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Change It Up

How fixtures can re-energize a store.

Many retailers fighting for market share know firsthand the benefits of price slashing or price matching but competing on price alone isn't the only option available. Savvy retailers recognize that hard-good essentials like store fixtures can go a long way to creating the right ambience to encourage store visits and increase sales.

The Right Look

"The way a product is displayed can have a positive impact on consumer shopping experience," explains Alain Charbonneau, sales manager, Etalex. "It's

a question of how to make the product appealing. For example, people don't often see the shelving but sometimes a simple change in the colour of the shelves can make a huge difference in the appeal of the product."

Etalex specializes in providing custom fixtures in metal, shelving, wood furnishings and heavy-duty racking systems. According to Charbonneau, recent trends include a move to more colourful displays.

"Some retailers are moving away from beige shelves to more colourful ones, such as silver, black or textured finishes, which can give the products a more excit-

ing look," he adds. "Shelving colour can enhance the visual impact of the product."

Charbonneau admits that the trend to colour "is like steering a large ship," it is a slow and delicate process.

Adding colour can also be accomplished with the right lighting.

"No other industry is changing as quickly as the lighting industry is today," says Bill Plageman, vice-president of marketing and product management, AMERLUX LLC. "LED can now replace just about any other source used in today's supermarket with better delivered lumens/watt and higher colour rendering ability. It can bring

excitement back to the aisles by delivering sparkle, colour clarity packaging in the aisle and great colour to produce, meat and fish, bakery and floral."

And adding excitement to the aisles can be part and parcel of creating that unique shopping experience — and increasing sales.

"Store fixtures should be used by food retailers to attract, guide and influence shoppers to the high margin, more profitable items throughout the store," states Cheryl Beach, manager, marketing communications, Hussmann Corporation. "Refrigerated and non-refrigerated display cases can also be used to support cross-merchandising within the centre store, to feature refrigerated and dry products together in produce, bakery and deli departments, and to highlight special product promotions with end cap displays."

Highlighting certain products or product groupings can also be achieved through mobile merchandisers.

"These cases address the need for flexible merchandising options for grab-and-go or seasonal products by enhancing merchandise visibility in high-traffic areas of the store," explains Michael Lehtinen, product manager, Cases, Heatcraft Kysor/Warren. "Retailers enjoy the benefits of energy efficiency, rapid relocation and incredibly easy installation that can be managed by almost any employee in their store."

The Competitive Landscape

The Euromonitor International June 2014 report on Grocery Retailers in Canada pointed to healthy growth for grocery retailers over the previous year. But, it also spoke of

"ever-growing competition in an already overcrowded grocery industry", which led to consumers seeking out bargains rather than maintaining brand loyalty.

Overall store appeal is one of the ways in which Choices Markets seeks to maintain its customer base and brand loyalty. And store fixtures play an integral role in this.

"Store fixtures are extremely important," explains Ishkandar Ahmed, chief executive officer, Choices Markets. "That's what creates the retail ambience of the store. It's all part of the overall design and look. Take lighting for example. If a store wants a more specialty look, it can go with fancy lighting fixtures. Then it is the type of specialty store that it is. You can give it a more boutique feel by having spotlights. It all adds to the shopping experience."

Ahmed states that his company reviews store fixtures "top to bottom" during every renovation, which occurs at least once every ten years. Choices Markets recently completed renovations on its Cambie location, changing the fixtures and undergoing a store expansion.

"We saw a huge increase in sales in customer count and overall sales as a result," he says. "But we don't know how much of that was due to the new fixtures or to the expansion."

Ahmed adds that store fixtures hold the potential to change the look of the store and to generate cost savings.

"If you look at replacing older refrigeration equipment, for example, there have been huge advances in technology," he says. "If you replace that old equipment, you cut down on maintenance costs and you end up with equipment that has a new, modern feel to it, which changes the appearance of your store."



Refrigerated and non-refrigerated display cases such as those from Hussmann Corporation can help with cross-merchandising throughout the store.

Industry Specialists Concur

"We are seeing a change in esthetics on refrigerated display cases," explains Heatcraft Kysor/Warren's Lehtinen. "Retailers are looking for display cases that improve the visual appeal of the store and the refrigerated merchandise, while lowering energy costs. Factors such as lighting, enhanced product visibility, energy efficient features and increased capacity all play important roles in selecting the best display case to drive sales and to improve store esthetics."

The importance of display cases is relevant with all cases — refrigerated or not, big or small. In the case of Bren-car Inc., the choice of cases can lead to increased sales.

"Store fixtures contribute to the retail shopping experience by keeping the customer interested in your store," explains Stu Spear, president, Bren-car, which specializes in bulk food cases. "To do this, the fixtures need to be well laid out, clean, full and well tagged and identified. If a shopper struggles with the fixture in any way, this becomes an issue and they might decide not to purchase that particular item due to the product's presentation and their frustration with it."

Experience Counts

Bryan Vincent can speak firsthand of how important store fixtures can be. He spent 23 years with Thrifty Foods, 20 of which was as director of bulk foods operation.

"If you want to make extra money and drive volumes up, you can do it with the right store fixtures," he says, adding that in their case, having more bins wasn't the answer. "We got 80 per cent of the sales from 20 per cent of the bins so we decided that we wanted to get the best bins in the business, which proved to be Bren-car's. We then used the extra space we got from eliminating some of the bins for merchandising tables, which we

used to highlight the most popular items. Our little bulk department ended up doing over a \$1 million in sales a year."

According to Bren-car's Spear, store fixtures can be paramount to a retailer's success.

"Creating a welcoming and compelling space is crucial for the success of your business," he says. "Customer service and impressive inventory drive sales but so do merchandising fixtures. These elements are the core foundation of your business."

A New Day

Increased competition in the grocery channel, combined with consumer lifestyle changes, lead to a changing retail landscape where grocers will need to use all of the tools on hand to maintain their customer base.



Kysor Warren knows that the right display case can lower energy costs while improving the store's visual appeal.



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Choices Markets knows how important store fixtures are, and that they have the potential to change the look of the store.

"The dynamics of the food retail industry is changing and the shopper will have a lot of influence over the food retail experience of the future," states Hussmann Corporation's Beach. "There is more competition than ever for that food retail dollar...Research shows that there will still be a role for the traditional grocery store but they will need to differentiate themselves from other food retail outlets. They can do that by providing their customers with a personal shopping experience that is convenient and cus-

tommer-service oriented."

Halo Metrics Inc.'s Marketing Manager, Ravinder Sangha, speaks of a consumer shopping experience seamlessly integrated with the online world, where a consumer can purchase online and pick up or return in a store all in one seamless effort.

"I think it means bringing the online experience to your bricks and mortar store," he says. "Staff should have access to tablets for interactive content which can be presented to customers to help with product education. Retailers should allow customers to share their

shopping experiences online through store apps. Pricing should be competitive to what is available online. And product must be on hand when the consumer is ready to purchase."

According to Sangha, these are all things that will contribute to the new shopping experience.

"Fixtures need to allow integration of new technologies while giving consumers full access to merchandise," he says. "Part of why consumers shop at retail locations is instant gratification. This means having the product they want on hand to purchase the moment they make that purchasing decision."

Preparing for the Future

"We believe that over the next five to 10 years, store design, layout and fixtures will be influenced by the shoppers looking for an experience, convenience, value and connectivity for every shopping trip," states Hussmann Corporation's Beach.

The retailer of the future will have to rely upon expertise, resources and a commitment to delivering that all-important consumer shopping experience. Having the proper store fixtures to best influence that experience will be essential to continued success. ●

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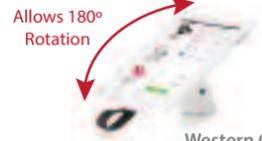


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