

Improve customer flow in your store

Practical guides
to optimise your shop

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Manage the movements of your customers: it pays off!

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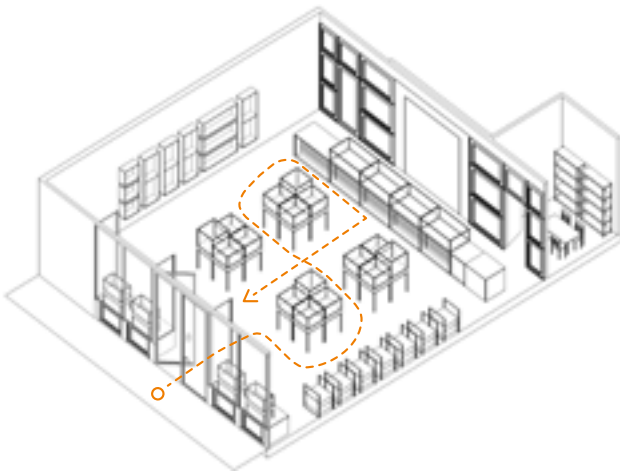
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A

Manage the movements of your customers: it pays off!

Not only does the internal layout of your shop guide the movements of your customers, it can also have an impact on their spending!

The flow or movement of potential customers in your retail outlet can be influenced by the shop layout (arrangement of furniture, placement of partitions, location of lights...), as well as the position of products.



Displaying the right product types in the right places is a true art and its impact should not be underestimated. For example, if you want to encourage “impulse” buys, place products in the “hot area”, in other words the front half of the shop. On the other hand, low profit items, or items few of your customers are looking for can be placed towards the back. This is the “cold area”, where customer footfall tends to be relatively low (this is particularly noticeable in most supermarkets).

Did you know?

There are three types of customer flow in retail outlets.

1. **Fully guided flow**, which steers customers so they see every department and pass every product. This strategy is employed by Ikea, but is not always popular with customers. Some people are not keen on being forced to move in one direction rather than the other.
2. **Systematic, linear flow**, as seen in supermarkets.
3. **Free, intuitive, flow**, which is better suited to natural human behaviour, but is not always the most effective in terms of sales.

Your doorway, the initial welcome

1. In order to create a setting that psychologically invites people in, symbolically accentuate the entrance: a simple change of material or colour can make customers feel at ease.
2. Make sure your flooring does not obstruct, or worse yet endanger, the movement of people: make sure the floor is flat, with no significant damage (no cracks over 1 cm wide), uniform, non-slip, opaque and non-reflective. Be careful, a doormat can be dangerous if its edges become curled.
3. Meanwhile, on the pavement, where passers-by may be anxious about trip hazards such as cobbles, a paving slab or mat, placed at the threshold of your shop, will symbolise safety and create trust.

There is no point leaving your door open: a study carried out in Antwerp in 2015 and 2016 proved that customers numbers and sales do not suffer from a closed door. Not to mention financial and environmental issues; an open door has a huge impact on your energy consumption!

More information here (Dutch only):
<https://stadslab2050.be/energie-voor-t-antwerpse-hart/gesloten-winkeldeuren/onderzoek-wijst-uit-winkeldeuren-hoeven-niet>



4. Avoid covering your door with visual obstacles, such as excessive stickers. Symbolically, this sends the message that your door is difficult to open or that you have something to hide. Stick to the essentials: opening hours, visibility stickers for glass doors, etc
5. Make sure there is sufficient lighting around the door and the window display: a clear view of your products will encourage passers-by to come in, while inadequate internal lighting will give the impression that your shop is shut.
6. If you have a clear space between the pavement and the door, do not fill it with racks and merchandise: a clear entrance makes your shop more appealing.

On the subject of shop doorways, be sure to respect the following regulations:

- the **open width of your doorway** (passing space) must be at least 95 cm.
- the **turning area** must be at least 1.50 m, or 1.20 m if the turn is a right angle.
- Your **door handle** must be easy to use.
- if you have automatic doors, they must **remain open** for at least 6 seconds.

The first steps: a decisive few metres

7. Referred to as the "landing zone", the first few metres inside the door are where customers get the first look at your shop. To allow them to acclimatise, avoid bombarding them with products.
8. Do not overload your customers as soon as they arrive: music volume, fragrance, temperature... keep it subtle.
9. Customers must be able to grasp the logic of your layout and the various areas at a glance: departments, changing rooms, tills, etc. must be clearly and legibly signposted.
10. The overall look of the shop and the feel it creates must be coherent with what the customer has seen on social media or your website.
11. The route they follow inside your shop should be logical and intuitive, so customers can easily find what they are looking for. If your visitors hesitate upon entering, or think long and hard before they begin to move around the shop, watch out: they are not in "purchase mode", they are in "stress mode"!

"Hot" and "cold" areas: learn to use them to your advantage!

12. Whatever area they are in, shelves must be accessible to all customers. Make them between 70 cm and 1.30 m in height, giving people with reduced mobility greater autonomy.
13. Position products that promote customer interaction, such as testers and samples, in the front half of your shop (the "catch zone", or "hot area").

70% of turnover comes from products located in the front half of the store (the "hot area", in other words the entrance and "catch zone", while 30% comes from the rear half (the "cold area", in other words the counter and the space at the back of the shop).



14. Set aside space in this area for impulse buys (gadgets, on-trend items, small gifts, etc.).
15. Votre zone d'accroche sert également à accueillir les événements, les promotions, les dernières tendances, les soldes.
16. Une fois arrivé au milieu du magasin, la motivation de votre client baisse : c'est tout à fait normal car il a déjà découvert une grande partie de vos produits. Il faut créer un « aimant visuel » pour le stimuler et guider son attention vers le fond : une mise en scène spéciale, un jeu de lumières, etc.
17. Veillez à ce que vos allées soient agréables à emprunter et sans aucun obstacle. Côté pratique, une largeur d'1,20 m et un cercle de rotation d'un diamètre d'1,50 m sont indispensables à la bonne circulation des personnes à mobilité réduite et des parents avec poussette... et de façon générale, de toute personne un peu encombrée par un sac à dos ou des sacs de courses !
18. Installez dans la zone du fond les produits « de destination » : ceux qui font votre réputation, pour lesquels les clients se déplacent spécialement jusque chez vous. Quand ces produits sont bien visibles et accessibles, vos clients n'ont aucun problème à aller jusqu'au fond du magasin.

19. If you run a fashion boutique, position fitting rooms in the cold area: customers will have to cross the shop (and discover every section) in order to reach them.

If you have fitting rooms, you must follow certain accessibility rules: a 1.50 m turning space free from obstructions inside and outside each door, and doors measuring at least 85 cm in width.



Like on the road: priority to the right!

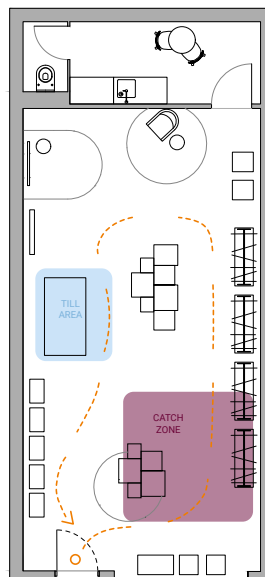
20. If your shop is narrow, the wall on the right as you walk through the door will sell best: do not block customer access to this wall.
21. If your space is wider, and the right-hand wall is further from the entrance, consider positioning a table or display unit featuring your new collection, or a range you want to highlight, in this area.

When entering any space, the majority of people tend to head right. After scanning the area from left to right, the gaze tends to settle on a vanishing point situated to the right, at a 45 degree angle from the entrance. This is called "the right turn preference". For example, in a fashion boutique, the wall on the right as you enter is used to present the latest collection.



22. Never position the tills to the right of the entrance. If your customers are confronted with the tills as soon as they enter the shop, they are immediately reminded that they have to pay...

23. Ideally, position tills towards the end of the customer journey. One simple rule: place them on the left-hand side as you enter, around 1/3 of the way into your shop (see below).

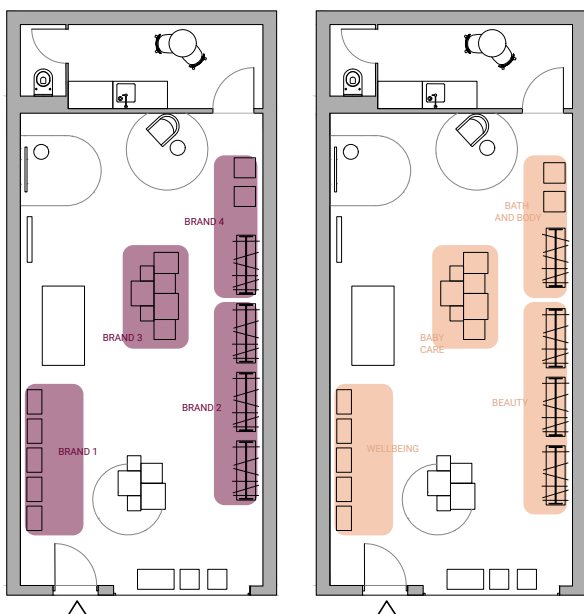


Choose your till location carefully: at the end of your customer pathway and to the left of the entrance.

How can I guide customer flow?

24. Guide your customers subtly, without them even realising, by drawing their attention to certain areas using "visual magnets", in other words, products you want to showcase.
25. Be careful not to block access to the "visual magnets" with display units or partitions.
26. Use furniture to create vanishing lines, lines of view that add structure to the space and naturally steer your customers towards the cold areas of your shop. They will instinctively follow these visual lines.
27. Create virtual "corridors" using pale, contrasting colours on the floor.

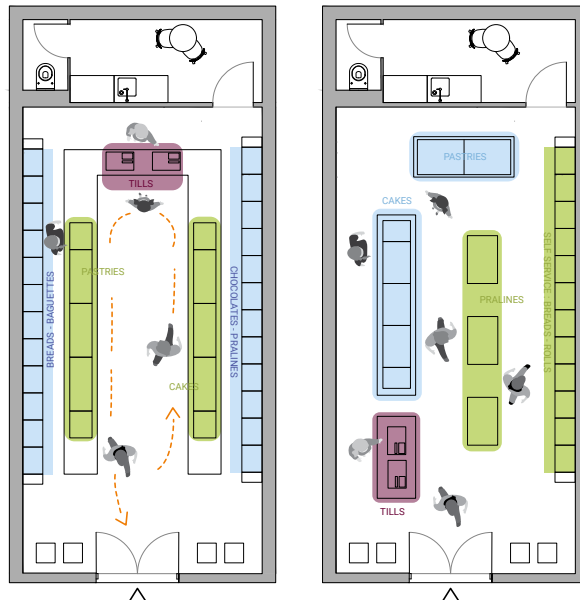
- 28. Always make sure to position key items at the end of the lines of vision. The classic mistake? A line of vision that guides the eye towards... the stockroom door.
- 29. Think about how to make life easy for your customers! For example, instead of arranging products by brand, try arranging them by “solution to a problem”, as in the example below.



.Originally, this beauty and well-being boutique organised its stock according to brand. They forgot that not all consumers are looking for a specific brand, but they are all seeking a solution! They also prefer to compare similar products from several brands. In this layout, the customer must walk back and forth across the shop several times in order to compare two similar products from different brands... as must the sales assistants! Furthermore, the brands found in the hot area sell better than those in the cold area.

In his new concept, the shopkeeper decided to create areas based on solutions. He has identified four and marked them clearly with signs and images. He immediately noticed that customers became more independent, that his shop was easier to manage and that his turnover increased.

- 30. Prevent areas of congestion, which waste your time and that of your customers, as seen in this before/after photo of a bakery



Originally, the traditional layout (in which customers queued to be served), meant customers were waiting for up to 20 minutes at peak times. Staff were also wasting a considerable amount of time fetching products from different areas of the shop. The result: irritated customers and lots of sales assistants!

After the refit, a self-service area was created to the right of the entrance, in addition to counter service at the rear and on the left, and a till near the exit. Thanks to this layout, there is hardly any queue and customers move freely. The result: customers are served in 5 minutes, even on a Sunday morning, and less staff are required.

- 31. If you want customers to discover an entire range, display it on a round counter. Intuitively, the customer will walk around it.
- 32. Positioning units in a V formation (45 degree angle), to create an arrow that points in a given direction, can be a very effective way of steering customers towards a specific point.

B

Who are we?

hub.brussels is the Brussels Agency for Business Support.

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Contact

Got a question or comment on this practical guide? Want to design a shop interior that is both eco-friendly and on trend? Contact the hub.brussels Retail

Design expert, Thibaut Surin, at the following address:
red@hub.brussels

Thanks

hub.brussels offer our warmest thanks to everyone who has contributed, directly or indirectly, to making this guide a reference on the subject of sustainable shop fitting and design.

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