

## Talking Business



Wendy Hallett

# A little paid advice can go a long way

During these tough times caused by the credit crunch, one temptation for a small business is to cease spending on development.

The irony is that in hard times the need to maintain growth is key to a long-term business strategy for when times get better. There is a way of using money and staff effectively to ride out the economic storm.

When I started my business 10 years ago, I was starting a new venture, needed expertise fast in a number of different fields, and I also had a limited budget. The solution was to use consultants in conjunction with employees.

**It never hurts to have an expert's opinion on where you can improve**

There are brilliant consultants out there who bring a wealth of experience to a small business and provide the flexibility of only the services you need, when you need them.

Hallett Retail has used, and still uses, consultants for a broad spectrum of needs – IT, PR, HR, staff training, shop-fitting and accountancy, to name a few. I have found that using consultants is crucial when you are developing a new area of business, for example when Hallett Retail went into Debenhams and our expansion into New Look.

Consultants are not afraid to say what they think and it never hurts to have an expert's opinion on where you can improve.

The key to success in using consultants is to find the right one. Networking can be the answer, with recommendations a good place to start. I have found a wealth of talent in working mothers who have chosen consultancy as a flexible way of working at a senior level.

So if you want to plan for the future without risking the present, I suggest looking into the consultancy arena.

**Wendy Hallett** is managing director of concession operator Hallett Retail Services