

An illustration of a hand in a green sleeve holding a yellow level against a horizontal bar. Below the bar, several tools including a wrench, a tape measure, pliers, and a screwdriver are visible inside a brown toolbox. The title "At Your Service" is written in large white letters on the front of the toolbox.

At Your Service

A Look at Installations and Services for the 'Do It for Me' Market

Today's consumer is often looking for ways to make life easier. Whether they are paying an accountant to file their taxes or requesting people to run their errands, there are some people who prefer to have services performed for them.

As a home improvement retailer, you serve professional workers and DIYers. However, the do-it-for-me (DIFM) customers are another demographic not to miss. This customer is the type that McLendon Hardware assists through its installation service business, McLendon Home Services, says owner Taylor Judd.

"McLendon Home Services assists the non-DIYer, what is called the 'do-it-for-me' customer," Judd says. "They range from the later-age baby boomer needing extra help around the home, to the younger first-time homeowner without the skills or time to complete their various projects."

To learn the benefits of these business offerings, *Hardware Retailing* spoke to two retailers, including Judd, who serve DIFM customers through their installed sales and handyman services.

In the following pages, learn how these services can boost your bottom line, the challenges associated with them and tips for success.

Call In the Professionals

There are times when no matter what advice or help you try to give a customer, the project may be best handled by a professional.

For those customers lacking the time, skills or desire to complete home improvement projects, offering installed sales and handyman services can make your business stand out from the crowd.

At Briggs Hardware in downtown Raleigh, North Carolina, customers frequently ask for help to get their jobs done, says Stuart Davis, the store's handyman and co-owner of the business with his wife, Evelyn Murray.

"When Evelyn decided to reopen the store founded by her family, I was there to help," he says. "It is now located downtown in a smaller space, but the name kept our customers and solid reputation."

After business took off, Davis says he was frequently explaining to their customers how to complete a variety of projects.

"I have been a handyman for much of my life, so that often came up in my conversations with customers who were struggling or confused about a project," he says. "Once they learned about my background, many would ask if I could fix their problem for them. Evelyn and I decided adding handyman services to Briggs Hardware made sense."

Both homeowners and businesses request handyman services through Briggs Hardware. The jobs Davis goes on range from quick visits hanging a flat-screen TV or repairing drywall, to a longer job finishing up a contractor's project checklist when they run out of time.

In Washington state, McLendon Hardware also offers a variety of handyman and installed sales services to customers across its seven locations. McLendon Home Services, which is under the hardware chain's umbrella, was created out of a need for those skilled in projects around the home, says Judd.

In 2008, Judd approached leaders at McLendon Hardware to pitch the idea of a home services startup within their business. Rather than find someone else to help a customer complete their projects, Judd pitched a way for McLendon's to streamline the experience and keep the quote and sales experience in the store, he says.

"This idea was something that resonated because McLendon Hardware customers want to be helped with project quotes and other information in the store, not always have someone come to their home for a quote," Judd says. "The main focus of our home services is to be as cost-effective, professional and convenient for the homeowner as possible."

McLendon Home Services serves single-family residential homeowners. The business focuses on assisting in the repair and replacement market.



Customers of **McLendon Hardware** stores in Washington have the opportunity to hire trained service professionals to install a wide variety of products in their homes. The business assists "do-it-for-me" customers looking for convenience and a reliable company.

Davis says his services aide the contractors in town rather than compete with them, as he can help complete the small projects they don't have time to do.

To promote their services, McLendon stores advertise the costs associated with different products that can be installed, like garbage disposals or new faucets, on the tags in the aisle, he says.

Judd manages the McLendon Home Services team, which has service centers in two of the seven stores, and has a team of about 20 employees who are experienced, licensed and certified to complete in-home projects.

Plus, the store has a small group of contractors that work through McLendon as contracting partners for any jobs his employees aren't trained to do.

Something to consider before offering these services is a store's customer base. McLendon works closely with homeowners, so these services are a smart addition, Judd says.

Briggs Hardware has a small footprint and is a go-to spot for the homeowner rather than a large contractor market. However, Davis says his services aide the contractors in town rather than compete with them, as he can help complete the small projects they don't have time to do.

"The handyman services I offer often help out our local contractors," Davis says. "Sometimes, they have other projects coming up, and they'll call me to see if I can tie up loose ends on a project for them."

A Closer Look at Customer Service

Offering handyman services through a home improvement store adds an extra layer of customer service to loyal shoppers, says Davis.

"Briggs Hardware has been a part of the Raleigh community for 152 years, so a local looking for a handyman is even more likely to hire us," he says. "The reputation of our business gives us an advantage over the competition, because the customer knows we're a good, reputable business."



Stuart Davis, store handyman and co-owner of **Briggs Hardware** in Raleigh, North Carolina, visits several customers' homes a week for all types of projects. A service he frequently performs is mounting flat-screen TVs on walls.

McLendon Home Services also has found success in part due to its name and customers trusting the business to tackle their home improvement projects, Judd says.

“Our customers are hardware store customers, so they are loyal to the business already,” Judd says. “Home services are just an additional purchase they’ve made through the store. They are buying a product, and that product has a service attached.”

“I was familiar with the needs of both the retailer and the homeowner in order to make this a successful business. Plus, we brought people in from the marketplace with the skills to deliver great service to customers.”

—Taylor Judd, McLendon Home Services

Both Davis and Judd have a wealth of experience in home improvement, which is another important factor for those considering adding this service to their business.

“I had 25 years of experience in the repair and replacement market before we started McLendon Home Services,” Judd says. “I was familiar with the needs of both the retailer and the homeowner in order to make this a successful business. Plus, we brought people in from the marketplace with the skills to deliver great service to customers.”

As the only handyman working for their business, Davis says he is able to apply his past experience in the home improvement industry and as a handyman for his current role within Briggs Hardware.

Not only does he understand how to do a wide variety of jobs, but he also knows the right way to work with clients to ensure they are happy.

When it comes to hiring for this role, Davis suggests retailers look for those with the technical skills and a knack for customer service, as they will represent the company outside the store.

“If a retailer wants to hire someone to provide handyman services through their store,

they need to be able to complete a wide variety of jobs,” Davis says. “In addition to finding trained professionals with all of the necessary technical abilities, personality in this role is big, too. Those who are friendly, can clearly work with and communicate professionally with customers are the ideal candidate for the job.”

A primary reason McLendon Home Services has a high success rate is because of the strong communication process the company uses. The process is implemented as soon as a customer adds installation services to their project purchase, Judd says.

“In any of our services, especially if we haven’t been to the customer’s house before, we do a run-through with the homeowner ahead of starting installation work,” Judd says. “We’ll tell them what is on the list to do and look at it with them. If there isn’t a way to install it properly or it’s much different than what was communicated through the store, then there is a reassessment. We have a very liberal return policy, so if they purchase a job with a service that can’t be performed successfully, we refund them 100 percent. It’s worth it to keep a customer.”

The flyer features the McLendon Home Services logo at the top. The main headline reads '- Up to - 20% OFF TREX® DECKING'. Below this, a sub-headline states 'Never replace your deck again with tough-as-nails Trex boards!'. A block of fine print follows, detailing terms and conditions. The flyer is divided into three sections: '- We Finance -' with details on financing options, '- Projects big & small -' listing various services, and '- Visit Our Showrooms -' with contact information for two locations. An Angie's List award badge is positioned in the bottom right corner.

McLendon Home Services

- Up to -
20% OFF
TREX®
DECKING

Never replace your deck again with tough-as-nails Trex boards!

Terms and Conditions: Offer valid for Trex orders of 150 sq. feet or more. Discount percentage varies based on your order's square footage and Trex product(s) selected. This deal cannot be combined with other specials or offers, and cannot be applied to current or past jobs. Limit one deal per person/household.

- We Finance -
On approved credit, get 12 months same-as-cash or finance up to seven years at low rates. Call MHS for details.

- Projects big & small -
WE PROFESSIONALLY INSTALL
Windows, entry doors, decks, water heaters, garage doors, plumbing, handyman services & more!

- Visit Our Showrooms -
Experience quality products for yourself or speak to a McLendon Home Services expert. We're here to assist you Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and by appointment, at both showrooms:

PUYALLUP | **RENTON**
11307 Canyon Rd. E. | 440 Rainier Ave. So.
888-404-4647
McLendons.com/installation

Angie's list
2017-2018
SUPER SERVICE AWARD

McLendon Home Services prioritizes communication in its installed services, whether through flyers in the store or with a customer on a job.



As the handyman for **Briggs Hardware**, **Stuart Davis** performs a wide variety of jobs for homeowners and business owners. He will even change locks and repair screens on-site.

One way McLendon's avoids these issues is by strengthening the chain of communication internally and with customers from start to finish of a project.

"There is software we use that is specifically designed for home improvement store special orders, install services quoting and order tracking. It helps us connect all the activity and the customer communications," Judd says. "No matter what store a customer places an order from, our team can see in real time what is happening with the order."

By using a software program like McLendon Home Services or another system of checks and balances, you can eliminate the vast majority of misunderstandings and pitfalls.

Spread the Word About Service Offerings

Once a single handyman or a group of installed service professionals is hired to address home improvement service requests, building this business within a business requires marketing the services and encouraging customers to spread the word.

Briggs Hardware has established its handyman offerings through its company website. If a customer searches for Briggs Hardware, they will find information about the store, and a separate landing page about handyman services and the phone number to call. Briggs handyman services has also attracted customers through social media and word of mouth from happy customers, Davis says.

Briggs Hardware in Downtown Raleigh, NC
October 3 · 🌐

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Home and Office Repair
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Typically replies within an hour
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Home Improvement · Hardware Store · Landmark & Historical Place
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Home Improvement in Raleigh, North Carolina

Briggs Hardware spreads the word about their home and office handyman services in a variety of ways, including word-of-mouth and social media.

“To capture that market, you need to provide these services; otherwise your customers will go to the big-box retailer to have a water heater installed for them.”

—Taylor Judd, McLendon Home Services

“We make sure to let our customers know we have a handyman on staff,” Davis says. “Customers I’ve completed work for are a big help. When they tell a friend or colleague that I completed a job and was a friendly, trustworthy person who got it done right, that’s the best advertisement we could ask for.”

McLendon Hardware attracts the attention of its customers to its home services through traditional marketing channels, social media and store signage.

“We utilize online advertising and commercials for TV and radio,” Judd says. “However, we also have a lot of store signage that indicates products that have the option of installed services. Our employees on the salesfloor are able to clearly communicate that. Word-of-mouth is huge for us, which makes it even more important that every experience a customer has with us is positive.”

Through Briggs Hardware handyman services, Davis says his positive reputation and professionalism with customers has even helped build his online customer reviews and ratings. Online review boards Angie’s List and Yelp are one of the ways consumers will get that word-of-mouth referral.

“I have a five-star rating online for the handyman services I provide our customers,” Davis says. “My customer will let others know I can complete their projects. I make it a point to ensure my customers feel comfortable and can trust me in their homes.”

Although adding these services can seem daunting on top of an already busy operation, Judd says it’s something to consider as a way to remain competitive.

“Many hardware retailers are in markets near a big-box retailer like Home Depot or Lowe’s—these retailers already offer installation services,” Judd says. “To capture that market,

you need to provide these services; otherwise your customers will go to the big-box retailer to have a water heater installed for them.”

There are some things to consider before taking on these store services, like hiring the right employees and ensuring the legal side of the operation isn’t overlooked.

As the sole handyman for Briggs Hardware, Davis says he has to make sure he is meeting all the requirements of the state of North Carolina.

“As a handyman, I am insured through the business to cover any liabilities and workers’ compensation that might arise while on a job,” he says. “However, there are several standards anyone has to meet in this position, yet it differs from state to state.”

For example, in Washington state, Judd says a contractor will need a business license, and they need to be insured and bonded to perform contracting services off-site.

“For any retailer who is thinking about offering these services, they should be sure to consult with a local contracting firm,” Judd says. “Most of these companies can address the different legal requirements that need to be filled. I would just remind them how important it is to cover all of their bases.” ➡

Know the Rules and Regulations

By providing home installation and handyman services out of your business, you can grow your sales and help the customer beyond the walls of your business. Before you get started, however, you need to know what is legally required to offer these services. Below are some starting points, but if you’re serious about adding these services, seek a qualified attorney for legal advice.

- **State contractor’s board.** Seek your state’s contractor’s board, and search it online for the various laws and fines that can occur if the laws aren’t being followed.
- **Licensing.** A contractor’s license typically requires the professional to pass competency tests, pay a fee and prove insurance or bonding. Licensing for trades requires more specific knowledge and experience than contractor licenses.
- **Registration.** This is often less strict than licensing; it requires contractors to prove insurance and pay a fee.
- **Bonding.** Contractors work with a third party to cover any potential issues incurred by the client.
- **Insurance.** It’s very important a contractor is insured to cover potential property damage, injuries or workers’ compensation.