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Creating an Exciting, Enticing and Energetic Store through Merchandising

Debra Wood Perosio
Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management
Cornell University

Is your retail store exciting, enticing and energetic? Does it “scream” come in and buy something to your customers? Do your customers leave with more than they intended to buy? If you have answered “no” to any of these questions then maybe it is time to “freshen” up and re-merchandise your retail store.

So what is merchandising? What does it hope to achieve? The goal of merchandising is to maximize customer satisfaction and value profitably through your product selection, pricing and the services you offer your customers. Merchandising is not just having a few displays or attractive signs. Every touch-point of your store should send the same message to your customers from the displays to your workers to your bags!

Merchandising can really be thought of as having two primary approaches: functional and customer focused.

In a function approach to merchandising the retailer is concerned with setting the “right” prices through efficient and effective procurement, developing a spot-on promotional program, and creating attractive and creative displays within a store layout that maximizes exposure to products.

The other side of the coin emphasizes creating and maintaining satisfied customers. How do you as a retailer provide customers with the retail shopping experience they crave? Are they looking for convenience, a broad selection of products or perhaps a narrow deep product selection, high or low prices, and what type of “experience” do they expect when coming to your store? Understanding your target market can help you answer these questions and create merchandising plans to optimize sales and customer satisfaction.



So let's take a look at the merchandising from a practical perspective. Merchandising shouldn't be what is reflected in this sign, yet how many times have you felt like this after eating out or going to a store and being treated badly or worse yet totally ignored?

When you go to Bass Pro Shops how can you not be mesmerized by the merchandising that is everywhere...floor, shelves, walls and ceilings and even the restrooms! Next time you visit a Bass Pro Shop look around carefully at how detailed and cohesive the merchandising is.

Some other great companies with merchandising to watch and observe are Trader Joe's, Wawa and Sheetz. All three of these companies create an "experience" for the customers, all in different ways. Trader Joe's is just fun...the Hawaiian shirts the employees wear, the colorful signs, crazy packaging and selection of products makes it a fun adventure. Sheetz is bright, colorful, and efficient, making your stop for gas much more enjoyable while Wawa creates a "home-town" feel in their convenience stores while getting customers in and out quickly with high quality food and products.

Let's take a look at some merchandising strategies that may help energize your store.

1. Store Layout
 - a. The entrance should be a quick decompression zone for your customers. Help to get them in the "right" frame of mind for shopping by placing fun displays, important information and or samples right at the entrance.
 - b. The front of the store should be used for promotional items or high attraction items like fresh baked good, beautiful product or awesome new products.
 - c. Place your "core" products in the center of your store.
 - d. The back of the store should be saved for "destination" products like milk and soda.
 - e. At the checkouts place small bins with a variety of products like impulse items likely to be forgotten during the regular shopping trip---This is very valuable real estate for sales and should not be overlooked.
2. Store "Hot Spots"
 - a. Where are the high traffic areas in your store? Where do people congregate? Use that area to place higher priced items, items that are new to the store or favorite items that may only be available certain times of the year.
3. Promotions
 - a. Use every element of the promotional mix (sales promotions, advertising, personal selling, public relations and social media) to communicate with your audience. Create sales events that are unique and special combining special events with great prices...customers love this!
4. Trendy and Fresh Displays
 - a. Keep your displays fresh, colorful, exciting and stocked! Rotate and change displays frequently to keep things interesting and new.
5. Demonstrations and Sampling

- a. These are two powerful merchandising strategies that have a huge impact on customers. If you have a new product, demo it on special days. If you sell food products that's even better...everybody loves a free sample and people often buy the product after tasting. Both demonstrations and sampling provide personal contact with your customers which always creates a positive shopping experience.
- 6. New and/or Improved Products
 - a. If you have new products make sure you feature them in prominent displays with impactful and informational signs. Demonstrate or sample them if appropriate.
- 7. Signage
 - a. I can't say enough about good signs. They serve so many important purposes such as offering directions (who likes to be lost?), information, and promotion of the products.
- 8. Color
 - a. Don't forget how important color is in merchandising. Here are a few insights into the "meaning" of various colors:
 - i. Yellow and red are attention grabbers
 - ii. Green evokes the idea of health, freshness and natural products
 - iii. Brown speaks to home, hearth and earthiness
 - iv. Black gives an air of sophistication, elegance and exclusivity
 - v. Trust and reliability are often associated with blue
 - vi. Violet is mystical and often associated with whimsy and imagination

There are so many interesting aspects to merchandising. Have fun with it and your customers will enjoy it and reward you with purchases. So remember if you want to have an exciting, enticing and energetic store, identify everything with signage, set the mood of your store with windows and the entrance, embrace all senses, change your displays often, engage customers with demonstrations and sampling and don't be afraid of color!

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