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## ***Retailing***

### ***Tailor Your Design To The Location!***

Most retailers recognize the importance of location to their success. But many think the issue is only about traffic. "I need more 'walk-bys'!" If you belong to this group, there are other site-related issues you need to consider when designing or renovating your store.

One important guideline is to tailor your design to meet local customer expectations. Seems like common sense, doesn't it? But you'd never know it by some of the 'fish out of water' layouts you see every day out there. Why is that?

One of the most common reasons is that reading customer expectations isn't always an easy thing to do. To overcome this, it is sometimes helpful to classify stores into four levels or 'tiers' (A, B, C and D) based on the population size they serve. Tiers 'A' and 'B' represent larger markets of 5,000,000 and 1,000,000 respectively, while smaller areas with populations of 500,000 and 50,000 would be classified as 'C' and 'D'.

The general guideline is that high-end, 'full-on' designs can be useful in the upper tiers (A and B), but a more subtle, understated approach is usually fine in the smaller regions. Why? Because customers tend to expect more in the larger centres. They want to see and be a part of 'the latest' in the course of their shopping experience.

Consider Prada as an example. While their store in Toronto represents 'the standard' or typical design, the New York City location is a spectacular showcase. And not just because New York does higher numbers. Outstanding design is quite common in 'The Big Apple', so it has become part of the local customer's expectation. Any store that doesn't offer this high-end level is therefore seen as 'below the bar' or substandard.

Conversely, a sleepy town in Connecticut can generate terrific results (maybe even exceed N.Y.C.), yet the retailer doesn't have to meet the same design expectations. Simply being the best in its local class will do. Get the message?

Don't blow your brains out! If you have new construction or major renovation plans on the board, consider each local market before finalizing the design. Make sure your drawings are in sync with customer expectations in that area. Don't offer anything less than what your shoppers are looking for. But there's no need to go overboard either!

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**

### ***Where's The Cash Desk?***

Close your eyes and try to picture a vintage store from the '50's. Lots of product lining straight shelves and tables, not a lot of signage or clutter ... a real 'homey' feel. Can you see the old fashioned cash register sitting close to the entrance and a smiling merchant standing nearby greeting his customers?

While this image may seem warm, familiar and friendly, it is actually bad for business. We want floor staff to actively greet and connect with shoppers, but placing the register near the entrance is often uncomfortable for customers. The location of your cash desk has a significant impact on traffic flow and there are definitely 'right' and 'wrong' places for it.

Consider your options in a 2000 square foot facility. Placing the cash desk along the side wall so that it sits midway through the store allows you to establish front, mid, and rear 'zones', an important approach to retailing that helps you departmentalize operations. This location also provides customers with the 'landing pad' they need to familiarize themselves with your store.

Now let's look at the same store with the desk at the rear wall. This layout creates a very open and spacious impression. Service is present, but less obvious. Customers feel like they have more freedom, yet still perceive service levels to be higher than normal. Typically, this placement is used by retailers with higher price points than stores with the cash desk closer to the front.

What about not having a cash desk at all? In this environment, the staff whisks away with the selected merchandise and brings it back wrapped and ready to go. An interesting approach, right? It usually works best in a very service-oriented retail venue where relationships are more important than the price of the product. (In other words, very expensive stores!)

Dynamic retailers with a lot of energy might consider using flexible P.O.S. units that actually move around the store with the customer. This is especially useful for retailers who want to be perceived as interactive and also react to traffic flow. They can also help solve one of the bigger problems created by a center cash desk, which, in smaller stores, can tend to 'block' customers from browsing through merchandise in the rear section.

So where did you place your cash desk? Is the location promoting sales or reducing them? What are you going to do about it? Start today!

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## **Construction**

### ***Watch Those Pennies!***

After a lot of time and effort, you've developed a sound concept and you know it works. You've

successfully translated your winning formula into a store design where every touch point is authentic and accurately reflects the image you want to project. Now you're in possession of a good set of drawings and an excellent general contractor.

The next question inevitably becomes "Where can we save money on construction?" No simple answers here. Remember, every touch point must be authentic if your brand is going to be successful. But the fact remains that a vigilant review of individual expenses can save big dollars. So where do we begin?

A great source of potential savings is your general contractor. He may have a very good idea of the areas where cost seems to be out of line with value. Since he is familiar with the entire project, he may also be aware of stages that can be 'tightened up' or rescheduled to save time.

For example, maybe long deliveries on certain items have led him to include a premium to compensate for a potential late finish. Armed with this knowledge, you have the option of sourcing reasonably equivalent substitutes with better availability. This often saves both time and money for everyone.

Another good place to look is your plan for lighting and flooring. It is quite likely that you can develop a direct supply relationship that reduces or eliminates a distributor's mark-up. Not only will this allow you to realize an immediate savings, but you will also control the supply of the material, taking another potential delay out of your build time.

Get the idea? With a clear focus on your brand, look for constructions savings that make sense. It won't be easy, but keep that old adage in mind ... "Watch your pennies and the dollars will take care of themselves!"

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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