

Solutions to Engage Customers in Store



People today are highly mobile, and they often have short attention spans to boot. How can you best capture the attention of your customers, serve their needs and translate their in-store shopping experience into sales?

Making **smart inventory decisions** is one way to ensure sales success within your store. But that's only half the process toward successful sales.

The other half is making customers aware of items in stock by using everything from **eye-catching packaging** to **strong visual-merchandising techniques**. The question is, what works best?

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In today's highly mobile world, it can be hard to stand out from the crowd. Discount sites are constantly offering products with even greater savings for consumers, and many online retail sites are able to carry a more expansive inventory than retailers constrained by square footage.

But the brick-and-mortar store isn't dead. According to eMarketer, 196.6 million, or 89.6 percent, of U.S. Internet users over the age of 14 are expected to shop online this year, "compared with 163.2 million who will go on to complete a purchase digitally." So what happens to the 33.4 million whose online shopping research doesn't convert to a sale? That's where the opportunity for enhancing in-store experiences can readily benefit retailers.

Between creating more-strategic in-store displays to help customers find what they really need, to installing more digitally driven in-store shopping experiences, here are tips for more-effective inventory showcases to improve your sales:

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iStock/IPGGutenbergUKLtd Instant Gratification

Instant Gratification

The one major benefit brick-and-mortar locations have over e-commerce sites is that customers can walk in for an item and walk out with a product, rather than having to wait days or weeks for a package to arrive.

But even with such instant gratification, it's no reason not to highlight the great inventory a store may carry. The more up front retailers can be about providing interesting and useful products, the greater potential for sales.

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“First and foremost, it is important to have some kind of display, no matter if it’s a special holiday product or not,” said Richard Winter, president of Point of Purchase Advertising International (POPAI). “POPAI’s latest Shopper Engagement Study suggests a 50 percent or more lift in sales by having a display in-store. There’s even higher sales when a display is placed in a secondary location, where higher shopper traffic occurs. The display plants the seed in a shopper’s mind about the product.”

POPAI’s Research Advisory Board co-chair Michelle Adams, of Marketing Brainology, noted, “With 82 percent of purchase decisions occurring in-store, it is important to capture the attention of shoppers with stand-out messaging. In other words, messaging that appeals to an individual’s senses, particularly ones that help a shopper visualize how the product will satisfy a need or contribute to his or her family’s well-being.”

This often shifts from trying to compete with mobile shopping trends to attempting to create a shopper experience that captures in-store shopping behavior. Visualization and keeping the store top of mind for purchases are key reasons many retailers are already putting out their holiday decorations. But as Winter noted, strategic placement can make a world of difference in the success of a display as well.

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iStock/mangostock Proper Techniques

Proper Techniques

Hardware retailers rarely carry consumable goods, so there is often no emergency that is driving hardware purchases. As a result, there needs to be an incentive for customers to explore a product further and to ultimately see the need for it within their homes.

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To do this successfully requires that retailers study their target audience — not just basic metrics such as age, gender and income but also psychographics and behavior. “In other words, targeting not just individual customers, but their lifestyles,” [according to Shopify.com](#). From there, retailers can determine the best strategy for reaching intended customers.

With hardware retail products, this often involves highlighting a solution of sorts. Finding a particular touchpoint for your customers can make a world of difference in the way customers view a product. Once it fits a clear and immediate need, a product no longer is a nice-to-have item; it’s a need-to-have item. This can suit anything from storage solutions to homeware products to power tools.

It’s also helpful to track the general traffic flow in your store. **According to Business 2 Community**, 90 percent of shoppers turn right when they enter a store in an effort to decompress and get a better feel for the store and its layout before they shop. Where are you sending them after that? Is there a particular product you would like them to see as they scan the store?

Other display showcases can also be effective points of sale. Customers spend 44 percent of their time viewing endcaps while browsing through stores; another 33 percent is spent looking at floor stands. Are you using these display points to highlight popular items, or perhaps seasonal necessities, and make them easier for customers to find? Customers have short attention spans, so make sure you’re maximizing time spent in-store by strategically placing products.

Also make sure you’re creating the right ambience for shopping. Sight is obviously crucial to in-store purchase capabilities, but sound, touch and even smell can be important as well, Shopify notes. Tactics include having products available for customers to hold and to test and playing music that appeals to your general demographic.

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iStock/merznatalia Multimedia Components

Multimedia Components

Although showrooming has become an obstacle for retailers as e-commerce trends have continued to grow, there are ways to capitalize on mobile shopping behaviors.

Webrooming — using mobile research to inform an in-store purchase — is becoming more frequent and is expected to continue into the holiday season, **according to RetailNext**. The company reports that 65 percent of holiday shoppers plan to find items they want online but make the

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purchases at a store, in part to save on shipping costs but also to examine the products before making purchases. So if you're running an online promotion, it might be worth highlighting the same items in-store to make it easy for interested customers to find the products they seek.

Digital displays also create eye-catching showcases for products. Customizable tools that allow customers to see how various products may look, such as paint visualizers, door-customization options or flooring selections, can be beneficial not just in showcasing the product but also by making customers more comfortable with their purchases. Lowe's has already invested in this concept with an even more robust solution: **the Holoroom**.

Videos are also helpful tools to help showcase the usability of a product and provide a more interactive experience for shoppers. These can be used in kiosks, digital signage and point-of-sale setups.

"We see three popular uses: Use touch-enabled LCDs to create a customer interactive display, invite customers to the store to view a special event program, and use the display for interactive distance learning and internal training.

Even simply allowing customers to browse through products in a digital format can assist with purchases, because it saves shoppers the hassle of having to scan each item in an aisle to find what they're looking for.