

# RETAILING *is Storytelling*



*Bass Pro Shops are built around telling stories within each area, moving customers through different sections that present products in compelling designs. Photo by jpellgen/Flickr/ licensed under CC BY 4.0*

In the age of anonymous e-commerce, consumers love to hear a story. That's where the face-to-face selling opportunity of a brick-and-mortar store out-competes the online market.

Retailing consultant Chris Miller, told attendees at the 2022 National Retail Hobby Stores Association Convention and Expo in Las Vegas, that every product, every service in a hobby store has to have a story. Your store design, presentation and staff can help you tell those stories to customers.

## Tell a Story

Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's stores are prime examples of retail storytelling. Each department takes you on a journey. "You go in there to buy a fishing pole, and you come out with hip waders and a tackle box too," Miller said. A hobby shop has a similar opportunity with different departments - RC cars with demos, train layouts, slot car tracks and so on.

Resetting your store can help make the story more inviting for your customers. The job is to figure out how to create a retail environment with inviting merchandising so that people spend more.

A reset doesn't necessarily have to cost a lot of, or any, money. Doing the work in-house to re-envision how your customers view

merchandise and move through the store can pay off. One retailer saw a 21.7% increase in sales with a low-cost store reset.

## Have a Goal

It's about more than redecorating your store. It's about using the store to make customers feel comfortable and removing barriers to buying.

First, set a goal. You may want the average ticket to go up by 1.2 items, or the average sale to go from \$35 to \$79. "Whatever your plan is, find a way to get there," Miller said. The goal is not to have the biggest store, but the most profitable.

Redrawing the map of your store is a good place to start. All the big retailers do it - the grocery store makes you walk by the high-priced items in the center to pick up eggs and milk at the back of the store. Give customers a racetrack or path through the aisles to encourage browsing and impulse buying. Ikea is master of the rigid racetrack. Remember, when most people go into a store they start moving to the right, so give a path to move through the aisles.

Miller recommends starting with a "Wow" feature at the front of your store. Have an area upfront that changes product display



frequently to make a great first impression. Remove clutter from the entrance. Consider widening the aisles so people will feel more comfortable in them. If a three-foot-aisle already has a customer in it, someone else may bypass that aisle.

Small steps like double facing, or putting two products on the shelf, and moving items from knee level to eye level can boost sales. Visual merchandising such as the use of props, can take displays to the next level.

Create a merchandising calendar to remind you to change endcaps and displays regularly. Keep track of what works and what doesn't so you can recreate the successes and avoid the duds.

Is changing your store worth it? Miller said Walmart stores undergo a refresh every 30 months, with new signage and a fresh coat of paint, and a bigger remodel every five years. But the changes increase sales so much they pay for themselves in less than a year. HM

### Four Pillars of Retail Appeal to help your store stand out

- **Curb Appeal:** Grab drive by and walk by attention quickly
- **Store Appeal:** People judge your store in 28 seconds
- **Merchandising:** Show respect to the merchandise
- **Staff:** Train your staff to tell a story for every product

Manufacturers like Traxxas can help with visual merchandising displays that demo the product in its natural habitat. Photo courtesy of Twisted Steel RC Hobby Shop.



Shops with model railroad layouts have a built-in storytelling advantage. Shoppers are drawn to a running train, even if that's not their top hobby interest. Photo courtesy of White Rose Hobbies.



Wide aisles draw customers deep into the store where they feel comfortable browsing, and the colorful walls create a warm environment. Photo courtesy of Big Boy Toys and Hobbies.



HobbyTown/HobbyPlex in Omaha makes a big first impression with giant signage. There's no doubt as to what this store is about. Photo courtesy of HobbyTown Omaha.

