



# What Matters to Customers

## How Hardware Stores Keep Customers Happy

A 2006 Market Study

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Published by



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## PREFACE

### Russell R. Mueller Retail Hardware Research Foundation



The Russell R. Mueller Retail Hardware Research Foundation was established in 1968 as a living memorial to Russell R. Mueller, managing director of the North American Retail Hardware Association from 1952 through 1967. He devoted his career to improving the business climate for family-owned retail hardware stores.

The purpose of the Foundation is to conduct research and educational activities designed to improve the retail hardware industry. These activities fulfill a basic need, are of industry-wide interest and application, retain their value over a period of years and perpetuate the causes for which Russ Mueller worked. All information developed by the Foundation is made available throughout the industry.

Funded by an initial grant of \$50,000 from the Board of Directors of the North American Retail Hardware Association, the Mueller Foundation is organized as a non-profit business league. Research and educational projects are funded by voluntary contributions from individuals, companies and organizations at all levels of distribution throughout the hardware industry.

The Board of Directors of the Mueller Foundation consists of representatives of the major segments of hardware distribution, including retailing, wholesaling and manufacturing. All Board members serve without compensation, assuring that 100 percent of the Foundation's income is available to finance research and education projects.

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### Acknowledgements

The Russell R. Mueller Retail Hardware Research Foundation wishes to thank the sponsors of the 2006 market study, *What Matters to Customers*, for their financial support, the nearly 60 hardware retailers who distributed questionnaires to customers, the more than 900 consumers who responded to the study and several individuals whose talents and hard work made the study and this report possible. Their support is truly appreciated.

**John P. Hammond**  
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# CONTENTS

2006

5

What Matters to Customers

## **Executive Summary** 6

## **Overview** 7

Profile of Customer Respondents 9

What Retailers Can Do 9

## **Methodology** 10

## **Study Results** 11

Exceeding Expectations 11

Expressing Opinions 13

Building Relationships 14

Making Shopping Choices 15

## **High-Performance Difference** 18

## **Appendix** 23

### Customer Segment Data

By Gender 23

By Age and Gender 26

By Type of Customer 32

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*What Matters to Customers* is a market study that measures the success of family-owned retail hardware stores in meeting customer expectations. It defines those expectations and pinpoints the reasons customers choose hardware stores in preference to big-box home improvement centers.

More than 900 hardware store customers in 58 major metro, suburban and small town markets in 11 states completed detailed questionnaires designed to answer three critical questions:

**What do customers want from their neighborhood hardware stores?** Getting expert help is most important while home delivery is least important. Women have higher expectations than do men in all areas of shopping. And, as customers age, they put more value in getting expert help, especially when it involves installing a product at home. Although all types of customers want help solving problems, this kind of assistance is of greatest importance to light do-it-yourselfers.

**Are customers getting what they want?** The stores in this study exceeded their customers' expectations. Customer ratings of hardware store performance on the factors related to shopping satisfaction were higher than ratings on importance on all factors. When asked what the stores could do better, most could find nothing to suggest. Where they did comment, they focused on training, saying that in some cases salespeople did not understand basic repair problems and how to solve them.

**How do expectations differ between hardware stores and big-box home improvement centers?** Lower prices and wider selection are

the only drawing cards for big-box home improvement centers. Service, convenience and, most importantly, knowledgeable, pleasant and respectful employees are hardware store advantages — by far! When it comes to products, customers go to big-boxes for home improvement items such as lumber and building materials, which hardware stores are less likely to sell. Customers prefer hardware stores for core home repair items — plumbing, electrical, hardware and tools — and for niche departments such as housewares and automobiles.

In an attempt to see what high-performance hardware stores may do differently or better, the study isolated those retailers who reported sales per square foot of \$175 or more and net profit before taxes of 7.4 percent or higher and segmented responses of their customers.

In general, it is a matter of doing all of the important things just a little bit better. The high-performance stores had higher customer satisfaction ratings on all shopping factors related to solving problems and providing expert help.

To summarize, customers like hardware stores. Study respondents gave their hardware stores a strong vote of confidence, saying they would refer the

store to friends and family and would return themselves. They said it would be very difficult to find another store that would meet their needs as well as the hardware store.

Nearly three-fourths of respondents were men. The 46-65 year age group represented half the respondents with just 1.5 percent in the 24 years and younger group — a matter of potential concern for hardware stores. Half the respondents described themselves as light do-it-yourselfers, while 23 percent said they were professionals. They live close to the hardware store and have been shopping at their local hardware store for more than 15 years. They said they visit the hardware store nearly three times as often as they shop at a big-box.

The study was commissioned by the Russell R. Mueller Retail Hardware Research Foundation and was conducted between November 2005 and April 2006 by Reginald A. Litz, Ph.D, Litz Consulting Services Incorporated, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Major funding came from six industry sponsors — Distribution America, Do it Best Corporation, Hyde Tools Incorporated, Orgill Incorporated, Robert Bosch Tool Corporation/Accessories Division and True Value Company.

# What Matters to Customers

## How Hardware Stores Keep Customers Happy

Two years ago, the Russell R. Mueller Retail Hardware Research Foundation conducted an in-depth study to define the strategies that family-owned hardware stores use to compete with big-box home improvement centers. Nearly 350 hardware retailers in major metro, suburban and small town markets throughout the United States shared their actions in dealing with big-box competitors.

That study defined five strategies which were published in the Mueller Foundation report, *Winning Retail Strategies*. The five strategies were:

**Build customer relationships** – personal as well as business relationships turned out to be the greatest strength in the battle for consumer dollars. The more accessible hardware stores were to customers and the better they accommodated customers' needs the better they could compete with big-boxes.

**Train employees** – hardware store owners understood the need for employees to be able to solve customers' problems and assure that they buy the right products, but most training programs were informal. The study pointed to a need for strong and continuing employee education and training.

**Compete aggressively** – the responding hardware stores were aggressive in learning all they could about big-box competitors and differentiating themselves from these stores.

**Adapt product mix** – hardware stores said they tried to stock items that

complement rather than compete with big-box product mix.

**Offer special services** – hardware stores indicated that they concentrated on services that related directly to the products they sold and that could be handled quickly on the salesfloor.

*Winning Retail Strategies* detailed what retailers thought their customers wanted and how they went about providing it. The Mueller Foundation wanted to go one step further and ask the customers themselves what they expected when they went shopping in hardware stores. And, even more to the point, were their neighborhood hardware stores giving them what they wanted?

Now we know. The Foundation's newest study, *What Matters to Customers*, finds that hardware store owners do, indeed, know what their customers want. Through skillful marketing, they tell their customers what they can expect when shopping in their stores and then deliver on their promises. The customers themselves understand very clearly the difference between hardware stores and big-box home improvement centers and make shopping decisions accordingly.

Nearly 60 retailer participants in the *Winning Retail Strategies* study formed the basis for the current study. They handed detailed questionnaires to 100 of their customers. More than 900 customers mailed their questionnaires to Mueller Foundation offices, producing a response rate of about 15 percent.

*What Matters to Customers* was designed to answer three questions:

What are customers looking for when they go shopping at their local hardware store?

Are customers getting what they are looking for?

How do customer expectations differ between hardware stores and big-box home improvement centers?

To get answers to those questions, questionnaires asked customers to rate five sets of statements relating to shopping expectations and experiences. These were shopping satisfaction factors, hardware store performance on the satisfaction factors, opinions of hardware stores, relationships with hardware store personnel and shopping preference decisions.

Customers also had the opportunity to write in comments about likes and dislikes.

In addition to looking at responses of the full panel of customers, the study segmented their answers by gender, by gender and four age groups and by three types of customer. The four age groups were 24 years and younger, 25 to 45 years old, 46 to 65 years old and 66 years and older. The customer groups were light do-it-yourselfers, serious do-it-yourselfers and professional tradesmen and contractors.

In an effort to find out whether customer satisfaction correlates with



high profitability, researchers isolated the retailers who reported sales per square foot of \$175 or more and net profit before taxes of 7.4 percent or better and segmented responses of their customers. The results of this segmentation indicate what top-performing stores do differently or better than other stores.

Overall findings are generally positive. Customers like their hardware stores. They shop there frequently. They plan to continue to make frequent shopping trips. They will recommend the store to friends and family.

The reasons why they like hardware stores center squarely on expert help to solve problems, to buy the right products, to know what to do when they get home. These factors were the most important to customers and hardware stores performed well with performance ratings exceeding importance ratings. Even on factors that were deemed less important, such as home delivery, hardware stores performed well.

Customers do not want to lose their neighborhood hardware stores. They acknowledge that they may pay a bit more, but they will support them because their owners give them a unique personality and because the companies and their family owners are an important part of the local community. And they say they could not easily find another store that would serve their needs as well.

Customers do shop at big-boxes but many of their answers suggest it is not a particularly pleasant experience. The stores are too big, it takes too long to find what they want, employees are hard to find and ill-informed.

Customers shop at big-boxes for what they cannot get at hardware stores — lower prices especially on big-ticket items or major projects and products such as lumber and building materials.

The competitive strengths are clear — hardware stores win on service, convenience, knowledge and personal relationships; big-boxes win on price and selection.

Still, there are a few warning signals. The youngest age group — the 24s and younger — accounted for only 1.5 percent of the customer respondents.

Although this could be attributed to a tendency to live with parents or in an apartment where they have less need for home improvement products, there are hints that this age group is more strongly oriented to big-box shopping than are older age groups. Although the youngsters have a positive view of hardware stores, this is a matter for concern.

Retailers need to be sensitive to this age group because they are the next generation of shoppers and it is not too soon to take steps to assure their business 10 years from now.

Training is critical and could become a weak point if the big-boxes change their ways. Although customers

give hardware stores high marks for providing expert help in all critical areas, they also suggest that hardware stores need to sharpen their training activities. When asked what hardware stores could do better, many answers related to having employees who understand completely the ins and outs of home repair and improvement projects.

This points to the need for formal and ongoing training for all employees, including part-timers. And the training needs to include hands-on use of products and completion of projects.

Hardware stores have the competitive advantage with the study's respondents. They perform well in areas that are of significant importance to customers as well as those that are less important. The message for hardware stores is two-fold: Focus attention on those areas, such as expert help, where they have a clear advantage while continuing to provide the support and services that are appreciated but may be lower on the list of expectations.

In the pages that follow, we detail customer responses to the study and highlight significant findings.

*What Matters to Customers* was conducted by Reginald A. Litz, Ph.D, Litz Consulting Services Incorporated, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Major funding came from six industry sponsors – Distribution America, Do it Best Corporation, Hyde Tools Incorporated, Orgill Incorporated, Robert Bosch Tool Corporation/ Accessories Division and True Value Company.

# Profile of Customer Respondents

The following chart details the characteristics of the more than 900 customers who responded to the Mueller Foundation study, *What Matters to Customers*. Several

differences appeared in the gender, age and type of customer segments.

Women travel further to shop in hardware stores while men tend to spend a bit

more. Younger shoppers spend less. Serious DIYers and professionals travel further to visit hardware stores but spend more once there — significantly more for professionals.

## What Retailers Can Do

The results of the Mueller Foundation study, *What Matters to Customers*, would indicate that family-owned hardware stores are in an enviable position to compete with big-box home improvement centers. They enjoy a strong franchise with their customers.

Given that they seem to be doing many things right, what actions seem to be called for by the study findings?

**Pay close attention to younger customers** – or the lack of them. Be aware that they have grown up with big-box stores and may be more susceptible to their low-price strategies.

**Appreciate women customers.** They may be more demanding but they express more positive feelings about hardware stores than about big-box home improvement centers. They feel like they get respect from hardware store salespeople.

**Be sensitive to pricing.** Big-boxes will always have a price advantage but the respondents to the Mueller Foundation study understand the value of personal service and expert help. They don't mind paying a little more, but everyday pricing needs to be in line with — not necessarily lower than — big-box prices.

**Create an image and deliver on it.** Customers understand the difference

between hardware stores and big-boxes. They said they knew what their neighborhood hardware store had to offer and expected to find it there.

**Hire the right kind of people** – individuals who like to help people solve their problems, who like to do home improvement projects, who can demonstrate to customers that they understand what they need.

**Train everyone, including part-timers.** Formal training is a must, as is hands-on training. It should be on-going as new products and methods come on the market.

**Create a welcoming environment** that makes customers feel they are the most important people on earth.

**Develop friendships with customers.** Know their names, know which ones need a lot of help and which ones would rather take care of themselves.

**Respect customers as people.** As one said, don't laugh when he asks for a "thingamajig."

**Support community organizations and events** and encourage employees to become personally involved.

Men	71.7%
Women	28.3%
24 years and younger	1.5%
25-45 years	20.4%
46-65 years	50.2%
66 years and older	27.8%
Light do-it-yourselfer	51.5%
Serious do-it-yourselfer	25.5%
Professional	23.0%
Distance from hardware store from big-box home improvement center	6.3 miles 11.7 miles
Driving time from hardware store from big-box home improvement center	10.7 minutes 19.3 minutes
Years lived at current address	19.4 years
Years shopped at hardware store	16.2 years
Years big-box home improvement center has been in market	7.9 years
Number visits to hardware store in last 30 days to big-box home improvement center	7.1 2.8
Dollars spent during last visit to hardware store	\$42.65
Time spent in hardware store	17.3 minutes

## How the Study Was Conducted

*What Matters to Customers* was a year-long study conducted among customers of family-owned retail hardware stores. It was designed to answer three questions: What are customers looking for when they shop in local hardware stores? Are they getting what they are looking for? How do expectations differ between hardware stores and big-box home improvement centers?

It was commissioned by the Russell R. Mueller Retail Hardware Research Foundation and conducted by Reginald A. Litz, Ph.D, Litz Consulting Services Incorporated, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Two years ago, the Mueller Foundation conducted a study among family-owned retail hardware stores to find out how these stores compete with big-box home improvement centers. At that time, retailers were asked if they would be interested in participating in a follow-up study of their customers. About half expressed interest. They were recruited to participate in this study.

The study was conducted between November 2005 and April 2006. The participating retailers were located in 58 major metro, suburban and small town markets in 11 states: California, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Texas and Washington.

Retailers handed out detailed questionnaires to 100 of their customers. These questionnaires were customized

for each store, so that customers were evaluating a specific hardware store where they shop. Nearly 900 customers responded by completing the questionnaires and mailing them to Mueller Foundation offices. Customers were offered a \$5 coupon toward their next purchase at the participating store as an incentive to complete the questionnaire. Nearly 700 coupons were mailed to respondents who requested them.

The response rate varied from one or two questionnaires per store to 50 or more questionnaires per store. Overall, the response rate was about 15 percent.

The questionnaire requested the following types of information from customers:

*Characteristics* – age, gender, level of do-it-yourself activity, distance from stores, length of time in current home, frequency of shopping trips, amount spent and length of time in the store.

*Shopping expectations* – rating the importance of 11 factors that contribute to shopping satisfaction in hardware stores.

*Hardware store performance* – rating how well the hardware stores performed on each of the 11 factors.

*Opinions of hardware stores* – rating of six factors that reflect customers' opinions of their local hardware stores.

*Relationships with staff at hardware store* – rating of 10 factors that describe the kind of business and personal relationships customers have developed with store owners and personnel.

*Shopping preference* – rating of eight factors describing why customers would shop at the hardware store or a big-box home improvement center as well as where they were most likely to purchase products in major merchandise categories.

Customers also had the opportunity to write in comments about shopping expectations and experiences.

Each factor was rated on a scale of one to five with one being the lowest rating and five being the highest. Ratings were averaged to derive a single rating on each factor; ratings were also segmented by gender, by age and gender and by type of customer. There were four age groups and three customer type groups.

The age groups were 24 years and younger, 25 to 45 years old, 46 to 65 years old and 66 years and older. The customer groups were light do-it-yourselfers (do routine home maintenance projects), serious do-it-yourselfers (do major home improvement projects) and professionals (tradesmen and contractors).

In an effort to find out whether customer satisfaction correlates with high profitability, researchers isolated the retailers who reported sales per square foot of \$175 or more and net profit before taxes of 7.4 percent or better and segmented responses of their customers. These profitability measurements parallel those of the high-profit stores in the North American Retail Hardware Association's annual *Cost of Doing Business Study*.



## Exceeding Expectations

Customers go to hardware stores to get help. And hardware stores give them that help. That is, clearly, the top finding in the new study, *What Matters to Customers*.

Most important is help in solving problems, closely followed by help in understanding what products to buy and how to use them at home.

To find out what customers think is important and whether hardware stores satisfy customer needs, the Russell R. Mueller Retail Hardware Research Foundation analyzed responses from more than 900 customers of family-owned hardware stores. These customers were given a list of 11 factors that relate to shopping satisfaction in hardware stores. They were asked to rate each factor on a five-point scale as to how important it was in their shopping decisions. Then they were asked to grade the hardware stores' performance on the same factors. The accompanying chart shows clearly what customers expect when they shop at hardware stores and that the stores are exceeding those expectations.

Convenience and service are important but do not rank as high as problem-solving. Service factors such as mixing paint, making repairs, renting equipment and home installation received lower importance ratings as did convenience factors such as completing the transaction quickly. At the same time, customers gave hardware stores high marks on all 11 factors. Although

importance ratings ranged from a high of 4.21 out of 5 for solving problems to 1.85 for home delivery, none of the performance ratings fell below 4.0.

In conjunction with the ratings, customers were asked what hardware stores could do better. More than half (57.3 percent) of the answers were of the "doing fine now" nature. Of those who cited room for improvement, a large number focused on employee training while other suggestions had to do with respect for customers' time.

### Results for Customer Segments

The study segmented customer responses by gender, by gender and age and by type of customer. Respondents were sorted into four age groups and three customer types. The age groups were 24 years and younger, 25 to 45 years old, 46 to 65 years old and 66 years and older. The customer types were light do-it-yourselfers, serious do-it-yourselfers and professionals.

Although both men and women value the same things — expert help from salespeople — women are more demanding. They place a higher importance on most of the shopping satisfaction factors.

For example, women said in-store services such as paint mixing and repair were more important than did men. Women also place greater importance on product installation at home, help loading purchases into their vehicles and home delivery.

Women were also happier with how hardware stores treat them. In every

instance, women gave hardware stores higher performance ratings than did men.

Age seems to make less difference than gender in what is important in hardware store shopping. Younger men show a slight preference for in-store services such as paint mixing and repairs, as do younger women.

When it comes to meeting expectations, men in the youngest age group are more critical. They tended to give hardware stores slightly lower performance ratings than did the older groups. Results were mixed for women, with lower ratings coming from the 24 and younger and 46 to 65 age groups.

It should be no surprise that light do-it-yourselfers attach more importance to all shopping satisfaction factors than do serious do-it-yourselfers and professionals. The significant finding is that all three types of customers place high value on help solving problems. Serious do-it-yourselfers and professionals tend to put less emphasis on more technical aspects such as what products are needed and how to use them.

Hardware stores rate high in performance with all types of customers, with professionals being most satisfied on convenience factors such as expediting the purchasing process.

It should be noted that in all segments, differences were slight, but enough to suggest that hardware stores should not let up on efforts to satisfy all customers.

Data on customer segments appears in the Appendix, beginning on page 23.

## Customer Comments

### WHAT HARDWARE STORES DO WELL

"They were very professional, courteous and knowledgeable about product info."

"I know what I need, grab it and I'm back home in 10 minutes. It's time and convenience."

"Most importantly, when a customer comes in the store, sales help immediately offer assistance and make servicing that person the number one priority."

"The whole staff is very helpful. It is the one business in town I don't want to do without."

"They are all so nice; they greet us using our first names."

"Employees treat us like family and certainly make it seem like they are sincerely interested that we get good service."

"The staff has helped us over the phone. No matter how small the part we need, the staff locates it, tells us if it is something we can use and how to replace it."

"I called to see if an item was in stock; they held it for me. I picked it up the same day. Everyone was friendly and courteous."

### WHAT HARDWARE STORES COULD DO BETTER

"Be better cross trained to do all jobs in the store; i.e.: replace screens, make keys."

"Be more knowledgeable about basic repair."

"Hire more people with experience in knowing how things work. They had experienced salespeople but they let them go and hired young kids."

"The salespeople have always been courteous and helpful. I do not get a sense that they have in-depth knowledge for fixer-uppers."

"Be less relaxed; have a sense of urgency to help me quickly but still listen and ask the right questions."

"Acknowledge you are in the store, that you are a customer ready to buy."

"Listen to just what you are trying to accomplish and suggest alternative."

"Be more responsive with additional cashiers pulled from other areas when lines back up. Delays from unmarked or mis-marked items and clerks who cannot find the correct SKU."

## HARDWARE STORES EXCEED CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

Average Ratings

Shopping satisfaction factors	Importance to Customers*	Hardware Store Performance**
Provide expert help in solving problems	4.21	4.38
Provide expert help in understanding exactly what products are needed	3.93	4.30
Provide expert help in understanding how to use or install products at home	3.74	4.20
Get products ready for use at home; e.g.: mix paint	3.72	4.27
Help complete purchases quickly	3.69	4.40
Provide services to repair broken items	3.35	4.16
Personal greeting when entering the store	2.86	4.37
Help to load purchases into vehicles	2.80	4.25
Provide assistance at home; e.g.: installing a product purchased at the store	2.55	4.09
Offer rental services	2.28	4.07
Deliver purchases to customer's home	1.85	4.11

\* Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning not important and five meaning extremely important.

\*\* Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning did not apply and five meaning excellent. Did not apply answers were not included in the ratings, which range from poor to excellent.

# Expressing Opinions

Customers' opinions about retail stores often drive actions that reach beyond their own shopping decisions. The study, *What Matters to Customers*, conducted by the Russell R. Mueller Retail Hardware Research Foundation, went deeper than customer expectations and satisfaction to find out what shoppers think about family-owned hardware stores.

One very telling indication of what customers think is whether they would refer a store to friends and family. There's no doubt they will. When asked to rate on a five-point scale how likely they are to refer the neighborhood hardware store, customers gave it the highest overall rating in the study, a 4.79 out of 5.

In fact, of all the statements that reflect attitudes toward hardware stores, only one — getting the best prices — rated below 4.0 and that was a very respectable 3.91. That vote alone should give hardware stores some degree of satisfaction. They would appear to be making progress in mitigating their high-price image.

Hardware stores seem to be strengthening their position as the store of first choice, especially when it comes to solving

problems. Customers were solid in their intention to go there first in the future.

They have also solidified their reputation for being in-stock. Customers said they could rely on the hardware store to have merchandise in stock. That may be, in part, because employees can find a workable substitute if the store doesn't have an item the customer specifically requests. That traces directly to customers' reliance on salespeople to answer their questions.

Other opinions reflect customers' loyalty to their communities. They shop at hardware stores because they want to support their local business community. As one customer commented, "I'm willing to pay a little bit more to keep my money local."

The accompanying chart details the ratings on six statements that reveal customers' opinions about their neighborhood hardware stores. It is significant that all of the ratings, except that for best prices, are very close together and, as a group, very strong.

## Results by Customer Segment

Women have more positive opinions about hardware stores than do men, but

not by much. Even when it comes to finding the best prices, women have a more favorable opinion of hardware stores.

One of the troubling findings in this study was the very low number of customers in the youngest age group — 24 years and younger. Although they may not own homes yet and have less need for the products sold in hardware stores, there are a few signals that hardware retailers would do well to heed.

One of those signals shows up in these ratings — not surprisingly, it's price. Men in the youngest age group gave hardware stores the lowest rating on price, suggesting that they could be more susceptible to the low-price strategies of big-box home improvement centers. Women's attitudes toward price are different where the 25 to 45 year olds were most critical.

Differences among the three types of customers — light do-it-yourselfers, serious do-it yourselfers and professionals — were negligible and tracked closely the opinions of the full panel of respondents.

Data on customer segments appears in the Appendix, beginning on page 23.

## CUSTOMERS' OPINIONS OF HARDWARE STORES

How likely customers are to ...	Average Ratings
Refer the hardware store to friends or family	4.79
Go to the hardware store as a way of supporting the local business community	4.73
Go to the hardware store first to solve a problem in the future	4.71
Rely on the hardware store to have products in stock that they need	4.67
Rely on the hardware store's salespeople to have the know-how to answer questions	4.58
Go to the hardware store to get the best prices	3.91

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning did not apply and five meaning highly likely. Did not apply answers were not included in the ratings, which range from highly unlikely to highly likely.

# Building Relationships

Two years ago the Russell R. Mueller Retail Hardware Research Foundation published a study, *Winning Retail Strategies*, in which owners of family-owned hardware stores detailed how they compete with big-box home improvement centers. The number one strategy was building customer relationships.

The 2006 Mueller Foundation study, *What Matters to Customers*, followed up by asking customers to describe the personal and business relationships they have with hardware stores.

It would seem the hardware stores where the study respondents shop have done a solid job of developing relationships that keep customers coming back.

Customers were asked to indicate their level of agreement with 10 statements designed to reveal how strong the bond was with their local hardware store. They used a five point scale ranging from strongly disagree (one) to strongly agree (five).

There were two significant findings — the highest and the lowest levels of agreement — and both were strong endorsements for hardware stores.

The statement with the strongest agreement involved customers' intention to visit the neighborhood hardware store at least once in the next 30 days. It is borne out by another finding: Customers said they shopped at their hardware store an average of seven or eight times in the past 30 days. They make frequent trips and intend to continue doing so.

The statement with the strongest disagreement was this one: They could easily find another store to meet their needs as well if the hardware store were not in business. They do not want to lose their hardware stores.

Customers also strongly agreed that family owners are an important part of what makes the store appealing, that everyone at the store is important to the local community and that the hardware store is involved in building the community. Local ownership and involvement is a key competitive advantage.

## Results for Customer Segments

There are a few hints in the results that women may not feel quite as comfortable in hardware stores as men do. Women feel strongly about continuing to shop at their hardware stores and that family and community are important. The differences come in knowing salespeople by name, considering them friends and feeling comfortable about asking for help in an after-hours emergency. Still, women said it would be harder to find a replacement.

Looking at differences by age reveals a few more hints that younger customers may not have quite the same values as older groups. Community involvement by the store and its employees is not as important to 24 year old and younger men. However, younger women gave much the same responses as the older groups.

Professional customers seem to have developed stronger relationships than the do-it-yourselfers. They know salespeople by name, the salespeople know them and they consider salespeople friends. They have received help with special problems and are less hesitant to call for after-hours assistance.

It is important to note that the differences among and within each segment are not major.

Data on customer segments appears in the Appendix, beginning on page 23.

## Customer Comments

### WHAT CUSTOMERS LIKE BEST

"The inventory and knowledge and assistance offered. It's like asking your dad."

"I know everyone by name and they know us."

"They are fair, friendly and innovative. The owners are a great family. Their values are evident throughout the organization."

"Nice store, close, friendly, have selection of different things and it's an important part of the community that we will continue to support."

"The store is the center of the community. People meet and gather at the store. The owner is committed to the community."

"It's nice to go to a store where they know what they're doing and are happy to help you. That's hard to find in most stores today."

"They have everything and you can buy just one screw, not a whole box full."

"I remodeled a house and for each project I got into — whether it was fixing walls, painting, redoing floors — they helped me and explained to me how to fix my problem."

"They practice what they preach — the customer comes first. Very unusual in retail."

"They don't laugh when I say I need a thingamajig to fix the window."

"I always find something extra there, something I wasn't even shopping for but did need."

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH CUSTOMERS

The extent to which customers agree that...	Average Ratings
They expect to visit their neighborhood hardware store at least once in the next 30 days	4.71
Part of what makes the hardware store is the family that owns and operates it	4.43
The people at the hardware store are an important part of the community	4.42
The hardware store is involved in helping build the community	4.30
They know at least one salesperson by name	4.12
The people at the hardware store have offered "above and beyond" service such as ordering special merchandise	4.12
At least one salesperson knows them by name	3.91
They consider at least one salesperson a friend	3.81
They feel comfortable calling someone from the store with an after-hours emergency	3.20
They could easily find another store to meet their needs as well if the hardware store were not in business	2.57

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning strongly disagree and five meaning strongly agree.

# Making Shopping Choices

It's all very interesting to know what customers say they think about family-owned hardware stores. But do those feelings translate into shopping decisions?

The new Russell R. Mueller Retail Hardware Research Foundation study, *What Matters to Customers*, put that critical question to hardware store shoppers.

What products are they most likely to buy at hardware stores? At big-box home improvement centers?

Where are they most likely to go for service, convenience, selection and price?

Hardware stores are the clear choice for core home maintenance and repair products — plumbing, electrical, hardware and tools — and for niche departments such as housewares and automotives. Big-box home improvement centers are preferred for products related to big-ticket improvement projects — lumber, building

materials, flooring and wallcoverings, all products that hardware stores are less likely to stock in any depth. It's almost a draw for paint and seasonal merchandise.

Hardware stores are by far the preferred choice for service and convenience. The study listed eight reasons for choosing where to shop and asked customers how likely they were to go to a hardware store or big-box. They were asked to indicate their preference on a five-point scale with one meaning more likely to go to a big-box and five meaning more likely to go to the hardware store.

Customers expressed strong preference — a rating higher than 4.0 — for hardware stores on six of the eight reasons, all relating to expert help, quality merchandise and the convenience of making a quick trip. The only reason that favored big-boxes was price.

### Results by Customer Segment

There's little difference in shopping choices between men and women when product selection is involved. Their preferences track those of the full panel of respondents. The same is true for the reasons for making shopping choices — hardware stores are preferred for service and convenience, big-boxes for price.

Age is a different matter. The youngest age group — men and women 24 and younger — tend to prefer big-boxes for more product categories. Hardware and tools are the only departments where they expressed a preference for hardware stores.

Something of a dichotomy appears in the data on reasons for making shopping choices. The youngest shoppers indicate as strong a preference for hardware stores as do the older groups for

service and convenience but show a slightly stronger preference for big-boxes on prices.

The preference for big-boxes is not significant, but it is another indication that younger shoppers have a more favorable impression of big-boxes.

Much the same is true when cus-

tomers are segmented by type of activity. Whether do-it-yourselfer or professional, their choices of where to shop for major merchandise categories follow closely preferences of the full panel.

When it comes to reasons of service and convenience, light do-it-yourselfers show a stronger preference for hardware

stores, perhaps because they are not as confident of their own skills as are serious do-it-yourselfers and professionals and may feel intimidated by big-boxes. For sure, they appreciate the help they get from hardware store salespeople.

Data on customer segments appears in the Appendix, beginning on page 23.

## Customer Comments

### WHY CUSTOMERS SHOP AT BIG-BOXES

"They carry large items the hardware store doesn't stock."

"A better price in bigger stuff, more variety."

"When the price differential is substantial and significant money is involved. Also the variety of products is greater."

"Because I know exactly what I need and don't have to rely on a salesperson with limited knowledge."

"We don't. Rude salespeople, can't get help. Seem to prefer contractors, not little folks."

"Because it is on a regularly traveled route from my home to varied job sites. I hate it. ... On a job site I'll shop the nearest local hardware store first."

"I would only shop at a big-box when I would need large items for a major project; i.e.: bathtub, shower stall. I think it is stupid to drive to a big-box for a can of paint, Christmas lights, etc. You are not saving any money. And the big-box is too big; you waste time wandering around looking for what you want and help."

"We are weekend workers on our house and the big-box stores are open later on Sunday."

### MOST IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HARDWARE STORES AND BIG-BOXES

"The hardware store treats me like a real person, not just another sale."

"Service and you buy just what you need – not all the extras you do not need."

"Cheaper at the big-box."

"The hardware store is perfect for smaller items, while the big-box is geared for the larger items."

"The personal service; I like to support stores in my community so they'll stay there. Else we'll have only warehouses."

"Excellent customer service. Big-box staff is usually hard to find and you have to walk miles to find them. They are not helpful with heavy items. They do not offer to carry anything to the car and I often feel they are talking down to women. But at the hardware store I have always been treated with respect."

"Convenience of location and store size. As a senior citizen, I prefer a smaller store for ease of shopping, ability to find a clerk or being asked if I need help. Wonderful!"

"There is a night and day difference in customer service at the hardware store. The big-box stores have much less knowledgeable help. I would rather pay a little more to know my money stays local."

"Service. I can get in and out of the hardware store fast and if I have a problem they are close and ready to help. I feel the hardware store's prices are very competitive and when things are on sale, they are even lower than the big stores. I feel like most of their products are of better quality, too."

"I am a small sole proprietorship business entity myself. I support the people like myself because I know they need me as much as I need them. The box stores do not nurture the America I believe in. The bigger is better mentality is hurtful to our economy. It is extremely easy to find what you need [at the hardware store]. You don't have to spend hours going from store to store. If they don't have what I need, they will special order off their catalog."



## WHERE CUSTOMERS SHOP

Average Ratings

Where customers say they are most likely to buy...	Hardware Stores	Big-Box Home Improvement Centers
Plumbing, heating, lighting, electrical	3.59	3.32
Building materials, lumber, flooring, wallcovering	2.69	3.94
Hardware and tools	3.47	3.18
Seasonal (lawn and garden, Christmas, etc.)	3.09	3.22
Paint and decorating	3.02	3.11
Other (housewares, automotives, sporting goods, etc.)	3.06	2.97

Average ratings are based on five-point scale with one meaning cannot remember and five meaning most or all products purchased at that type of store. Cannot remember answers were not included in the ratings, which range from no products purchased to most or all products purchased.

## WHY CUSTOMERS SHOP AT HARDWARE STORES

Customers say they shop at hardware stores...	Average Ratings
When they want salespeople available to help them	4.60
When they want salespeople to help them find exactly what they need	4.54
When they are in a hurry	4.54
When they want salespeople to knowledgeably answer questions	4.48
When they want salespeople who can show them how to use the products once they get home	4.37
When they are looking for the highest quality products	4.07
When they are looking for specific brand names	3.55
When they are looking for the lowest prices	2.73

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning much more likely to go to big-box and five meaning much more likely to go to hardware store.



# The High-Performance Difference

Does customer satisfaction translate into high profitability? What do high-performance hardware stores do differently or better than other hardware stores? To find out, the Russell R. Mueller Retail Hardware Research Foundation pulled a special breakout of results in its new study, *What Matters to Customers*.

The retailers who participated in the study by giving questionnaires to their customers were asked to submit information about their own operations. The high-performance stores were isolated and the responses of their customers pulled out.

High-performance stores were defined as those reporting sales per square foot of \$175 or more and net profit before taxes of 7.4 percent or higher. These profitability measurements parallel those of the high-profit stores in the North American Retail Hardware Association's annual *Cost of Doing Business Study*.

Customers of the high-performance stores represented 12.5 percent of the full panel of more than 900 customers.

As is so often the case, high-performance stores do not do any one thing better than everybody else. They

do almost everything just a little bit better. They tend to the details of retailing a little more carefully. The charts on the following pages tell the story.

High-performance stores exceed customer expectations a little bit better, they enjoy tighter emotional ties to their customers and they build stronger personal and business relationships.

Significantly, customers of high-performance stores think their neighborhood hardware store gives them value for their money. Although they said they would be more likely to go to a big-box home improvement center for the lowest prices, they said they would go to the hardware store for the best prices, indicating a clear understanding of the value the hardware store adds through well-informed salespeople, in-stock position, in-store services and convenient location.

Customers of high-performance stores place more value on local family ownership and the store's contribution to its community. And, importantly, they would find it more difficult to replace their local hardware store as a preferred place to shop.

Somewhat unexpectedly, given their strong endorsement of their local hardware stores, customers of high-performance stores tend to shop less frequently at the hardware store and more frequently at the big-box. Still they visit the hardware store more than twice as often as the big-box.

They said convenience in the form of speedy transactions was less important than did customers of other hardware stores, which may contribute to their tendency to shop at big-boxes more often. This and the fact that the big-box is closer to home than it is for customers of other hardware stores.

They also reported spending substantially less during their last visit to the hardware store than did customers of other hardware stores.

Customers of high-performance hardware stores are more likely to be light do-it-yourselfers and less likely to be professionals, which may account for the lower transaction size. They have shopped at their neighborhood hardware store for more years and live closer to both the hardware store and the big-box.



## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Average Ratings

Importance of shopping satisfaction factors	Customers of High-Performance Stores	Customers of All Other Stores
Provide expert help in solving problems	4.18	4.16
Provide expert help in understanding exactly what products are needed	3.93	3.90
Provide expert help in understanding how to use or install products at home	3.84	3.69
Get products ready for use at home; e.g.: mix paint	3.61	3.73
Help complete purchases quickly	3.61	3.71
Provide services to repair broken items	3.75	3.19
Personal greeting when entering the store	3.07	2.79
Help load purchases into vehicles	2.73	2.83
Provide assistance at home; e.g.: installing a product purchased at the store	2.38	2.58
Offer rental services	2.05	2.33
Deliver purchases to customer's home	1.30	1.94

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning not important and five meaning extremely important.

Average Ratings

Hardware stores' performance on satisfaction factors	Customers of High-Performance Stores	Customers of All Other Stores
Provide expert help in solving problems	4.64	4.27
Provide expert help in understanding exactly what products are needed	4.41	4.25
Provide expert help in understanding how to use or install products at home	4.50	4.11
Get products ready for use at home; e.g.: mix paint	4.55	4.32
Help complete purchases quickly	4.55	4.34
Provide services to repair broken items	4.47	4.11
Personal greeting when entering the store	4.46	4.20
Help load purchases into vehicles	4.36	4.29
Provide assistance at home; e.g.: installing a product purchased at the store	3.86	4.11
Offer rental services	3.81	4.08
Deliver purchases to customer's home	2.50	4.00

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning did not apply and five meaning excellent. Did not apply answers were not included in the ratings, which range from poor to excellent.

## CUSTOMERS' OPINION

How likely customers are to...	Average Ratings	
	Customers of High-Performance Stores	Customers of All Other Stores
Refer the hardware store to friends or family	4.89	4.71
Go to the hardware store as a way of supporting the local business community	4.83	4.71
Go to the hardware store first to solve a problem in the future	4.69	4.68
Rely on the hardware store to have the products in stock that they need	4.75	4.62
Rely on the hardware store's salespeople to have the know-how to answer questions	4.73	4.47
Go to the hardware store to get the best prices	4.10	3.93

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning did not apply and five meaning highly likely. Did not apply answers were not included in the ratings, which range from highly unlikely to highly likely.

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH CUSTOMERS

The extent to which customers agree that...	Average Ratings	
	Customers of High-Performance Stores	Customers of All Other Stores
They expect to visit the hardware store at least once in the next 30 days	4.67	4.73
Part of what makes the hardware store is the family that owns and operates it	4.76	4.31
The people at the hardware store are an important part of the community	4.67	4.42
The hardware store is involved in helping build the community	4.44	4.29
They know at least one salesperson by name	4.25	4.23
The people at the hardware store have offered "above and beyond" service such as ordering special merchandise	4.33	4.14
At least one salesperson knows them by name	3.95	4.02
They consider at least one salesperson a friend	3.81	3.82
They feel comfortable calling someone from the store with an after-hours emergency	3.20	3.12
They could easily find another store to meet their needs as well if the hardware store were not in business	2.52	2.69

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning strongly disagree and five meaning strongly agree.

## WHERE CUSTOMERS BUY

Average Ratings

How likely customers are to purchase at hardware stores...	Customers of High-Performance Stores	Customers of All Other Stores
Plumbing, heating, lighting, electrical	3.41	3.62
Building materials, lumber, flooring, wallcovering	2.64	2.68
Hardware and tools	3.23	3.48
Seasonal (lawn and garden, Christmas, etc.)	3.00	3.05
Paint and decorating	2.72	3.00
Other (housewares, automotives, sporting goods, etc.)	3.34	3.16

Average Ratings

How likely customers are to purchase at big-box home improvement centers...	Customers of High-Performance Stores	Customers of All Other Stores
Plumbing, heating, lighting, electrical	3.45	3.27
Building materials, lumber, flooring, wallcovering	4.31	3.94
Hardware and tools	3.17	3.13
Seasonal (lawn and garden, Christmas, etc.)	3.33	3.10
Paint and decorating	3.48	2.94
Other (housewares, automotives, sporting goods, etc.)	2.88	2.91

Average ratings are based on five-point scale with one meaning cannot remember and five meaning most or all products purchased at that type of store. Cannot remember answers were not included in the ratings, which range from no products purchased to most or all products purchased.



## WHY CUSTOMERS SHOP AT HARDWARE STORES

Average Ratings

Customers say they shop at hardware stores...	Customers of High-Performance Stores	Customers of All Other Stores
When they want salespeople available to help them	4.57	4.50
When they want salespeople to help them find exactly what they need	4.61	4.45
When they are in a hurry	4.15	4.66
When they want salespeople who can knowledgeably answer questions	4.48	4.39
When they want salespeople who can show them how to use the products once they get home	4.36	4.32
When they are looking for the highest quality products	3.89	4.00
When they are looking for specific brand names	3.31	3.62
When they are looking for the lowest prices	2.54	2.80

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning much more likely to go to big-box and five meaning much more likely to go to hardware store.

## CUSTOMER PROFILE

	Customers of High-Performance Stores	Customers of All Other Stores
Percent of respondents	12.5%	87.5%
Light do-it-yourselfers	60.0%	46.6%
Serious do-it-yourselfers	26.7%	29.3%
Professionals	13.3%	24.1%
Distance from hardware store	3.5 miles	5.1 miles
from big-box home improvement center	4.3 miles	24.0 miles
Driving time from hardware store	7.5 minutes	10.4 minutes
from big-box home improvement center	11.1 minutes	29.9 minutes
Years lived at current address	23.5 years	17.3 years
Years shopped at hardware store	24.6 years	17.0 years
Years big-box home improvement center has been in market	6.1 years	6.5 years
Number of visits to hardware store in last 30 days	5.0 visits	7.7 visits
to big-box home improvement center	2.4 visits	1.4 visits
Dollars spent during last visit to hardware store	\$22.46	\$51.40



Results for the Russell R. Mueller Retail Hardware Research Foundation's study, *What Matters to Customers*, were broken into three segments:

- Gender – men vs. women
- Age and gender – four age groups

each for men and women; the age groups were 24 years and younger, 25 to 45 years old, 46 to 65 years old and 66 years and older

- Customer type – light do-it-yourselfers (do routine home repair or decorating projects), serious do-it-

yourselfers (do major home improvement projects) and professionals (tradesmen and contractors)

Charts on this and the following pages present statistical data for these three segments.

## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: MEN VS. WOMEN

Average Ratings

Importance of shopping satisfaction factors	Men	Women
Provide expert help in solving problems	4.13	4.42
Provide expert help in understanding exactly what products are needed	3.82	4.25
Provide expert help in understanding how to use or install products at home	3.60	4.13
Get products ready for use at home; e.g.: mix paint	3.62	3.98
Help complete purchases quickly	3.70	3.75
Provide services to repair broken items	3.20	3.71
Personal greeting when entering the store	2.81	3.02
Help load purchases into vehicles	2.64	3.23
Provide assistance at home; e.g.: installing a product purchased at the store	2.42	2.85
Offer rental services	2.26	2.34
Deliver purchases to customer's home	1.76	2.05

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning not important and five meaning extremely important.

Average Ratings

Hardware stores' performance on satisfaction factors	Men	Women
Provide expert help in solving problems	4.27	4.56
Provide expert help in understanding exactly what products are needed	4.24	4.41
Provide expert help in understanding how to use or install products at home	4.18	4.39
Get products ready for use at home; e.g.: mix paint	4.26	4.48
Help complete purchases quickly	4.33	4.48
Provide services to repair broken items	4.20	4.44
Personal greeting when entering the store	4.18	4.39
Help load purchases into vehicles	4.23	4.44
Provide assistance at home; e.g.: installing a product purchased at the store	4.06	4.22
Offer rental services	4.06	4.20
Deliver purchases to customer's home	4.08	4.15

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning did not apply and five meaning excellent. Did not apply answers were not included in the ratings, which range from poor to excellent.

## OPINIONS ABOUT HARDWARE STORES: MEN VS. WOMEN

Average Ratings

How likely customers are to...	Men	Women
Refer the hardware store to friends or family	4.76	4.81
Go to the hardware store as a way of supporting the local business community	4.68	4.79
Go to the hardware store first to solve a problem in the future	4.67	4.75
Rely on the hardware store to have the products in stock that they need	4.66	4.73
Rely on the hardware store's salespeople to have the know-how to answer questions	4.51	4.73
Go to the hardware store to get the best prices	3.82	4.07

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning did not apply and five meaning highly likely. Did not apply answers were not included in the ratings, which range from highly unlikely to highly likely.

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH HARDWARE STORES: MEN VS. WOMEN

Average Ratings

The extent to which customers agree that...	Men	Women
They expect to visit the hardware store at least once in the next 30 days	4.71	4.67
Part of what makes the hardware store is the family that owns and operates it	4.42	4.41
The people at the hardware store are an important part of the community	4.42	4.43
The hardware store is involved in helping build the community	4.28	4.34
They know at least one salesperson by name	4.17	3.90
The people at the hardware store have offered "above and beyond" service such as ordering special merchandise	4.12	4.06
At least one salesperson knows them by name	3.99	3.59
They consider at least one salesperson a friend	3.87	3.54
They feel comfortable calling someone from the store with an after-hours emergency	3.23	2.97
They could easily find another store to meet their needs as well if the hardware store were not in business	2.64	2.33

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning strongly disagree and five meaning strongly agree.

## WHERE MEN AND WOMEN BUY

Average Ratings

How likely customers are to purchase at hardware stores...	Men	Women
Plumbing, heating, lighting, electrical	3.65	3.35
Building materials, lumber, flooring, wallcovering	2.68	2.55
Hardware and tools	3.52	3.25
Seasonal (lawn and garden, Christmas, etc.)	3.01	3.12
Paint and decorating	2.93	2.96
Other (housewares, automotives, sporting goods, etc.)	2.92	3.10

## WHERE MEN AND WOMEN BUY

Average Ratings

How likely customers are to purchase at big-box home improvement centers...	Men	Women
Plumbing, heating, lighting, electrical	3.35	3.26
Building materials, lumber, flooring, wallcovering	4.12	3.92
Hardware and tools	3.27	3.00
Seasonal (lawn and garden, Christmas, etc.)	3.23	3.23
Paint and decorating	3.08	3.17
Other (housewares, automotives, sporting goods, etc.)	2.97	3.05

Average ratings are based on five-point scale with one meaning cannot remember and five meaning most or all products purchased at that type of store. Cannot remember answers were not included in the ratings, which range from no products purchased to most or all products purchased.

## WHY MEN AND WOMEN SHOP AT HARDWARE STORES

Average Ratings

Customers say they shop at hardware stores...	Men	Women
When they want salespeople available to help them	4.58	4.64
When they want salespeople to help them find exactly what they need	4.50	4.59
When they are in a hurry	4.54	4.54
When they want salespeople who can knowledgeably answer questions	4.46	4.51
When they want salespeople who can show them how to use the products once they get home	4.32	4.49
When they are looking for the highest quality products	4.01	4.21
When they are looking for specific brand names	3.46	3.76
When they are looking for the lowest prices	2.63	2.98

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning much more likely to go to big-box and five meaning much more likely to go to hardware store.

## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: MEN BY AGE GROUP

Average Ratings

Importance of shopping satisfaction factors	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
Provide expert help in solving problems	4.13	4.19	4.10	4.12
Provide expert help in understanding exactly what products are needed	4.38	3.86	3.78	3.84
Provide expert help in understanding how to use or install products at home	3.63	3.60	3.59	3.63
Get products ready for use at home; e.g.: mix paint	4.00	3.64	3.57	3.67
Help complete purchases quickly	4.14	3.98	3.65	3.55
Provide services to repair broken items	3.50	3.15	3.22	3.20
Personal greeting when entering the store	2.88	2.85	2.79	2.79
Help load purchases into vehicles	3.75	2.74	2.55	2.68
Provide assistance at home; e.g.: installing a product purchased at the store	2.00	2.28	2.42	2.52
Offer rental services	3.25	2.40	2.31	2.02
Deliver purchases to customer's home	2.50	1.85	1.73	1.72

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning not important and five meaning extremely important.

Average Ratings

Hardware stores' performance on satisfaction factors	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
Provide expert help in solving problems	4.00	4.32	4.24	4.29
Provide expert help in understanding exactly what products are needed	4.14	4.32	4.23	4.22
Provide expert help in understanding how to use or install products at home	4.14	4.30	4.12	4.18
Get products ready for use at home; e.g.: mix paint	4.00	4.35	4.22	4.26
Help complete purchases quickly	4.38	4.34	4.31	4.34
Provide services to repair broken items	4.14	4.42	4.17	4.15
Personal greeting when entering the store	4.14	4.23	4.18	4.13
Help load purchases into vehicles	4.00	4.45	4.19	4.16
Provide assistance at home; e.g.: installing a product purchased at the store	3.75	4.11	3.95	4.20
Offer rental services	4.14	4.19	4.05	3.96
Deliver purchases to customer's home	3.50	4.28	3.98	4.13

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning did not apply and five meaning excellent. Did not apply answers were not included in the ratings, which range from poor to excellent.

**OPINIONS ABOUT HARDWARE STORES: MEN BY AGE GROUP**

Average Ratings

How likely men are to...	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
Refer the hardware store to friends or family	4.13	4.76	4.75	4.81
Go to the hardware store as a way of supporting the local business community	4.17	4.67	4.73	4.63
Go to the hardware store first to solve a problem in the future	4.00	4.60	4.69	4.70
Rely on the hardware store to have the products in stock that they need	3.88	4.56	4.67	4.75
Rely on the hardware store's salespeople to have the know-how to answer questions	4.00	4.42	4.47	4.67
Go to the hardware store to get the best prices	3.13	3.73	3.78	3.98

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning did not apply and five meaning highly likely. Did not apply answers were not included in the ratings, which range from highly unlikely to highly likely.

**RELATIONSHIPS WITH HARDWARE STORES: MEN BY AGE GROUP**

Average Ratings

The extent to which men agree that...	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
They expect to visit the hardware store at least once in the next 30 days	4.88	4.76	4.73	4.65
Part of what makes the hardware store is the family that owns and operates it	4.25	4.31	4.44	4.47
The people at the hardware store are an important part of the community	3.88	4.34	4.39	4.54
The hardware store is involved in helping build the community	3.75	4.29	4.25	4.35
They know at least one salesperson by name	4.13	4.01	4.18	4.27
The people at the hardware store have offered "above and beyond" service such as ordering special merchandise	4.38	3.85	4.14	4.24
At least one salesperson knows them by name	3.88	3.91	3.97	4.08
They consider at least one salesperson a friend	4.13	3.59	3.86	4.05
They feel comfortable calling someone from the store with an after-hours emergency	3.43	2.99	3.19	3.43
They could easily find another store to meet their needs as well if the hardware store were not in business	2.88	2.57	2.65	2.65

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning strongly disagree and five meaning strongly agree.

## WHERE MEN BUY: BY AGE GROUP

How likely men are to purchase at hardware stores...	Average Ratings			
	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
Plumbing, heating, lighting, electrical	3.00	3.53	3.64	3.79
Building materials, lumber, flooring, wallcovering	3.25	2.65	2.68	2.67
Hardware and tools	3.25	3.35	3.56	3.58
Seasonal (lawn and garden, Christmas, etc.)	2.75	2.86	3.06	3.08
Paint and decorating	2.63	2.81	2.96	3.00
Other (housewares, automotives, sporting goods, etc.)	3.43	2.68	3.05	2.79

How likely men are to purchase at big-box home improvement centers...	Average Ratings			
	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
Plumbing, heating, lighting, electrical	3.40	3.43	3.63	3.25
Building materials, lumber, flooring, wallcovering	4.17	4.19	4.13	4.06
Hardware and tools	3.14	3.33	3.26	3.25
Seasonal (lawn and garden, Christmas, etc.)	3.00	3.26	3.20	3.26
Paint and decorating	2.43	3.13	3.11	3.03
Other (housewares, automotives, sporting goods, etc.)	2.83	2.99	2.94	3.02

Average ratings are based on five-point scale with one meaning cannot remember and five meaning most or all products purchased at that type of store. Cannot remember answers were not included in the ratings, which range from no products purchased to most or all products purchased.

## WHY MEN SHOP AT HARDWARE STORES: BY AGE GROUP

Men say they shop at hardware stores...	Average Ratings			
	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
When they want salespeople available to help them	4.86	4.47	4.57	4.64
When they want salespeople to help them find exactly what they need	4.43	4.32	4.51	4.61
When they are in a hurry	4.71	4.34	4.54	4.66
When they want salespeople who can knowledgeably answer questions	4.29	4.35	4.44	4.56
When they want salespeople who can show them how to use the products once they get home	4.29	4.11	4.33	4.43
When they are looking for the highest quality products	3.86	3.74	3.99	4.24
When they are looking for specific brand names	3.00	3.20	3.43	3.69
When they are looking for the lowest prices	2.43	2.49	2.59	2.81

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning much more likely to go to big-box and five meaning much more likely to go to hardware store.



**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: WOMEN BY AGE GROUP**

Average Ratings

Importance of shopping satisfaction factors	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
Provide expert help in solving problems	4.40	4.48	4.39	4.41
Provide expert help in understanding exactly what products are needed	4.20	4.29	4.26	4.18
Provide expert help in understanding how to use or install products at home	4.40	4.18	4.15	4.00
Get products ready for use at home; e.g.: mix paint	4.20	4.16	3.94	3.86
Help complete purchases quickly	3.60	3.82	3.70	3.80
Provide services to repair broken items	5.00	3.70	3.72	3.57
Personal greeting when entering the store	3.20	3.16	2.94	3.02
Help load purchases into vehicles	4.40	3.23	3.16	3.26
Provide assistance at home; e.g.: installing a product purchased at the store	3.00	3.05	2.71	2.96
Offer rental services	2.60	2.29	2.40	2.22
Deliver purchases to customer's home	2.80	2.20	1.99	1.96

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning not important and five meaning extremely important.

Average Ratings

Hardware stores' performance on satisfaction factors	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
Provide expert help in solving problems	4.40	4.55	4.65	4.42
Provide expert help in understanding exactly what products are needed	4.00	4.47	4.49	4.20
Provide expert help in understanding how to use or install products at home	4.33	4.49	4.41	4.26
Get products ready for use at home; e.g.: mix paint	4.50	4.61	4.46	4.37
Help complete purchases quickly	4.60	4.50	4.45	4.51
Provide services to repair broken items	4.50	4.63	4.44	4.23
Personal greeting when entering the store	4.00	4.43	4.39	4.39
Help load purchases into vehicles	4.00	4.63	4.61	4.08
Provide assistance at home; e.g.: installing a product purchased at the store	4.00	4.38	4.26	4.05
Offer rental services	4.50	4.18	4.18	4.20
Deliver purchases to customer's home	3.00	4.00	4.36	4.08

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning did not apply and five meaning excellent. Did not apply answers were not included in the ratings, which range from poor to excellent.

**OPINIONS ABOUT HARDWARE STORES: WOMEN BY AGE GROUP**

Average Ratings

How likely women are to...	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
Refer the hardware store to friends or family	5.00	4.79	4.81	4.84
Go to the hardware store as a way of supporting the local business community	4.40	4.75	4.79	4.85
Go to the hardware store first to solve a problem in the future	4.60	4.55	4.83	4.79
Rely on the hardware store to have the products in stock that they need	4.60	4.47	4.81	4.84
Rely on the hardware store's salespeople to have the know-how to answer questions	4.60	4.64	4.75	4.77
Go to the hardware store to get the best prices	4.40	3.73	4.05	4.44

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning did not apply and five meaning highly likely. Did not apply answers were not included in the ratings, which range from highly unlikely to highly likely.

**RELATIONSHIPS WITH HARDWARE STORES: WOMEN BY AGE GROUP**

Average Ratings

The extent to which women agree that...	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
They expect to visit the hardware store at least once in the next 30 days	4.75	4.61	4.70	4.67
Part of what makes the hardware store is the family that owns and operates it	3.80	4.30	4.42	4.56
The people at the hardware store are an important part of the community	4.60	4.20	4.48	4.53
The hardware store is involved in helping build the community	4.60	4.09	4.37	4.51
They know at least one salesperson by name	4.00	3.76	3.94	3.95
The people at the hardware store have offered "above and beyond" service such as ordering special merchandise	4.20	4.02	3.97	4.31
At least one salesperson knows them by name	4.00	3.52	3.60	3.60
They consider at least one salesperson a friend	3.60	3.55	3.53	3.54
They feel comfortable calling someone from the store with an after-hours emergency	3.80	2.87	2.96	3.02
They could easily find another store to meet their needs as well if the hardware store were not in business	2.80	2.73	2.19	2.20

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning strongly disagree and five meaning strongly agree.

**WHERE WOMEN BUY: BY AGE GROUP**

Average Ratings

How likely women are to purchase at hardware stores...	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
Plumbing, heating, lighting, electrical	3.50	3.47	3.20	3.55
Building materials, lumber, flooring, wallcovering	2.50	2.63	2.58	2.38
Hardware and tools	3.67	3.03	3.39	3.16
Seasonal (lawn and garden, Christmas, etc.)	3.75	2.97	3.21	3.03
Paint and decorating	3.50	2.84	3.09	2.69
Other (housewares, automotives, sporting goods, etc.)	4.00	2.83	3.15	3.26

Average Ratings

How likely women are to purchase at big-box home improvement centers...	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
Plumbing, heating, lighting, electrical	3.20	3.27	3.22	3.39
Building materials, lumber, flooring, wallcovering	4.20	3.98	3.92	3.83
Hardware and tools	2.20	3.14	2.93	3.15
Seasonal (lawn and garden, Christmas, etc.)	3.20	3.18	3.19	3.38
Paint and decorating	3.40	3.12	3.10	3.38
Other (housewares, automotives, sporting goods, etc.)	2.67	3.04	2.96	3.32

Average ratings are based on five-point scale with one meaning cannot remember and five meaning most or all products purchased at that type of store. Cannot remember answers were not included in the ratings, which range from no products purchased to most or all products purchased.

**WHY WOMEN SHOP AT HARDWARE STORES: BY AGE GROUP**

Average Ratings

Women say they shop at hardware stores...	24 and Younger	25-45	46-65	66 and Older
When they want salespeople available to help them	4.40	4.55	4.70	4.63
When they want salespeople to help them find exactly what they need	4.80	4.42	4.69	4.53
When they are in a hurry	4.40	4.51	4.64	4.39
When they want salespeople who can knowledgeably answer questions	4.80	4.31	4.60	4.52
When they want salespeople who can show them how to use the products once they get home	4.80	4.34	4.60	4.38
When they are looking for the highest quality products	4.40	3.85	4.30	4.37
When they are looking for specific brand names	2.80	3.40	3.83	4.06
When they are looking for the lowest prices	2.40	2.79	3.00	3.19

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning much more likely to go to big-box and five meaning much more likely to go to hardware store.

## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: BY TYPE OF CUSTOMER

Average Ratings

Importance of shopping satisfaction factors	Average Ratings		
	Light Do-It-Yourselfers	Serious Do-It-Yourselfers	Professionals
Provide expert help in solving problems	4.29	4.16	4.03
Provide expert help in understanding exactly what products are needed	4.10	3.78	3.70
Provide expert help in understanding how to use or install products at home	3.97	3.44	3.42
Get products ready for use at home; e.g.: mix paint	3.79	3.65	3.63
Help complete purchases quickly	3.69	3.55	3.98
Provide services to repair broken items	3.55	3.03	3.07
Personal greeting when entering the store	2.89	2.77	2.99
Help load purchases into vehicles	2.88	2.61	2.84
Provide assistance at home; e.g.: installing a product purchased at the store	2.72	2.16	2.43
Offer rental services	2.23	2.29	2.44
Deliver purchases to customer's home	1.90	1.64	1.87

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning not important and five meaning extremely important.

Average Ratings

Hardware stores' performance on satisfaction factors	Average Ratings		
	Light Do-It-Yourselfers	Serious Do-It-Yourselfers	Professionals
Provide expert help in solving problems	4.39	4.26	4.35
Provide expert help in understanding exactly what products are needed	4.37	4.20	4.21
Provide expert help in understanding how to use or install products at home	4.35	4.11	4.13
Get products ready for use at home; e.g.: mix paint	4.32	4.33	4.32
Help complete purchases quickly	4.37	4.32	4.46
Provide services to repair broken items	4.28	4.29	4.23
Personal greeting when entering the store	4.24	4.18	4.28
Help load purchases into vehicles	4.35	4.17	4.35
Provide assistance at home; e.g.: installing a product purchased at the store	4.16	3.95	4.16
Offer rental services	4.05	4.12	4.23
Deliver purchases to customer's home	4.06	3.83	4.17

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning did not apply and five meaning excellent. Did not apply answers were not included in the ratings, which range from poor to excellent.

## CUSTOMERS' OPINIONS: BY TYPE OF CUSTOMER

Average Ratings

How likely customers are to...	Light Do-It-Yourselfers	Serious Do-It-Yourselfers	Professionals
Refer the hardware store to friends or family	4.79	4.77	4.79
Go to the hardware store as a way of supporting the local business community	4.75	4.70	4.72
Go to the hardware store first to solve a problem in the future	4.72	4.63	4.69
Rely on the hardware store to have the products in stock that they need	4.71	4.68	4.64
Rely on the hardware store's salespeople to have the know-how to answer questions	4.68	4.48	4.40
Go to the hardware store to get the best prices	3.91	3.80	3.94

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning did not apply and five meaning highly likely. Did not apply answers were not included in the ratings, which range from highly unlikely to highly likely.

## RELATIONSHIPS WITH HARDWARE STORES: BY TYPE OF CUSTOMER

Average Ratings

The extent to which customers agree that...	Light Do-It-Yourselfers	Serious Do-It-Yourselfers	Professionals
They expect to visit the hardware store at least once in the next 30 days	4.68	4.75	4.79
Part of what makes the hardware store is the family that owns and operates it	4.42	4.41	4.47
The people at the hardware store are an important part of the community	4.44	4.40	4.49
The hardware store is involved in helping build the community	4.31	4.22	4.40
They know at least one salesperson by name	4.01	4.07	4.51
The people at the hardware store have offered "above and beyond" service such as ordering special merchandise	4.06	4.10	4.25
At least one salesperson knows them by name	3.72	3.93	4.47
They consider at least one salesperson a friend	3.70	3.76	4.19
They feel comfortable calling someone from the store with an after-hours emergency	3.05	3.18	3.50
They could easily find another store to meet their needs as well if the hardware store were not in business	2.60	2.46	2.50

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning strongly disagree and five meaning strongly agree.

## WHERE CUSTOMERS BUY: BY TYPE OF CUSTOMER

Average Ratings

How likely customers are to purchase at hardware stores...	Light Do-It-Yourselfers	Serious Do-It-Yourselfers	Professionals
Plumbing, heating, lighting, electrical	3.49	3.79	3.72
Building materials, lumber, flooring, wallcovering	2.58	2.61	3.06
Hardware and tools	3.44	3.55	3.67
Seasonal (lawn and garden, Christmas, etc.)	3.07	3.10	3.04
Paint and decorating	2.95	3.03	3.20
Other (housewares, automotives, sporting goods, etc.)	3.08	3.14	2.97

Average Ratings

How likely customers are to purchase at big-box home improvement centers...	Light Do-It-Yourselfers	Serious Do-It-Yourselfers	Professionals
Plumbing, heating, lighting, electrical	3.26	3.38	3.42
Building materials, lumber, flooring, wallcovering	4.09	4.27	3.96
Hardware and tools	3.11	3.31	3.29
Seasonal (lawn and garden, Christmas, etc.)	3.24	3.21	3.26
Paint and decorating	3.10	3.12	3.09
Other (housewares, automotives, sporting goods, etc.)	2.98	2.95	3.01

Average ratings are based on five-point scale with one meaning cannot remember and five meaning most or all products purchased at that type of store. Cannot remember answers were not included in the ratings, which range from no products purchased to most or all products purchased.

## WHY CUSTOMERS SHOP AT HARDWARE STORES: CUSTOMER TYPE

Average Ratings

Customers say they shop at hardware stores...	Light Do-It-Yourselfers	Serious Do-It-Yourselfers	Professionals
When they want salespeople available to help them	4.65	4.58	4.49
When they want salespeople to help them find exactly what they need	4.57	4.46	4.48
When they are in a hurry	4.56	4.61	4.46
When they want salespeople who can knowledgeably answer questions	4.53	4.43	4.44
When they want salespeople who can show them how to use the products once they get home	4.43	4.30	4.43
When they are looking for the highest quality products	4.12	3.98	4.03
When they are looking for specific brand names	3.56	3.42	3.61
When they are looking for the lowest prices	2.81	2.61	2.66

Average ratings are based on a five-point scale with one meaning much more likely to go to big-box and five meaning much more likely to go to hardware store.