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ACHIEVING RETAIL SUCCESS

5 WAYS TO STAND OUT IN-STORE

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THE CHALLENGE

Helping brands or services stand out in the retail environment can feel like a bit of a tough exercise. There is limited space, limited budget and competitor brands and retailers are vying for the same slice of the action or target demographic, often with unrealistic expectations.

Moreover, at ground zero, many retailers use traditional POS such as shelf barkers and headers for good reason – they work! Plus fixtures can often only accommodate certain types of POS. So what can we do? The answer of course is no one single thing but rather a combination of thought processes, strategies and activations. Firstly it is important to think like a planner and take the shopper's viewpoint in any activity. Give them what they want – not necessarily some forced objectives!

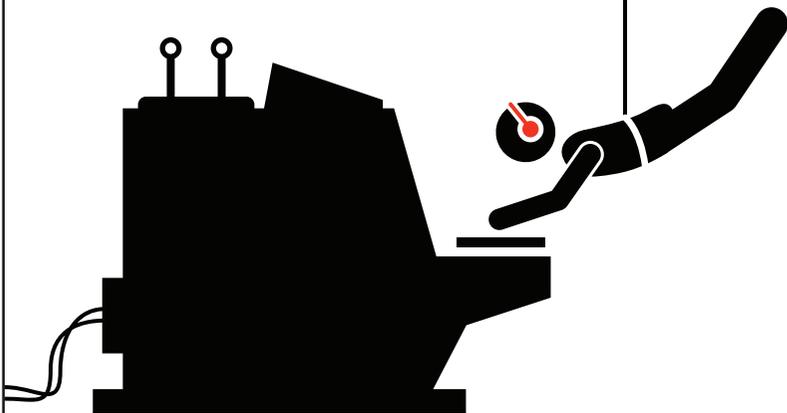
The following pages detail 5 ways that can help you stand out and succeed in the retail environment:

1

INTELLIGENCE IS YOUR SECRET WEAPON

That's right, good intel is key. One of my old college tutors used to say that you cannot pull a rabbit out of the hat unless there is one in there to begin with. Similarly, you cannot expect to come up with a blinding idea or solution unless you have proper knowledge of the store environment and customers you are dealing with. This often involves having to become an expert as you research a sector you may or may not have had much experience of.

Of course some insight is readily available, but don't shy away from doing your own and don't simply expect somebody else to do it for you. Go to stores, take pictures, talk to customers and staff, look at the competition, and see for yourself what works, what doesn't and what is best in class. The effort you put in will be more than equalled by the findings that come out of it.





2

INSIGHT IS A LAME DUCK IF YOU DON'T HAVE A GOOD STRATEGY

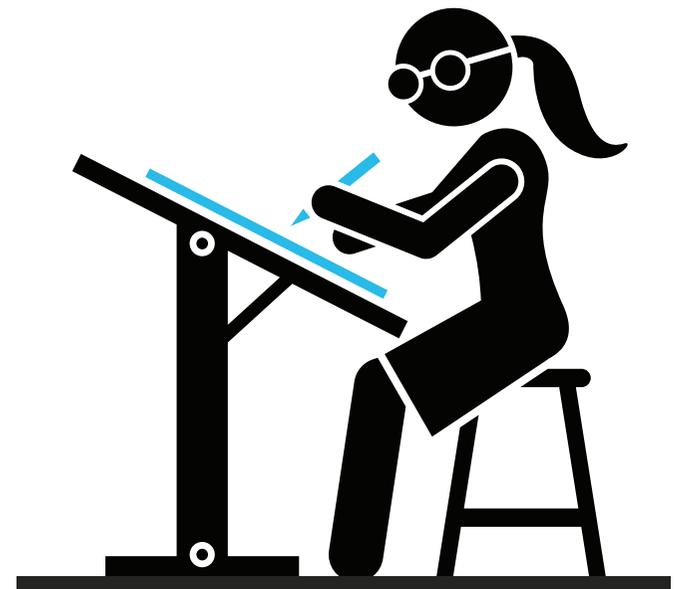
“Insight, insight, insight. That’s what we need to help uplift sales.”

I hear this a lot and it misses the point. That’s because insight is often regarded by some as a golden arrow that will magically fix things all by itself. Don’t get me wrong, great insight is crucial, however understanding insight and its full implications are even more crucial.

This brings me on to the single most important factor in anything you do and that is 'strategy'. This is what you should spend most of your time on, as much more valuable than the insight itself is what the heck you do with it and what customer-led approaches and activations it inspires.

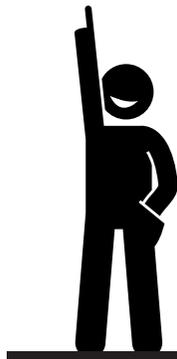
A good strategy will include multiple touch points and provide real benefits to consumers along the path to purchase.

Not all activities need to achieve the same outcome, or even necessarily achieve a sale. They do however need to connect the shopper to the insight in a way that stands out and engages. Be prepared to be the first, create the element of surprise and do new things.





3



STAY AHEAD WITH TECHNOLOGY

(I KNOW, I KNOW, YOU HEAR THIS ALL THE TIME!)

There is no denying that customers want and even expect digital and technological enhancements to their in-store shopping experience. Shoppers face a problem however, as research conducted by Vista found that 70% are familiar with innovations such as AI applications, however two thirds say they have yet to encounter the technology in a store. Retail is clearly missing out because all the evidence suggests such technologies boost sales.

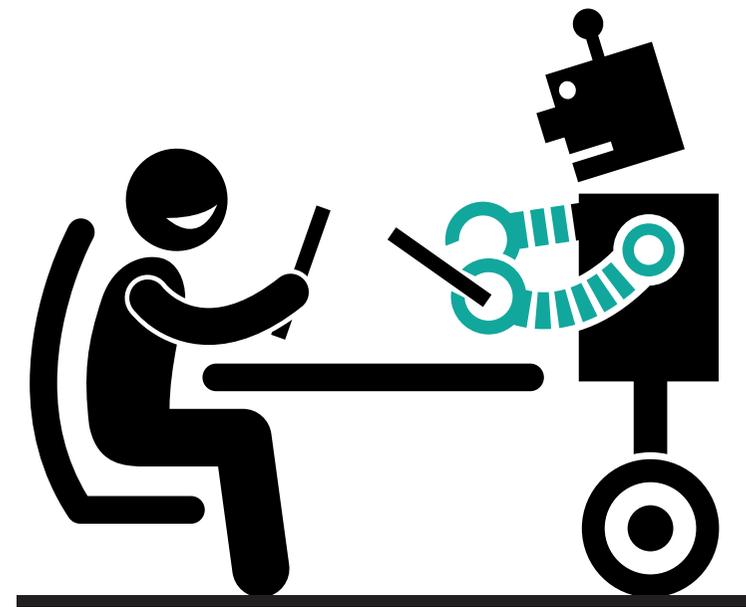
Even worse is that the IBM 2017 Customer Experience Survey found the sophistication of the digitally integrated in-store experience is rated “adequate” or worse for the vast majority (91%) of brands.

The problem is not lack of interest. Many brands and retailers are keen to be up on the ‘store of the future’ wanting to find the latest gadget that will bring cash flowing through the tills, but many are slow to implement anything due to cost and perhaps vague ROI.

There is no doubt that investing in these technologies can be costly, however retailers and brands should think about how they can deploy them effectively and get on with the actual implementation in stores. Consumer expectations are only getting higher and we need to be just as excited about technological improvements and be much bolder in deploying applications of these technologies

Shoppers are enjoying the technologies they use at home or on their smart-phones as it makes shopping easier, and smoother. The high street retailers however, are in danger of being too slow to implement new technologies and could find their customers going elsewhere.

The real beauty of many technologies is that they are of course multi-purpose and can be adapted to show different content as required so the investment is long term. A screen or projector selling beer one day can sell beauty products the next. Not only that but they can be part of a 'soft sell' approach to today's better informed customers. The end goal may still be a sale – but not necessarily on the day or from the same physical space.



4



LAUNCH THE EVENT

“A pleasant shopping experience” is increasingly moving up the priority list when it comes to choosing a store to shop in. This comes as no surprise as tangible, sensory experiences and human interaction is what separates the in-store from the online shopping experience.

Shoppers go to stores for the feeling it gives them and, the more you can do to make shopping feel like a leisure activity the better. Of course it helps to have a spacious, well designed and laid out store, but we might not always have the advantage of that and this is where promotions and events really come into play.

We think of events as celebratory things - an anniversary or a birthday, for example. However events are also transient which means we need to make the most of it while it lasts and experience it while we can. Conversely that great teenage angst FOMO (the dreaded ‘fear of missing out’) also rears it’s head as we don’t want to miss something that’s potentially to our advantage!

In-store events are proven to drive footfall and increase brand positivity. Not only that, if properly taken advantage of they can create a lasting bond with the consumer.

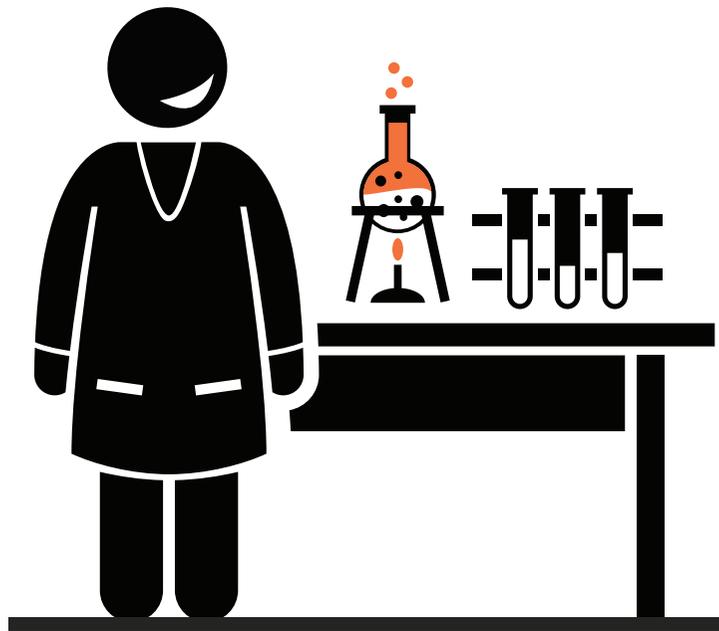
There are other factors too. Any parent will know what shopping with kids is like (I have two daughters myself) and the main enemy here is boredom. Boredom leads to fidgeting, running off, attention seeking and just being a general distraction from the shopping mission. Many a potential sale has been lost as a result of parents giving up and going somewhere that will be easier on their children. Stores that can therefore engage with kids will get the thumbs-up from parents wanting a break from the stress, able to focus on what they came in for in the first place.

Lets just be clear though, putting up some interesting POS is not in itself an event. Create events that provide real interactions with a human presence and a sense of occasion, something to be enjoyed while it's there and missed when it's gone.



5

CAPTURE THE FINDINGS – TEST, LEARN AND CREATE YOUR OWN INTELLIGENCE



With the need for insight and precise shopper data at an all-time high, it is perhaps surprising that many brands and retailers are reluctant to experiment with trials in-store to gather their own information from customers. Only by doing so can specific answers relevant to a particular brand or sector be found – and no amount of time spent searching around Google will change that.

Recently, I was asked by a paint manufacturer how many colour swatches is the optimum number for a customer to select from. The answer to this specific request was not to be found in any available intelligence report, but when it was suggested that testing different amounts of swatches to customers would give them an indication, there was silence. It was hoped that the answer would just be there without having to do anything to get to the result. The trouble of course is that testing is rarely factored into budgets or timings, perhaps understandable baring in mind the commercial pressures all brands and retailers face currently. As such there is very little in-store measurement data readily available.

Testing and capturing information directly from customers is hugely important in creating your own unique intelligence database and gives you some license to be bold in trying new and unproven activities. Whether you get the results you hope for or not, it will invariably point you to where you need to be.

As the time honoured quote from Albert Einstein put it, "If you always do what you've always done, you will always get what you've always got."



IN CONCLUSION

The methods and principals outlined here are by no means the only ways to stand out in-store, but given the rise in eCommerce and increasing competition online, it has become increasingly important to connect with customers in a smarter way as consumers expect a great shopping experience together with an emotional connection they simply cannot get online.

Research conducted by Vista found that 81% of UK consumers see the physical store as vital to the shopping experience and 70% say they enjoy the full experience of going into stores to browse, find out what is new and buy what they like at their leisure. Better still, 60% of Generation Z, who by their very definition are digital natives, prefer to purchase in-store.

It's safe to say therefore that the opportunity to drive traffic to your bricks and mortar store is there. But only by understanding what your customers want, while being creative and engineering uniqueness, can you stand out from your competitors and make a long-lasting impression with consumers.

'THANK YOU'

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