

## BrainTrust Query: Four Reminders About Effective Store Design

Commentary by [Bob Phibbs](#), The Retail Doctor

Through a special arrangement, presented here for discussion is a summary of a current article from the *Retail Doc* blog.

Organization of a store is crucial to building sales because the merchandise can only do so much with clever packaging.

A few weeks ago, I started a business makeover for a client about an hour outside of Manhattan.

I approach any project as if I were a new customer because they have fresh eyes. They don't pick up what the owner feels is obvious. If a store has gotten sloppy in how the merchandise is organized, it will show in the way customers walk through the store (and walk out quickly). My overriding philosophy in my customer mindframe: "Don't Make Me Think!"

The following are a few tips:

- 1. Follow the natural traffic patterns.** For a typical store in North America, customers naturally walk in and turn to the right. That means the best and brightest "wants" should sit to the right. Not at the back of the store or off to the left. If stores don't do this and put the counter on the right, at the very least it will cause commotion. Putting sale items up front on the right will only depress profit margins.
- 2. Keep it easy on the eyes.** Just because there are 256 colors of markers or ink doesn't mean a store should use them all. Signage should be simple and a quick read -- not clever or tricky. The model should be a freeway billboard, not an ad in *Martha Stewart's Living*.
- 3. Make a cohesive display.** Merchandise shouldn't just be stuck on an end cap. The customer should be made to feel smart about seeing what items go with other items to enhance their purchase. The whole store should be displayed, not just one product.
- 4. Take steps to maximize upsells.** What should be put at the register? If it's weird, cheap stuff that customers have to ponder ("Who buys this?"), stores will be missing the easy money. Instead, register items should be products anyone could use. It shouldn't require much signage either. Think: "Don't forget the glue!" not "Glue sticks \$1.99."

