

LYN M. FALK ON STORE DESIGN

CHECKOUT CHECKLIST

Go beyond just giving customers a place to pay for their purchases with these must-haves.

The checkout process continues to evolve as mobile devices become popular for ringing up customers. This doesn't mean, though, that your pet store shouldn't have a checkout counter, as it still serves as a homebase for shoppers. There they can get information and more easily make returns and exchanges or pay for multiple items. Even if you only use mobile devices for checkout, there still should be a "service counter" customers can go to directly and interact with an associate.

With that in mind, shoppers should be able to see the checkout counter as they enter your business. If not, good signage is a must — shoppers should never have to search for the checkout. For most stores and depending on size, this means positioning it in the middle or toward the back, where employees can see the front entrance and quickly scan the entire space. Putting the checkout counter right by the front door takes up valuable shopping space, where the latest and greatest products should be positioned. Also if up front, the back of the space can become out-of-sight for employees checking out customers. Retailers concerned about shoplifting should have cameras covering these spots instead.

No matter their location, checkout areas should be well branded, visually appealing, and highly functional for both customers and employees. Use this checklist to ensure your counter gets the job done:

EMPLOYEE TASKS

✔ Think about the tasks your team members perform at the counter, i.e. processing transactions, providing information to shoppers, shipping and receiving, answering calls. Is it set up to complete these tasks efficiently and ergonomically? Is the area well lit? Are anti-fatigue

mats in place to help those standing for long periods of time? Remember, a satisfied and energized employee brings in more sales.

BRAND

✔ Do the front and countertop reflect your business's color and finish schemes? It should seamlessly fit into your brand.

CUSTOMER COMFORT

✔ How do your customers interact with the checkout? Is there a place to put their purchases and a handbag? Is seating needed for longer consultations and/or filling out paperwork? Do you have a portion of the counter built to meet Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines: 34/36 inches high and 36 inches long? Provide this level of support to shoppers.

SIGNAGE

✔ In addition to a sign identifying the checkout counter from a distance if needed, your logo *has* to be proudly and prominently displayed on or around it. This is an important place to remind customers where they are shopping. Also, look at other signs around/on your counter. Are they all necessary? Are they well written, up-to-date, professionally printed, and branded? Be sure to display a list of any services you provide, i.e. special orders, grooming, training, gift wrapping, shipping.

ENTERTAINMENT FACTOR

✔ Consider how shoppers are approaching the counter and lining up. Do they know where to stand? What entertains them while they're waiting in line? Keep them engaged with a video about your business, products you sell, services you provide, or just fun clips of



The checkout counter at Modern Companion in Chapin, SC, perfectly reflects the store's brand and aesthetic.

pets playing. Studies show that when customers are happily engaged, wait time goes faster.

IMPULSE ITEMS

✔ Present them in well-designed containers of the same size and material. Too many items in multiple containers will distract the eye and *not* help you sell these products.

PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

✔ Place gift cards, company brochures and business cards on the counter in like containers to promote your brand, products and services.

PACKAGING

✔ Have a sample of one of your branded shopping bags visible so shoppers know they will get a nice bag for their purchase. Ditto for any holiday wrapping paper or boxes.

Remember, the checkout counter is often the last point of interaction a customer has with your business before leaving the store. So, these counters must not only provide a good first impression, but a strong lasting one!



LYN M. FALK is owner/president of Retailworks, Inc., an award-winning design, branding and display firm. She is an international speaker, registered interior designer and consumer behavior specialist. You can reach her at lfalk@retailworksinc.com.