

6 STEPS TO IMPROVING CUSTOMER FIRST IMPRESSIONS

1 CLEAN UP THOSE STORE WINDOWS

Your store windows should be clean and neat. Consumers should be able to see into the interior of the store while walking or driving by. That means posters, signs, outdated stickers, and promotional flyers that are blocking the view should be removed. Too many signs of any kind cause front-window clutter. Consumers ignore this type of marketing if there are too many multiple messages. Product in the front window should be well-lit with halogen spot lights (not fluorescent lights), and product should be elevated to at least the base of the window ledge.

2 REVITALIZE THE FRONT 1/3

When a customer enters a store, they have already formed an impression of the business. The front 1/3 of the store is where that impression can be changed and improved. When planning to remodel any retail space, always start with the front 1/3, and work your way to the rear of the store. Take product that is displayed within the first 6 feet of the entryway and pull it farther back in the store. Having product right on top of a customer when they enter the door causes the customer to bypass that product as they enter.

3 REFOCUS THE CHECKOUT

Your cash register area is the last area where a customer makes an impression about your business. Your register area should not look like your office, or a desk needing a good organizing. Your register area should be selling the image you want the customer to remember about the store, and this can be done with graphics on the wall behind the register. Ideally, the register area should also be merchandised with high profit, high margin products that your salespeople have been trained to sell. This is the last area where an add-on sale can be made.

4 REMERCHANDISE YOUR D-WALL

Every store has a dominant wall, and typically, that wall is to the right side, as the customer enters the front door. Statistics tell us that 70% of the time customers will turn to the right upon entering the front door. Critically look at the product, fixtures, and graphics you are displaying on this wall. Is this the first impression you want with every customer? If not, change it to display your store's unique strengths on this wall.

5 STRENGTHEN YOUR D-AISLE

Every store also has a dominant "aisle", located just inside the front door. One specific fixture might be the first impression that a customer sees when they enter your store, as they immediately look in. If you are unsure where your dominant aisle is located, go outside your store, enter the store, and observe what fixture or display you first observe. This dominant "aisle" must be your store's best impression, with the product, graphics, and look that you want customers to think of when they mention your store.

6 ELIMINATE THE "LOOP"

Many stores have a fixture layout in the store that allows customers to loop in and loop out of the store. This is called the I-J-L Loop, commonly recognized in stores by consumers that enter, walk down one aisle, turn up another aisle, and head for the door, saying, "I'm Just Looking" (I-J-L). To correct the Loop, one has to remove many of the straight aisle runs and replace them with irregularly spaced fixtures that allow customers to weave in and out through the store. This causes them to spend more time in the store, and consequently, spend more money.

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