

Making it easy to buy from you

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Shopping in a pharmacy is simply getting too hard!

There are some retail formats that are inherently simple and easy for customers to shop, such as well structured fast food or fashion stores. Then there are others that are usually hard and confusing. These are the formats that have one or several of the following attributes:

- Lots of different kinds of products are on display. This can leave customers trying to find the right item lost and bewildered.
- Product features and benefits are not obvious to an average consumer; specialised knowledge and information is needed to understand them. This can make customers feeling even more frustrated and helpless.
- There are many product options for achieving the same end purpose, so telling these products apart is difficult. In this case, customers will adopt the price as the main differentiation point. This does not encourage sales of higher value and higher margin items.

Sounds familiar? This is why I have said that shopping at a pharmacy is a hard job for customers. Hard things are to be avoided, so customers will go elsewhere to buy their product, to places that spent an effort to make it easier and more comfortable.

However, pharmacies are not unique in having these challenges. I believe a lot can be learned from how similar



The challenge was to create a 'want'.

problems are addressed in other retail formats. I am going to use two of our recent projects outside of the retail pharmacy industry to outline special methods and techniques we used to make it easy and fun for customers to buy from these retailers.

Alfresco

Alfresco Emporium is a homeware and kitchenware business with multiple locations in Sydney. The challenges we faced recently in designing a new

concept for their flagship store at Mona Vale were:

- How to display many thousands of stock items of different sizes, shapes, colours and dimensions?
- With so much product, how to make it easier for customers to find things?
- To find ways of answering customers' questions, 'How will this work for me?' and 'How will this look in my home?'
- How to allow for regular dramatic changes in product range (especially, in homeware), without the expense of changing the fitout?
- How to sell more items for every purchase transaction?
- How to integrate in one strong concept two different components of the business – one being the destination (kitchenware – where there is 'the need'), the other – mainly the impulse (homeware – where there is no 'need', so must create a 'want')?

CBD Cellars

CBD Cellars is an established wine retailer. Their business consists of two key areas: retail sales and corporate catering. With thousands of wines on display, some of the challenges we faced were similar to the Alfresco project above. In addition to these, there were some unique

problems we had to resolve in creating a new concept for this client:

- How to effectively differentiate the client from the supermarkets who intend to 'own' this market?
- How to sell more higher value items when there is an extensive price variation for every product variety?
- How to display the product (bottles) that look almost identical, in an interesting and enticing way?
- What is a cost-effective way of presenting product information considering that it is changing all the time (new products are being introduced; old products are being dropped)?

Making it easier to buy

I hope you could see plenty of parallels between these challenges and the ones most pharmacies have to face. Below are some of the techniques we have used to address these issues. They apply equally well to any retail format, including the pharmacy.

• Customer access

To make it easier for customers to buy, we first of all needed to ensure that they will be able to get to the merchandise. Sounds obvious, but in about 80% of



The country-style conservatorium creates a rustic feel.



A wine tasting/demonstration area was created in the middle of the store.



CBD Cellars: Metropolitan Store of the Year.

stores that I see this rule has been compromised by the desire of the operator to pile up as much stock as possible in a limited space.

Also, optimal sightlines have been designed throughout, for customers to see the entire store, and for the staff to see the customers.

• Distinct departments

All products have been categorised and arranged in clearly visible and delineated departments or sections. The departments structure is flexible and can be changed when products are being introduced or discontinued, without the expense of a shopfit.

• Impulse and destination

Optimal product positioning on the shop floor was also a very important consideration. Different areas were created for best sellers, impulse sales, complementary sales, feature/

new products, destination product categories. Striking and tempting visual merchandising displays scattered throughout the shop encourage companion buying and help to create a 'want'.

• Interactive shopping

This is the best method for helping customers understand product features and benefits and to see how it will work for them. Customers who have been given easy to understand information are able to see how products can help them to resolve their problems or enhance their lives. Consequently, they are much more likely to buy other items you sell that serve similar purpose, as well as higher value items.

This is also a very good strategy to differentiate your business from the competition, such as supermarkets.

For the wine store, we have put a tasting/demonstration area

in the middle of the store. We have added a fine wine room for wine connoisseurs, with tasting bar, lounge area, plasma screen, reference books – separate but visible from the retail floor. We have integrated LCD screens with the wine displays, in order to more effectively present the product information that is changing constantly.

The homeware store features a fully functional kitchen that is used for classes and cooking demonstrations (imagine the smell of a freshly baked cake when you enter the store on a Saturday morning). There is also a coffee bar with a range of coffee making machines, as well as a rustic country style conservatorium that houses flowers and country furniture.

• Branding and signage

A unique branding programme was created that integrates and supports the interior design and

makes it easier for customers to shop. Clear and distinct category signage is part of that programme and is particularly important when the products (bottles) have a similar appearance, as in the wine store.

Both projects described here have received highest industry accolades for their innovation since their opening last year. Alfresco has collected the Global Innovator 'Best Overall Store' and 'Top Window' international awards from Chicago, USA. CBD Cellars has been named the Metropolitan Store of the Year.

Making it easy for customers to buy from you can dramatically improve your business. If the methods I described here worked for two such diverse retail formats as homeware and wine, I am sure they can also be successfully used