

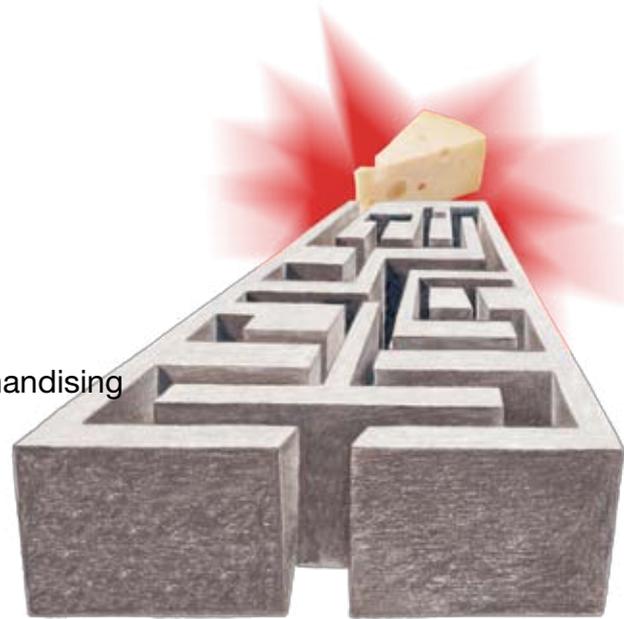
Convenience trucks

Tips from a store designer on truck layout and merchandising

BY PHIL SASSO

When I get gas, I pay at the pump whenever possible. That's not just to save time. It's because I'm a sucker for convenience stores. On a road trip to Nashville earlier this

year with my family, I think we bought more junk food than gas at one pit stop. The problem is that everything's always so enticing in those stores.



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Gas station owners realize this. They hire experts to layout and design their stores to maximize your exposure to all their goodies. These stores can

charge top dollar for all their treats and temptations because many customers, like me, are willing to pay for the convenience. Their "c-store design experts" have done volumes of research to know just how to merchandise their products and lead the customer's eye so they sell more. Their goal is to extract the most money from the most people. And it works.

Your truck is a lot like a tool and equipment convenience store on wheels. So, why not take a cue from 7-Eleven? Look at your truck's layout and merchandising and ask yourself: "What can I do better to entice more customers with all my offerings?"

I recently met with veteran c-store designer Jim Richards, president of P.E. Systems, a food service and c-store design firm. I asked Richards to walk me through a local gas station/convenience store to learn the basics of store design strategies. Here's what I learned and how it might help you:

Draw them in

When I'm pumping gas, I always see ads for special deals on drinks and snacks. These "loss leaders" are intended to lure you into the store, where you'll likely spend more money, Richards said. They're a lot like the





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“Coffee” or “Cold Drinks” signs can do as much selling as directing.

Signs and displays on your truck can help you push your best products. They don't have to be anything fancy. A simple, neatly hand-lettered

By keeping your truck clean and organized, you also make it quicker and easier to straighten it up and restock.

sign can go a long way to draw attention to a new item or pricing special. One dealer I know uses bright, neon-colored cardstock for his signs. Be creative.

Store-ganizing

Top-selling convenience stores are usually clean and tidy.

“When a store is dirty or in disarray, no one is inspired to buy anything,” said Richards. “It makes you feel uncomfortable about the quality of what you're buying.”

By keeping your truck clean and organized, you also make it quicker

and easier to straighten it up and restock. Having a place for everything makes it easier to put everything back in place.

Next time you're fueling up, stop at a gas station with a convenience store. Take a minute to walk around the store and look at the store design and merchandising. Chances are you'll be inspired. You may even pick up some ideas to improve your truck layout.

Just don't blame me if you find yourself buying a snack cake and cup of coffee you don't really need. After all, that's what it's designed to do. ■



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