How To Create Retail Store Interiors That Get People To Purchase Your Products

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Retail has been around for a mighty long time and one thing we know is that there are a lot of different approaches when it comes to designing the interior layout of your store. However, there are also some common design strategies that all retailers can employ that lead to generating more sales for your business.

Designing your retail store's interior is a topic that we've been looking at recently in an effort to help boutique merchants be more successful and thrive in today's digital era. From telling your brand's story and creating immersive experiences, to putting together head-turning window displays and signage essentials, when it comes to retail, the devil really is in the details, and we want you to get the basics down pat.

Which is why in this post, I'll be looking at some of the basics when it comes to creating effective retail interiors that attract more customers to your store, get them browsing more products, and get them heading towards the checkout. It's vital to keep in mind that from the moment someone steps into your store to the time they decide to checkout (or not checkout), smart design decisions make a significant difference in regards to whether you make a sale or not.

Enter the Threshold

The threshold area, also known as the "decompression zone", is the very first space that prospective customers step into when they enter your store and typically consists of the first five to fifteen feet worth of space, depending on how big your store is. It's also the space where your customers make the transition from the outside world and first experience what you have to offer. They also make critical judgements like how cheap or expensive your store is likely to be and how well coordinated your lighting, fixtures, displays, and colors are. Since they're in a transition mode, customers are more likely to miss any product, signage, or carts you place there.

Then, Off To the Right

It's a well known fact in the retail community that in North America, 90 percent of consumers upon entering a store will turn right unconsciously. The first wall they see is often referred to as a "power wall", and acts as a high-impact first impression vehicle your merchandise, so be sure to give it extra special attention in terms of what you choose to display and how you display it.

You'll want to make sure you entice and arouse your customer's attention with the products you put on display, whether it's your new or seasonal items, high profit or high demand products, or a place you design to tell your product's stories and create vignettes.

Have Them Walk a Path

This will vary greatly depending on the size and general layout of your store, but knowing that your customers want to turn right, your next job is to make sure that as they do that, they also continue walking throughout your store to gain the maximum exposure to your products. This not only increases the chances of them making a purchase, but a well thought-out path can be a great way to strategically control the ebb and flow of the traffic in your store.

Most stores use a circular path to the right to get customers to walk through to the back of the store and come to the front again. Some will make it even easier by covering the path with a different texture or look from the general flooring, paying homage to the old saying "where the eyes go, the feet will follow."

Another thing to keep in mind is that you want to use the path to lead your customers somewhere, which often means putting a eye-catching and attention-grabbing display at the end of an aisle for example.

But, Slow Them Down

With all the effort and time you've put into properly merchandising your products, the last thing you want to happen is for incoming customers to promptly hurry past them, ultimately limiting the number of products they'll purchase. One way retailers combat this is through creating breaks or what are sometimes referred to as "speed bumps." Essentially, this can be anything that gives customers a visual break and can be achieved through signage, and special or seasonal displays.

Most retailers effectively deploy the usage of what's referred to as "merchandise outposts," which are special display fixtures featuring products near the end of or in between aisles that encourage impulse purchases while complementing products on display in close proximity. However, since it's not likely that you'll have "aisles" per say in your store, it's still important to think about grouping products in a way that makes it easy to see what goes well together from a shopper's perspective. Also, remembering to keep "higher-demand" products displayed at eye-level is important while placing lower grossing products at the bottom or higher-up. Lastly, It's recommended to change up these speed bumps weekly or regularly enough to create a continued sense of novelty for repeat visitors.

Also, Make Sure They're Comfortable

You may or may not already be aware of something known as the "butt-brush effect," coined by consumer behaviour expert Paco Underhill who discovered that a typical customer, especially women, will avoid going after merchandise in an aisle where they could potentially brush another customer's backside or have their backside brushed. This holds true even if the customer is very interested in a given product. An easy way to avoid this problem is to ensure that your aisle, floor, and displays allow customers to have more than adequate personal space when browsing your products.

You can also make your store comfortable by incorporating some type of waiting area with comfy seats and benches which will encourage customers to spend more time in your store. Especially, if a shopper is accompanied by someone not interested in making a purchase or kids for that matter. A small tip to keep in mind is to keep the seats or benches facing the merchandise, so that they're still top of mind for those lounging around in your store.

Lastly, Check Them Out (Not Literally)

Where you place your check-out counter and your POS in a physical retail store is a question you can ask yourself for days and generate pros and cons for multiple options and still end up confused. However, a good rule of thumb to remember is that the checkout should be located at a natural stopping point in the shopping experience or path that you've purposefully created and designed.

So if customers naturally turn right when they enter, and you've managed to have them go through and circle all the way around, you'll realize that the left-hand side at the front is probably the ideal location for your checkout counter. However, this decision also depends on the size and layout of the store itself, which means you'll have to use your best gut judgement on what's the most natural point to have that check-out counter.

You'll also want to keep in mind that if you're a one-person show or don't have staff wondering the store, it'll be important to be able to keep an eye and see everything from where you'll be set-up from a loss-prevention perspective. Other tips to keep in mind when designing your checkout counter are:

- Have a counter that's big enough for shoppers to place their bags and/or personal belongings

- Take advantage of the wall behind the counter to create interesting and engaging displays

- Encourage impulse or "last-minute" purchases by stocking items customers crave or commonly need close-by

- Be polite in person by asking questions like "Were you able to find everything you were looking for?" and in signage regarding your exchange or refund policies

Designing your retail interior is a never ending process, where you can always be switching up, tweaking, adding, or taking away to create a resonating customer journey and experience. At the end of the day though, that's exactly what you want to focus on, the customer journey, which you'll want to to test out and optimize for constantly. Have a walk-through yourself and see where the visual cues guide you, or get your staff, friends, or family to do the same and give you honest feedback. Lastly, observe your customers and see what they're drawn to, what they avoid, and how they move, then match that with your intended design. If you keep resilient and keep your eyes and ears open, you'll be sure to create a retail environment that is a win-win for both you and your customers.

P.S. Selling offline or looking to get into physical retail? We've got you covered with Shopify POS.

(Image Credits: Retail Design Blog)