

Your store opening

By JOCELYN DALY

A few weeks back I took new dealers in the industry to visit a few sites in the Sandton area in Johannesburg. For those that do not know this area, it is an extremely affluent residential and business area. So there is serious money around.

Stores lose their shine

Many moons ago, I opened some of these shops for the first time so I knew the layout of some of the stores and of course, what they looked like when we opened them. In hindsight, that is probably the reason I was so disappointed in just about all of those we visited – regardless of the brand.

The only word I can find to describe them is tired. They all just looked so lost and forlorn! So here is my question to you and your store: Does your store look as great as it did when you opened it to the public for the first time? Here are some of the things that disturbed me on these visits:

- The pay point/s looked particularly poor. They were dirty and untidy and the fixtures looked like they needed some serious attention. How much could a few new shelves cost?
- Ticketing and labelling was non-existent for about 40% of the stores as a whole. The group had to physically count how many line items had no ticketing – so this is pretty accurate for all the stores we visited. This is an elementary retail norm – why can't we get it right?
- The shelves looked or were perceived to be empty. In reality they weren't but because the products were not being brought forward it left the impression that the store was empty.
- And don't let me talk about the condition of the toilets/rest rooms...

Start making improvements today

So here are some suggestions for you and your store this week.

Firstly, take a good long hard look at your store. You need to be honest with yourself here. Because you work in the store all day, you no longer see it through the eyes of your customer. Why do you think it does not look like it did on your opening day? Why does it have the look and feeling of being tired and past its sell by date?



Does your store look as great as it did when you opened it to the public for the first time?

Secondly, take each area of your store one at a time. Start at the pay point – all your customers end up there – so that is your first priority. Is it neat and tidy? Is it clean? Look at the shelves, are they still looking the same as on the first day? Clean the shelves, the partitions, the merchandise, any stands. In fact, any surface that the customer comes into contact with.

Then move onto the sales floor. Try this for yourself to see just how easy this is to do. Walk up and down the aisles and just bring the products forward. Straighten up shelves that look untidy – make sure that there are no empty spaces on the shelf. Now look back and see the difference. It's as easy and as simple as that....you have already made the impression change from a store feeling empty to one that looks full.

Once you have done this get your merchandiser to fill in all the gaps. Get him/her to look at the price labels at the same time.



Straighten up shelves that look untidy and make sure that there are no empty spaces on the shelf to change the impression from a store feeling empty to one that looks full.

A profitable store always has a store room that is spotless – no boxes, papers, wrapping or packaging lying around. If you get your store room right, the rest will follow.

Now take a walk into your cash office or back office. How does it look? Just because the customer does not see this office does not mean it does not have to be neat and tidy. Are there invoices lying around, till rolls and GRVs lying waiting to be attended to? If so, you know that they are behind in their work schedule – and this office is the soul of your business. If that gets out of hand – you can bet your bottom dollar that you are losing money!

It should be neat and tidy with easy access to files – you should be able to find anything you might be looking for within a moment or two. Can you do this?

Recover that shine

People in the retail industry talk about this as your store recovery. It is the simple act of getting your store ready to trade. It is the combination of several processes to make the store look and feel great. The continual process of preparing the store for its customers should be done on a daily basis!



Jocelyn has been involved in Energy and Retail, primarily the Fast Moving Consumer Goods sector of these industries, for the last 20 years.

The bulk of this time has been spent in specialising in operations and supply chain,

focusing on maximising the return on investment for both the operator as well as the supplier.

Jocelyn's passion for this industry is well reflected on this sector on her website <http://www.cstores.co.za>. It offers a one-stop site for information, procedures or suppliers within the convenience store industry. Or email her at cstores@iafrica.com.