence and define what excellent service looks like in practice. Evaluation should therefore monitor partner confidence, clarity of expectations, and observed behavioural change through mystery shopping, manager assessments, and partner feedback.

Externally, the press materials, social assets, and retail week communications help position John Lewis as a leader in service amid a crowded and increasingly automated market. Tracking media coverage, sentiment, and customer responses across platforms will indicate the effectiveness of the strategic storytelling and whether it aligns with customer expectations.

Overall, the evaluation framework ensures that the Service Renaissance is not viewed simply as a communications strategy but as a measurable shift in the quality of human interaction delivered across the business.

CONCLU- SION

The Service Renaissance campaign demonstrates how a focused, service-led approach can support John Lewis as it navigates a changing retail environment. Rather than adding new layers of complexity, the strategy prioritises clarity and consistency. By aligning internal communication, external messaging, and in-store cues, the campaign creates a unified direction that partners and customers can easily understand.

What this campaign ultimately shows is that service remains a strategic asset, not an operational afterthought. When partners feel equipped and recognised, their confidence translates into better customer interactions. When customers feel acknowledged and guided, their trust in the brand strengthens. The Service Renaissance provides a framework that helps these relationships function more effectively.

This campaign is not intended as a complete transformation of John Lewis, but as a structured step forward: a way to reinforce behaviours that already align with the brand's values while addressing the areas where customer expectations have outpaced experience. By setting clear goals and establishing tools to measure progress, the campaign ensures that improvement is both trackable and sustainable.

In bringing these elements together, the Service Renaissance offers a practical roadmap for elevating everyday interactions and preserving what makes John Lewis distinct in a competitive market. It positions the business to continue building loyalty through service that feels both intentional and reliable.

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IMAGE LIST

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