

## **Shop Fitting and Design – Seven Key Points to Win and Keep Customers**



In the current highly competitive retail environment, it is more important than ever to ensure your shop stands out and makes a powerful impression. Whether you are fitting out a new shop or refitting existing premises, you need to start by standing back and looking at the whole picture. Consider what you want to achieve and how best to go about it.

Your first aim is to tempt customers to stop, look in your window and walk through the doors. But then after that you need to ensure that they are impressed by the whole customer experience. This will encourage them to buy your products, return to the store in future and spread the word to friends and family.

This short guide will set out some key points to bear in mind, to create the right ambience for customers and so help to maximise your takings.

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## **1. Fit Design to Your Image and Target Market**

Your shop frontage is vital because it gets across the initial message about what kind of shop this is and what to expect. This is equally vital whether your store is a classic upmarket fashion or furniture store or a quirky colourful boutique aimed at younger shoppers.

In either case, the front windows are the area which will showcase your goods and your whole style. Frameless glass shop fronts are an increasingly popular choice, because they have the effect of taking the focus away from the surrounding building and drawing the customer straight into the store.

Once customers come through the door, the style established by the shopfront needs to continue. Whether your goods are cool and modern or traditional and luxurious, the design must help to show them to their full advantage. A clean, minimalist décor will often set off goods to best effect, with whites and neutrals very much in vogue.

However, even if you choose mainly neutral shades, you still need to build in branding. This should be an element running all through the whole store, with shapes, layout and display systems all working together. Motifs, shapes and colours appropriate to your brand can be picked out and included in your décor and in key fittings. The ideal is a design which won't go out of date quickly, and which can be changed as necessary through introducing accessories.

## **2. Create a Streamlined but Interesting Shopping Experience**

Practicality needs to be considered as an integral part of the design and this means planning your layout well, choosing fittings and furnishings which will use all areas to the maximum. It must be made easy for customers to get around the store, with enough counters or checkouts to ensure people can complete their purchases without avoidable delay. Stock must also be given enough space, so customers won't be held up by piles of goods in the aisles

We all lead busy lives, so irritants like very narrow aisles, lack of space by the checkouts or long queues for changing rooms are all likely to lead to customers leaving and not coming back. However, while you don't want unnecessary delay built in, the shop design needs to be interesting and encourage people to walk round and look at your displays rather than rushing in and out, so there is a balance to strike here. Open-plan layouts can often offer the best of both worlds and will give scope and flexibility for different styles of display in the future.

It is helpful if you choose contractors who can show you 2D and 3D images of how the store will look, and take your ideas and priorities on board. This should ensure you end up with a design which is workable in practice, as well as looking good.

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### **3. Get Input from Staff and Customers**

Because they work on the store's front line, staff will have good ideas about what is working and what isn't, so it is essential to get their input before deciding on a store design. Shop staff will know of any design problems in an existing store, such as lack of space for changing rooms, and equally will be able to spot potential sticking points in a new design. They can highlight workflow considerations meaning that certain areas need to be near to others.

As well as consulting staff, it's advisable to get views of the customers themselves on what would encourage them to visit your shop and come back. There might be ideas you haven't thought of, such as including sofas or even a coffee shop area within your store where customers can take a rest before carrying on with their shopping trip.

### **4. Think of Costs for You and the Planet**

Costing needs to be an integral consideration throughout the design process. This doesn't necessarily mean going for the cheapest options, but making sure that you cost everything in and get value for your money.

You need to look at both the short-term and long-term costs, for instance choosing quality flooring which will take the strain of many feet every day. The average shop interior design in London is expected to last for up to six years, so it must be built to last. An expert contractor can advise on working out a detailed budget which includes all the different elements involved in a shop fit or refurb.

Environmental factors are also important here. Recycling materials and avoiding waste wherever possible will help to keep down costs for you, as well as helping the planet. Making your design eco-friendly is another way to win customers, as green credentials are important to modern consumers.

### **5. Use Lighting, Heating and Air Conditioning to Create the Right Mood**

Lighting is also key to creating the right effect and encouraging customers into your store. LED lighting is now popular and is an environmentally friendly option. Soft or concealed lighting can help to create a mood and send messages about quality of goods, but at the same time it is important that there is enough light to see the goods properly.

Similar considerations apply to heating and air conditioning, since, if a store is too hot, cold or stuffy, it doesn't encourage customers to linger. Conversely, making sure your store has the optimum temperature and feels airy will encourage customers to stay. The right level of temperature varies depending on whether it is a food store, fashion store or another type of establishment. It's all about making sure that customers are comfortable and relaxed.

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## **6. Think Technology**

Siting your key equipment, such as counters and freezers, is obviously one of the first stages in creating a shop design. But, in the modern world, you also need to look beyond that and incorporate digital technology wherever possible.

Every shopkeeper is only too aware of competition from the net. Now that so much shopping is done online, you need to turn a visit to your store into a pleasurable experience in its own right, so that customers will want to come to you rather than just looking at their computer at home.

However, the way to success involves embracing technology rather than ignoring it – for instance, by including website browsing stations and display screens within your store design. Electronic pricing is likely to become another increasingly popular feature in the future. There is a need to build current technology into your premises, for instance by making sure you have enough power points and data cabling, and also to allow flexibility for the future.

## **7. Choose Experienced Contractors**

The whole process of fitting out a store will be far simpler if you choose contractors with experience of carrying out similar projects. They can advise you on all that is involved, discuss with you what you hope to achieve and set about creating a shop front and interior which will showcase your brand, draw in customers and keep them coming back.

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