

# expert speak

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## **BIRD'S-EYE VIEW**

- Store layout and design key to attracting customer attention
- Necessary to create a floor plan to meaningfully engage and interact with shoppers
- Store designers increasingly utilising interrupter, strikepoints and focal walls, to create a 'fresh' look
- Well designed stores often serve as landmarks in a particular region

# CREATING THE 'WOW' IN-STORE EXPERIENCE

Store design and layout are increasingly playing a key role in attracting footfalls, and store owners need to pay careful attention to the various elements utilised.

**H**istorically, visual merchandising was not considered as a key component in retail strategy, and for differentiating a store from its competitors. However, with consumers increasingly evaluating a store in terms of a refreshing retail environment and also taking into account local tastes, store owners have no choice but to respond appropriately.

It has been observed quite often that store management have a sense of complacency and 'operating fatigue', and we do suggest to clients to figuratively 'drag everything out to the parking lot', and that includes a store's merchandise, fixtures, props and visuals accumulated over the years, when planning the redesign of a store.

And, to achieve the objective of creating a store space that attracts attention, the executional consistency of a store design team, coupled with 'fresh' visual ideas that can be implemented within a store's budget, will be viewed as key. Of course, your customers can also give you valuable feedback and those can be suitably incorporated in an in-store experience.

## Create a floor plan

The process of redesigning a store should be viewed as creating a space that would

be 'inviting', and encourage existing as well as new customers to experience your in-store offerings. And, creating a floor plan would be a crucial component of the above objective, and it would be important to ensure that there are sufficient spaces in your store to engage, motivate and interact meaningfully with your customers.

Retailers often make the mistake of putting their best store design at the front of the store, and very little attention is paid to the rear portion of an outlet. Careful planning would ensure that only customers feel welcome in a store, coupled with suitable attention for store staff ambience and boosting their productivity.

## Delighting the customer

A number of visual techniques in a store can be suitably employed including colour, geometrical designs and bringing together a number of product categories to create a more 'unified' approach, and enable consumers to experience her shopping at a totally different level.

As part of that strategy, an 'interrupter', a portable fixture display with a focus on singular or simplistic price points, can be placed either departmentally or with a group of complementary offers, to attract the attention of consumers to various promotional

offers running from time to time. In several instances, utilising interrupters for creating links to immediate gratification or a sense of emotional connection, like luscious display of dark chocolate or monogrammed stationery, respectively, have been rather successful.

In addition, suitable use of 'strikepoints' along with suitable graphics, address themes related to lifestyle, holiday options and fashion in a store. Strikepoints act as a key contributor to the store's image via specialty auxiliary lighting, as well as their role in attracting consumer's attention to in-store resources.

Of course, the role of focal walls cannot be ignored and located at the end of key aisles or at the back of departments with internal merchandising zones and these areas also receive auxiliary lighting as well as intensified finishes, colour, and graphic elements. Floor walls create renewability and also attract attention of consumers to promotions and allied activities in a store, coupled with creating a bold rhythm throughout a store.

The above store designs and visual merchandising techniques would not only enable occasional shoppers, as well as core shoppers to spend more time in-store and also enhance the amount spend at a store.

## Promote cross-selling

Stores are akin to communities and have their own distinct personality and sense of continuity, as defined by their activities and location. Neighborhoods have landmarks that lead you from one place to another, and also bring people together, as well as facilitate greater integration in a community.

A 'great' store encourages these 'moments', and encourages consumers to stay on longer in-store, examine a wider variety of goods and be an integral part of a family's shopping trips. ©R

