



p-TIPS

Retail therapy (Top 10 ways to turn off customers)

- Retail stores, especially SMEs, cannot afford to lose even a single customer in this era of stiff competition. It doesn't take a lot of cash or high-tech gizmos to create a pleasant atmosphere in which shoppers are happy to spend time and their hard-earned money. Shari Waters, consultant at <http://www.retail.about.com/>, suggests that retailers look around their stores and see if any of the following may be turning customers off and pushing them into the doors of competitors or onto ultraconvenient Web e-tailer sites.
- 1) Dirty bathrooms. Restrooms, even if not for public use, must be sparkling and well supplied with soap, trash bins, and paper products. Daily cleaning is a must.
- 2) Messy dressing rooms. Tidy away hangers, tags, and packaging after each customer's use.
- 3) Loud music. Relaxing music contributes to a good retail atmosphere, but when too loud or inappropriate can ruin it.
- 4) Handwritten signs. Printed signs are easier to read and look much more professional. Use or borrow a computer and experiment with fonts and sizes that complement your store.
- 5) Stained floor or ceiling tiles. Regular cleaning, by the owner/employees or a contracted service, keeps stores looking fresh and attractive.
- Replace stained carpets or tiles as soon as possible.
- 6) Burned-out or poor lighting. Replaced burned-out bulbs immediately and ensure that customer areas have sufficient light. Some customers' eyes may be aging or less than perfect. It's certain that what they can't see, they won't buy.
- 7) Offensive odors. If you're operating a feed store or garden center, shoppers accept the smell of fertilizers. Some odors even invite purchases. But avoid strong smells (even of perfume) that may offend and use natural neutralizers if necessary.
- 8) Crowded aisles. Allow adequate space for customers to move and keep walkways clear. Being cramped is a turn-off; so is not being able to spot a wanted item hidden under others or the fear of injury from falling merchandise.
- 9) Disorganized checkout counters. Keeping the checkout area neat increases customer confidence and discourages theft.
- 10) Lack of shopping carts/baskets. Your store may be too small for carts, but every retailer needs baskets with handles that leave hands free to examine more items and encourage multiple purchases. Make sure that enough are available.