



Volume 1, Issue 2  
June, 2007

## ***Retailing***

### ***Understand Your Customer***

Let's take a closer look at one of the most important requirements of developing a sound and successful retail concept. Which one are we talking about here? It only makes sense that we should begin with the customer. How much do you really know about yours?

Why is this so important, you ask? It's simple. You can't have a focused retail concept without providing a focused experience for your customer. And you can't possibly offer a focused experience if you don't have an in-depth understanding of the people who shop in your stores.

You seldom sell 'necessities'. Whether you know it or not, you sell to peoples aspirations. People don't buy clothes – they buy a self image. Everyone is an individual and has a very specific idea of who they are. If they can not articulate who they are they can certainly tell who they aren't.

From razor blades to lipsticks – the products the retailer offers for sale under his banner creates a 'style council' of sorts. Consider Hollister jeans or Ford F150's. They say something about who their customer is. They also speak about who that person is not.

It only makes sense that you must know exactly what they want and how they want to buy it before you can satisfy those needs, right? That is a fact of life in the retail world.

So let's get down to the basics here. Is your target customer male or female? How old is he/she? How long does the average shopper spend in your store? How often does he/she usually return before making a purchase? With which of your competitors is your merchandise usually compared? Is your 'total shopping experience' perceived to hold greater or lesser value than theirs?

Now take a closer look at some of the motivational elements. What purpose or needs does your shopper wish to satisfy by visiting your store? What inspires him/her to walk through your front door? Is it merely convenience or does the experience you provide make it worthwhile? Are you a 'destination' or a 'walk-by'? Do you supply a basic necessity or fulfill an important aspiration?

How does your customer like to buy? Is personal salesmanship important or will 'self-serve' be fine? Should you offer a large selection or only a few choice items? Is a comfortable, aesthetically pleasing environment important or is this simply not an issue? If you answered 'not an issue' you need our help more than I thought.

And what about your retail neighbours? Do they have an impact on the mindset of your customers when they enter your store? What opportunities or challenges does that present?

These are just some of the characteristics of your customer's personality and buying behaviour that you must know inside and out if you want to develop a retail concept that touches your customer. You've simply got to do your homework here...there's no getting around it. If you've been somewhat lax in this area, don't be surprised if your results are less than stellar. Get to it today! Its surprisingly fun and enormously rewarding.

Do you need to know more about this right away? E-mail us at [info@rlwdesign.ca](mailto:info@rlwdesign.ca) or give us a call at 905-845-2255 and we'll lend a hand!

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## ***Store Design***

### ***The Door To Your Store***

Remember Rule #1 of Store Design: Don't even begin laying out racks and shelves until you've done all of your homework and put together a 'rock-solid' retail concept. If you aren't there yet, go back to the previous article. If your concept is focused, it's time to take the next step.

Let's begin at the beginning, so to speak...the door to your store.

Most people would agree that first impressions are very important. So it should come as no surprise that customers will draw immediate and lasting conclusions about your value as a retailer based on the storefront you offer them. Even the size of your door says a lot about the type of store behind it.

A wide and welcoming door says "All Aboard!" It is best suited to retailers who's customer profile could be described as 'anyone with a pulse and a wallet'. High volume home electronics stores are a typical example of this category. They're looking for men and women of all ages, backgrounds and income levels who may be in the market for a TV or DVD player. A very wide spectrum that excludes almost no one. Shoppers here expect a huge selection, minimal assistance and a low to medium price point, so much so that they are usually armed with competitors prices.

High-end home theatre boutiques, on the other hand, will usually be better served by a more narrow and 'exclusive' entry. Both physically and psychologically, it restricts access, suggesting that what lies beyond is something less common. Something reserved only for those with higher tastes and expectations. Something that will appeal to a much smaller, more defined customer profile. These customers are not looking for just any DVD player; these people are looking for an integrated home entertainment solution. An expert solution is less price sensitive than a DVD player.

See the difference? The right door for the right store. Again, it's all about aligning your design with the original retail concept. Everything about the way your store looks and how it operates must communicate a clear, consistent message to your customers. If your message isn't in sync with who you really are, then don't delay ... start fixing it today!

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## **Construction**

### ***Tender! Tender! Tender!***

Want to save 10% on your next store build? Then listen up. It's time to revisit one of the fundamental principles of construction – tender your projects!

This may seem very basic, but time and again companies with ongoing construction projects or aggressive schedules fall into the comfortable trap of continually using the same contractors who 'know the stores'. These are your favourite builders, the ones you have come to rely on because they know how to interpret your drawings. Having this kind of relationship feels warm and fuzzy and safe, right?

Wake up, folks! This 'warm and fuzzy' is costing you big bucks! Haven't you noticed how your construction costs have been creeping up? The only way to stay on top of your building expenses is to constantly source new qualified contractors who are familiar with the area you are developing. For retailers in the expansion mode, locating new builders can be as important as sourcing new merchandise!

Every tender should reveal a 10% spread. Depending on your construction budget, you have the opportunity to save ten of thousands of dollars. At the very least, you will have a much clearer understanding of the premium you're paying to maintain this relationship with your favorites!

Want to know more about the design or construction processes? Give us a call at 905-845-2255 or visit our website at [www.rlwdesign.ca](http://www.rlwdesign.ca). We'd be happy to help!

### **RLWdesign**

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