

LYN M. FALK ON STORE PLANNING

THOUGHTFUL DESIGN

To create a floor plan that works for your customers, get into their head.

When customers enter your store, do they always know where they want to go? Do they stop for a minute and look around? If customers have a dog pulling on their leash, does that force a quicker entry, sometimes leading them in the wrong direction? When laying out or reworking your floor plan, consider how customers “mentally process your store” upon entering and navigating throughout.

LEFT BRAIN — RIGHT BRAIN

First, customers use their left brain (the rational/interpretive side) to scan the store and find the department they need. This occurs in the “transition” zone — the first 10 feet inside the entrance. And even if the customer is there to simply buy cat food, but they see you have a bird department, this information registers in their brain and they may decide to buy bird supplies on their next visit.

The right brain kicks in when the customer sees an engaging display that lures them farther into the store. These are known as focal-point displays, which

I’ll discuss in more detail in the Nov-Dec issue. Engaging displays connect with the customer’s right brain (emotional side) and help them make a purchase decision more easily. Research has shown that over 85% of our purchase decisions are made with our right brain!

TRAFFIC AISLES

Always keep an open aisle leading into your store. This main aisle or aisles should be at least 36 inches wide to meet accessibility codes. No point between fixtures, furniture or displays should be less than 32 inches for additional ease of movement. And keep in mind that no one wants an obstacle course to get to their desired product selection.

DESTINATION, FREQUENTLY PURCHASED & IMPULSE ITEMS

Products that attract customers to the store are known as “destination” items and can consist of popular brand names or of specialty products that can’t be purchased elsewhere. Staples that qualify for your store’s loyalty program, such as



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food, also qualify. Customers will go out of their way to get these items, so put them toward the back of the store. This goes for sale merchandise as well — customers are willing to walk a distance to find a deal.

Frequently purchased products are often “commodity-type” items available at competitors, such as bully sticks, trendy toys and popular treats. Place these products closer to the entrance so they’re easily accessible. Putting them in the back of the store can frustrate customers, and in the long run you can lose sales on those items.

Impulse items are those a customer didn’t come in for but will buy when they see them. They are often featured on or around the checkout counter. Keep them in similar containers and be careful not to overcrowd the area and overwhelm your customer. Place too many products in too many types of containers on a small counter and sales will suffer.

CHECKOUT COUNTERS

These should be placed where staff can see the entrance and most areas of the store. If you’re in a small square- or rectangular-shaped store (narrow and deep), it’s best to position the counter in the back as it draws customers through the store to check out. It also provides staff easy access to the back room.

Finally, don’t be afraid to change your store layout. Many retailers put fixtures on wheels so they can do exactly that! You’ll be surprised at how a new layout can increase sales as people find products they never knew you carried!

Strong, Pawz on Main, Cottonwood, AZ

+ Not every product is sold at the same price at cost, which is why my prices aren’t the same as those on Chewy or in big-box stores. I know you can get it less expensive elsewhere. I’m not bitter when Chewy screws up your order and you need food for your dog, but you will get it at the

price it takes to keep my business operating. **Becci Scott, Fetching Dog, Scottsdale, AZ**

+ When a customer comes in and our sales staff spends 20 to 30 minutes trying to help them decipher which food is the best fit for their pet and then they leave to order their next bag from Chewy or Amazon. They might pay a little bit

more with us, but they are paying for our expertise, training and advice. Try telling a sales clerk at Walmart about the dog’s allergy problems and what his poop looks like! **Debbie Lange, Benson’s Canine Cookies, Lakeland, FL**

+ We try our best to respond to all inquiries, questions and comments. Unfortunately some may

fall through the cracks because they’re coming from Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, emails, blog posts, phone calls and in store! That might be manageable, but then you add on questions, emails, phone calls, DMs and cold calls from brands, vendors, distributors, sales people, advertisers and fundraisers. Plus you have a team, friends, family and busi-

ness associates. It’s a lot coming at you all at once, so we do our best to respond in a timely manner but definitely appreciate your patience if we don’t respond immediately.

Carly Patryluk, House of Paws Pet Boutique, Regina, SK

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