I even bought a top hat!

I never weed in the shark tank! confessions of a fish shop owner · https://shirleyaquatics.co.uk/knowledge/i-even-bought-a-top-hat/

Richard's Weekly Emails

By Richard Cook, Managing Director, Shirley Aquatics

I Even Bought a Top Hat



The top hat. Suitable for a five-year-old. Not for me.

In a hurry? Jump to:

- Being different

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- Okay to be boring

Throughout our history, both John and I have enjoyed **being different**. Doing things our own way, putting on a different kind of offering, coming up with new ideas. Getting people talking.

Being different runs in the family

I was reminded of this yesterday when I went to a trade show at the NEC. It was held in Halls 3 and 3A.

The very same halls that, back in 1993, we hired out to put on **Aqualife, the UK's biggest aquatic show**. We enjoyed it so much we did it again in 2001, this time at the National Motorcycle Museum.

A double-decker bus in Hall 3

Back then, Oase had a full-size red double-decker bus on their stand. Emblazoned with their branding, of course.

They clearly enjoyed standing out in a crowd too. (You can still find their Oase range with us today.)

One of our company values is **"We bring energy and are proud to be different."** It goes on to say we'd rather be a dynamic duck-billed platypus than a skulking sheep.

The circus that never came to town

I've always got ideas racing around my head. Last week I went down one particular rabbit hole with our aquarium sale.

For some reason, I'd got a circus theme stuck in my head. I'd come up with an elaborate cashback system, simply because it was different. The aquarium would appear at full price, but when you bought it you'd get cashback. You could spend that on decoration, on fish, or just have the money back in your account.

I'd even bought a top hat, so I could appear as the circus ringmaster in some of the videos. I had it all mapped out in my head.

Sometimes it's okay to be boring

Then I had a moment, and realised... **sometimes it's okay to be boring**.

It was unique, but complicated.

In fairness, that moment of clarity may have coincided with the top hat arriving from Amazon. It was clearly made for a five-year-old. It gave me a headache within seconds, and I looked ridiculous.

It's great to be different. It keeps things interesting. But sometimes you need to put on a tight hat to bring you back down to earth!

(Ooh, definitely getting that one on a T-shirt!)

Speak soon,
Richard

PS. Just to let you know, we've also got **20% off tropical fish throughout the whole of October**. That's whether you pop in store to see us or buy online.

PPS. And if you're wondering where the aquarium sale ended up... no ringmaster, no hoops, just good aquariums at a sale price until 1 November. Take a look here.

About Richard Cook

Richard is Managing Director of Shirley Aquatics, the family-run aquatic and reptile specialist established in 1939 and now in its third generation. With over 35 years in the aquatics industry, he writes these weekly emails to share honest stories, lessons and the occasional questionable purchase.