

Clutter and poor lighting present inventory badly. Organized, well-lit shelves invite customers to browse more and buy more.

Is Your Truck Just A Moving WAREHOUSE?

Sell more by showcasing products the way a retail store does.

BY PHIL SASSO, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



Phil Sasso is president of Sasso Marketing Inc. (www.sassomarketing.com), a technical marketing agency specializing in tools and equipment. Subscribe to his free marketing tips at philsasso.com/blog.

Q My DM says I need to rotate inventory so the truck layout is always changing. But an old-timer who's sold tools for my flag for years tells me it's better to keep things in the same place so you and your customers always know where to look for specific tools. I'm still a newbie. Who's right?

A If you think of your truck as a warehouse, the veteran dealer is right. You want to organize it so that the same things are always in the same place and easy to find. That's the best way to make your job easier and avoid wasting a lot of time shifting inventory back and forth.

But, if you see your truck as a warehouse, it's only doing half its job. Instead of just holding tools, your truck should be selling tools. Think of your truck more as a convenience store than a storehouse. In this case, rotating inventory will increase your overall sales. The more new things a customer sees in a year, chances are the more new things he'll buy over that year. So, if your goal is to make more money, your DM is right.

Q How often should you rotate inventory?

A "You should rotate inventory every day," says Cornwell Tools Training Manager Kurt Hopt. Obviously, you can't rotate your entire stock in a day, but you can rotate a little each day and, over a week, make a big dent by the next time you're back at that stop. "When you sell a product, you should rotate something new into its place. It's just that simple."

A small daily rotation makes the process painless while keeping your

inventory looking fresh and well stocked. Remember, "an understocked truck is an underperforming truck," says Hopt.

Q What's the best way to organize the inventory on my truck?

A Although I know you're asking about truck layout, let me first emphasize the importance of keeping your truck neat and organized.

Your truck is a retail store on wheels. To increase your success, you need to do the same things any successful retailer



The only boxes customers should see on the truck are packages you're selling or boxes for items you're giving away on promotion, as shown in the right-hand photo.

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does. A neat store is more profitable than a messy one.

"You won't find neatness listed in any marketing textbooks," says "Guerilla Marketing" author Jay Conrad Levinson. "Yet, the presence - or absence - of neatness exerts a powerful effect upon a person's decision to purchase ... [it] is a potent and inexpensive marketing weapon."

"Make sure that the truck is clean inside and out," says Cornwell National Sales Manager Dave Columbus. "You want to give a professional appearance. You want to make sure your driver area is clean and presentable. You don't want boxes in the aisle. You want the lighting to be bright. It's important to look at all this because first impressions are so important."

Tidy a little each day to keep clean-up manageable. Toss your shipping boxes, sweep your floor, dust your shelves, change burnt-out bulbs, and empty your trash every night when you're restocking your shelves, says Columbus. It's easy to lose sight of how your truck looks to customers when you've been on it 10 hours a day. Don't let your truck's appearance slip.

Now, about the layout, take the time to walk through your truck like a customer does.

"On most trucks, when you walk in, the first thing you see is the toolbox space," says Columbus. "I think it's important to have a

CONTINUED PAGE 24



These photos demonstrate the importance of keeping the counter neat. The top photo is an example of a counter that makes selling difficult. The counter in the bottom photo makes use of a video monitor that helps sell tools.

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toolbox in there, so your prime product, your big-ticket item, is the first thing that the customer sees.”

“Next, you should have your promotion items,” explains Columbus. It’s good to have a special area for items that are on promotion that month – whether it’s on top of a toolbox or shelf near your point-of-sale computer.

Clearance and trade-in items, which are most popular, should be displayed in the back of your truck so customers will walk through the truck and past other items to get to them, Columbus advises.

Throughout the truck, keep your best-selling items at eye level. You probably know most of your best sellers, but they will change over time. So, run a quick sales report monthly and scan it to confirm your hottest items. Then be sure your top products are displayed about five to six feet from the floor – unless



Which of these doorways invites you to check out the merchandise? The one that isn't cluttered. The right photo also shows a doorway that promotes specials.

product size or weight doesn't allow.

“You should also tag everything with prices,” says Columbus. “We stress this with our dealers.”

Although some flags may not agree, price tags can be good. Sometimes a

customer may feel too shy or be in too much of a hurry to ask for a price. It also saves you the time of looking up prices and it avoids the potential of getting a price wrong, especially if you're rushed.

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