

## In-Store Marketing

# Take your displays to a new level



By Randy Riley  
Trinity, LLC

**C**ONSIDER what happens when you walk into a party or gathering in which don't see anyone you know or no one comes out to greet you. You meander around until you end up finally talking to someone. You've taken unnecessary time, maybe gotten frustrated (if you're like me), and perhaps not had a very good time.

Contrast that to walking into a gathering where you immediately see a "friend" or someone comes to greet you to make you feel welcome. Either way, you quickly commence talking and can then meet other individuals who are adjacent to the person you started with. With all that, the experience is an easy, pleasurable, and memorable one.

Creating a "friendly," easy-to-navigate retail shopping environment—so that a shopper can identify brands and categories and then buy—is what the discipline of in-store marketing is about. In such an environment, numerous research studies have shown that when the consumer better sees, knows, and even emotionally connects to the brand and/or store, he or she will buy more!

As the c.e.o. of Procter & Gamble recently said of the importance of in-store marketing, "Our brands face their first moment of truth when consumers stand in front of a store shelf and decide whether to buy our brand, or a competing product. The second moment of truth is when they use our products." The same holds true in the building material product category.

As products have proliferated in all marketing channels, including in the lumber and building material retail channel, the importance, and yet challenges to create friendlier shopping environments grows. Brands like Andersen Windows, Trex composite decking and others understand this. That's why they work so hard to create retail displays that break through the visual clutter in stores.

Also, consider that research studies show that 75% of purchases today are made in a store. Consider that consumer advertising, while important, no longer has the mass appeal it used to have. The

store is the most important marketing venue today, for virtually every product category.

Consider these facts in light of the above noted growth in new products. As an example, how many composite products were there marketed five years ago versus today? How much more competition for retail floor space is there today with the proliferation of new products? How do you get seen in this retail environment?

Today, a building material product of any kind needs a deeper understanding for the need to differentiate oneself at retail and take in-store marketing that much more seriously. The importance of strategically thinking through one's in-store marketing plan is further challenged by the fact that there are numerous "shopper buyer" constituencies—consumer, builder, contractor, contractors' workers, architect—who come into the building material channel. One has to be smart about creating the right retail impact for the right audience, but what a great opportunity to address your shopper during the purchase process!

The lumber/building material shopping environment still offers a wonderful service component. But as windows, doors and flooring learned to fill the retail floor with displays to help the shopper better know their brand names, product features and benefits, so too have other building material companies learned that the retail environment is not just one for carrying inventory. They see that it is conducive to telling the brand story the way we're used to seeing Coke, Kraft, Sony, Nike and other well-known brands do it at retail. Consider that Starbucks has never spent money on national advertising—their brand story is told in their stores and with the consumption of their product.

Some composite material companies in the industry have especially "got it." They see the clutter and non-branded stacking of product samples on the retailers' floor. They believe in "brands" as a more profitable business model and cre-

ate striking branded floor and counter displays that draw the attention of the shopper, that deliver one more time a differentiated name, logo, brand color ("think UPS brown"), and brand story. Such companies understand they're creating that "friendly face" to the shopper.

We at Trinity actually believe there is a great opportunity for wood products to do a far better job at retail to differentiate themselves and show the beauty of their products. We see such products being advertised. Are they getting a good ROI on that? Some products or product categories suggest that they have less margin to spend on in-store displays. Would it make sense for such products to reflect on their total marketing mix and spend more in the store?

If brands or even categories (a cedar association, as an example) create visually striking displays that improve the retail environment and help the shopper make a better purchase decision, the retailer benefits by having good "silent salesmen" displays that improve the ambience and shopping experience of his/her store. This is another area of opportunity—to show retailers how a better looking and better marketed sales floor or display area will help he/she to satisfy their customers better. As the big box home improvement stores improve their shopping experiences, smaller lumber/building material retailers must do the same to stay competitive. This frankly can—and should be—one of their competitive advantages.

Why is Home Depot going through a multi-million dollar remodeling program to improve the shoppability of its stores? Why does Lowe's spend so much effort and money to ensure that its stores are enjoyable to shop? Because their shopper—both professional and consumer—want to be able to navigate, become informed, and buy easily. Again, in today's time-pressured society, this is what drives sales of a brand, category, and store.

Whatever kind of building material product you market, *you've got a story to tell at retail*. Strengthen your brand name. Show the beauty of your product. More than anything "show this" (and tell less—there's too much copy on POP displays) at the point-of-sale where your customer looks for help and confidence, through your branding efforts, in making a good purchase decision.

*Remember where the shopper/ buyer is that last 3 feet before a purchase is made...in the store!* Take advantage of this and do more and better in-store marketing—beat your competition at presenting your brand, add value to your retailers' environment, and sell more.

— Mr. Riley is president, co-founder and a partner in retail marketing specialist Trinity, LLC, Metuchen, N.J. ([www.trinityinstore.com](http://www.trinityinstore.com)).