

# Shopping carts and the “transition zone”

*Position baskets and carts to capture customers as they turn into shoppers*

**M**ore than 60 years have passed since the first shopping cart was used to help retailers improve their per-visit sales. Have you, as a merchandiser, realized the benefits you can gain from this simple basket on wheels? Ask yourself two questions about your store: First, do you offer shopping carts and baskets to your patrons? And second, are they offered so that people actually use them?

If you answer, “We have both shopping carts and baskets in our store, but few people seem to use them,” you’re not alone. You’ve probably committed one of the most common errors in retail.

Underuse of carts and baskets occurs when retailers are unaware of two important facts about the behaviour of the average shopper:

- When people enter any retail envi-



## EFFICIENCY BY DESIGN

*by Wayne Caverly*

ronment, they have to make certain adjustments. This is most clearly seen when people enter a store from out-of-doors. When entering a store from the parking lot or street, your clients need to adjust to new lighting levels and a different temperature and, psychologically, make the transition from ‘commuter’ to ‘shopper.’ What’s important about these adjustments is that the “transition zone”—the space

travelled in the time it takes to complete these adjustments—can be 10 feet. Within this first 10 feet your customer won’t (and indeed almost can’t) see what you’ve placed in front of them—including shopping carts and hand-baskets.

- About 80% of North Americans will naturally move right when entering a store. They do this to move right.

Now, back to your shopping carts and hand-baskets. Do you have them placed ‘conveniently’ at the entrance vestibule, or just inside the doors? Perhaps even on the left-hand side as you enter? If so, you should not be surprised if few people make use of them. What you have is a design problem, but a problem that is easy to correct. Simply move your shopping carts 10 feet into the store. Move some of your hand-baskets 10 feet in as well, but also try positioning basket displays in a few locations throughout the store. Many shoppers who do see the baskets on their way in don’t pick one up because they don’t expect to need one.

In a well-designed store (one that’s pleasant to shop in) customers will often find themselves in the



middle of the store with their arms full, wishing they had picked up a basket. Unfortunately, the most probable outcome in this instance is that they’ll leave with only what they can carry. If, however, you’ve placed baskets at key areas throughout the store, they’ll pick one up—and load it up.

Placing baskets in multiple locations should increase their usage, but your clients will only pick up a hand-basket if they can see it. Don’t make the other common mistake of placing hand-baskets too close to the floor. The best placement for any item you want seen is somewhere between knee level and eye level.

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Try these simple steps and you may see more shoppers “filling up” on purchases while they’re in your store. ✪

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