

In-Store Merchandising Tips

Wayfinding and Visual Cues

Make sure it's easy for customers to find what they need quickly, without asking for help. All products should be in easy eye and arm reach.

- Improve signage (placement, design) and reinforce with intuitive wall visuals. Place signs within the average visitor's line-of-sight and use colors that easily stand out against the background color scheme. Add labels to accessory shelving to make the browsing process more intuitive and easy.
- Place potentially congested areas at a comfortable distance from other congested areas. This will reduce confusion and help customers browse comfortably, without the added congestion of the adjacent area.
- Offer visitors a little "storientation." At a minimal level, post an employee at the front to greet and direct customers. Depending on the unique needs (size, layout) of each store, offering informational cards, kiosks and simple layout signs may be helpful, as well.

Roadblocks

Beyond not understanding where to go, it's important not to throw barriers up that prevent customers from getting what they want quickly and efficiently. What is the experience to get a basic product and check out?

An online store with the same problem would have a higher shopping cart abandonment rate... and we can assume brick and mortar stores are no different. Customers shouldn't have to "work" to locate or examine merchandise.

- Place products within comfortable reaching distance, preferably within a reasonably natural line of sight and arm's reach. For example, it would be relatively easy to use taller or elevated accessory shelves and angle them in the floorplan to create the center-aisle line-of-sight into the back of the room without negatively impacting the clean store design or real estate usage.
- Get people in and out more easily. Is your checkout line also serving as a customer service department (returns, service)? This can irritate people in line who have simple transactions to conduct and are forced to wait in excess of 15 minutes while faulty products are serviced and special orders created. Address long lines immediately to support both simple and complex transactions.

Don't forget to continue to test and iterate the customer experience to improve outcomes and remove the pitfalls that impact customer loyalty.

SOURCE: Leigh Duncan, a 15-year veteran of marketing, e-commerce and business and founder of Live Path (www.livepath.net).