

Give and Get Business Feedback

This worksheet is a starting point for independent home improvement retailers interested in swapping peer feedback about each other's stores.

The questions are not intended to be comprehensive and not all of them will apply to every business. The worksheet is designed to use for doing store critiques for other retailers, but it is a tool that can be adapted for multiple purposes, such as secret shopper reviews and assessments store owners and their employees do of their own operations.

Retailers should not be reluctant to share far more financial information with each other than is suggested here. Consult the most recent North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA) *Cost of Doing Business Study* for benchmarking data.

The following questions were compiled from resources provided by the Pterodactyl Management Group, Do it Best Corp. and Handyman Ace Hardware, as well as from prior NRHA research and suggestions from retailers.

GRADING SCALE:



ATTRIBUTES

HOURS OF OPERATION

- Are customers waiting outside for the doors to open in the morning, or routinely showing up after hours?
- How comparable are the hours to nearby businesses and other home improvement stores in the area?
- How many holidays is the business closed?

GRADE:

IN-STORE ADVERTISING

- Are sales well advertised and are the offers enticing?
- Do the signage, graphics and colors throughout the store work together to create a cohesive shopping experience and brand message?
- Are price tags, stickers, bin tags and signs easy to see and read?

GRADE:

COMMENTS ON ATTRIBUTES:

Blank area for comments on attributes.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

STAFF

- Are employees knowledgeable when answering questions about products?
- Do you notice any problems with how employees interact with each other or customers? How could they improve?
- Are all staff members professionally dressed (wearing uniforms, nametags) and easy for customers to identify as store employees?
- Is there a customer coordinator (or similar) on duty overseeing the salesfloor?
- Are team members actively seeking out customers?
- Is the overall personality of the team positive, upbeat and helpful?
- Is the team effectively acting as a team?

GRADE:

TRAINING

- Does the store have an effective training program?
- Is there evidence that the program is effective?
- Is the store using the NRHA training programs?

GRADE:

CULTURE

- Is the culture of the store/staff evident?
- Does the staff understand the store's core values/mission?
- Is store leadership strong and effective?

GRADE:

COMMENTS ON CUSTOMER SERVICE:

FINANCIAL METRICS

AVERAGE TICKET \$ _____

- How well is the staff upselling and add-on selling?
- How do average sales per customer reflect who the customer base is, and how can that base be broadened?
- Is the store's average ticket higher than other similarly sized businesses in the market and the nation? If not, why?

GRADE: _____

GROSS MARGIN _____ %

- Are they charging enough for products?
- Are they spending too much on product?
- Is theft a problem?
- How well are they managing acquisition costs?

GRADE: _____

SALES PER EMPLOYEE \$ _____

- How much revenue does each employee generate?
- Does the store have too many employees?
- Are any employees being overpaid?

GRADE: _____

PROFIT MARGIN _____ %

- How can they generate more in sales to increase profit margin?
- How can they cut expenses to improve margin?
- Is the average pay rate for employees too high?

GRADE: _____

SALES PER SQUARE FOOT \$ _____

- How efficiently does the store convert selling square footage into revenue?
- How does inventory turnover compare to the industry average?
- Are they moving dead inventory off the salesfloor to make space for new product?

GRADE: _____

COMMENTS ON FINANCIAL METRICS:

BUILDING INTERIOR—OVERALL

FIXTURES/LAYOUT

- How accessible is each department?
- Do the signage and layout make it easy to find products quickly?
- Is each department marked with a sign that can be seen from the main aisles?
- Is the store clean and organized?
- Is the layout easy to navigate?
- Is the salesfloor a compelling place to shop?

GRADE:

DISPLAYS

- Are products fronted on neat shelves and eye-catching endcaps?
- Are endcaps and clip strips kept full of product?
- Does the store use waterfall racking, wing panels and other displays well?

GRADE:

MERCHANDISING

- Do you see any glaring problems with product placement or empty shelves?
- Are departments organized in a way that encourages project and add-on sales?
- Are seasonal endcaps kept up to date?
- How well are shelf maintenance, fronting/facing and down stocking done?
- Are products displayed in the right place in the store?
- Is merchandising crisp, clean and compelling?
- How well does the store cross-merchandise?
- Are impulse items merchandised creatively and in logical locations?

GRADE:

CLUTTER

- Are the service desk, registers, and paint desk merchandised well or cluttered?
- Are products stacked haphazardly on the floor or blocking aisles?
- Are items such as empty boxes, bare display racks or last season's store décor lying around where customers can see them?
- Are unrelated products messily thrown into dump bins and closeout sections or tables?

GRADE:

CLEANLINESS

- Are shelves and products free of dust?
- Are the doors, floors, walls and customer restrooms kept clean?
- Are posters and signs clean, up to date and well placed?

GRADE:

BUILDING INTERIOR—OVERALL (CONTINUED)

INSIDE DÉCOR

- Does the retailer use innovative ideas to make the store stand out from competitors as a unique, locally owned business?
- Are music, scents or unique static features, such as murals, used to contribute to a pleasant shopping environment?
- Are signs and posters tasteful and minimal?
- Is the store cool and interesting?

GRADE:

LIGHTING

- Does lighting highlight products?
- Does the store have any dimly lit corners or dead light bulbs?
- Are lights located above every aisle?

GRADE:

COMMENTS ON BUILDING INTERIOR—OVERALL:

PRODUCT CATEGORIES

PLUMBING

- Is the vinyl tubing stored neatly on racks?
- Are inventory levels well maintained?
- Does the offering include a variety of styles in faucets and other products that can be decorative?
- Are all of the smaller products clearly priced and easy to identify?

GRADE:

ELECTRICAL

- Is the bulk wire organized and tidy?
- Does the department sell new technologies?
- How are the light bulbs displayed and is the bulb selection comprehensive?
- Are all of the smaller products clearly priced and easy to identify?

GRADE:

HARDWARE

- Are the products well merchandised on sliding racks or other displays to maximize the use of space?
- Is the department organized in a way that is logical for a customer looking for supplies for a complete project?
- Are the chains and ropes coiled, and unrolled at similar lengths for display?
- Are all of the smaller products clearly priced and easy to identify?

GRADE:

HAND AND POWER TOOLS

- Does the product mix make sense for the customer base?
- Does the department offer good, better and best products/price points?
- Does the offering include products that would make the store a destination for customers?

GRADE:

OUTDOOR LIVING

- Are the displays attractive and arranged so customers can visualize the products at their own homes? For example, patio chairs are arranged around tables.
- Are grills organized so customers can see the next step up in price and quality, making products easier to upsell?
- Are clip strips and endcaps used to promote accessories for add-on sales?

GRADE:

HOUSEWARES

- Is the selection interesting and on trend?
- Are there products that differentiate the category from the big boxes? For example, locally made products are included in the mix.
- Are varied items used in attractive displays?

GRADE:

PRODUCT CATEGORIES (CONTINUED)

PAINT

- Is the department organized in such a way that customers know where to go to get help from sales associates or get paint mixed?
- Is the area clean, with colorful signage and paint chips arranged to be eye catching?
- Does the department include an area where customers can sit and flip through magazines for ideas?

GRADE:

IMPULSE

- Are items displayed in logical locations to draw attention to product categories? For example, bug spray is placed on an endcap in the lawn and garden department.
- Are seasonal items appropriate for the current season?
- Are a variety of products, such as consumables, merchandised neatly near the checkout counter?

GRADE:

MERCHANDISE OFFERING/NICHES

- Are there apparent holes in the product lines offered?
- Does the selection include a variety of price points?
- Can add-on sales be bolstered by making some simple product additions? For example, shop vac accessories could be sold alongside shop vacs.

GRADE:

CONSIDER FOR ALL CATEGORIES:

Relevance of Product Selection: Current	GRADE:	
Stock Levels/In-Stock Position	GRADE:	
Shelf Condition	GRADE:	
Pricing Relevance	GRADE:	
Overall Presentation	GRADE:	

PRODUCT CATEGORIES (CONTINUED)

SERVICES

- Are the services offered appropriate to the market?
- How are the services promoted?
- Are all of the services and pricing listed on a sign that is easy for customers to see?
- Are cutting areas and equipment clean?

GRADE:

COMMENTS ON PRODUCT CATEGORIES:

- **Plumbing:**

- **Electrical:**

- **Hardware:**

- **Hand & Power Tools:**

- **Outdoor Living:**

- **Housewares:**

- **Paint:**

- **Impulse:**

- **Merchandise Offering/Niches:**

- **Services:**

EXTERIOR BUILDING AND SITE CHARACTERISTICS

EXTERIOR ATTRACTIVENESS

- Are signs faded or do they have burned out light bulbs?
- Is trash scattered in the parking lot or the landscaping unkempt?
- Is the building well maintained, attractive and well lit?
- Are the paint and exterior décor updated and current?

GRADE:

GARDEN CENTER OR EXTERIOR DISPLAY AREAS

- Does the store have compelling exterior product displays?
- Does the area look professional and appealing?
- Do the displays all have good signage?
- Are live goods well displayed, maintained and signed?
- Are the seasonal goods relevant?

GRADE:

PARKING

- Does the store have adequate parking, or do customers have to find overflow parking on side streets or at other businesses?
- Is the parking lot big enough for large trucks to enter, park and exit?
- Is the lot striped and well maintained?
- Is parking lot lighting effective for safety and shopability?

GRADE:

VISIBILITY

- Does the store have an adequate amount of and large enough signage?
- How hard would the building be to find if a customer didn't know where it was located?
- Are the building and signs visible from nearby streets?

GRADE:

STORE TRAFFIC

- Is the store located in a shopping center where it might attract walk-in customers?
- How busy is the store at peak times?
- Do customers have to wait in line at the checkout counter? If so, for how long?

GRADE:

EXTERIOR BUILDING AND SITE CHARACTERISTICS (CONTINUED)

CONVENIENCE

- Is the store on a main road and easy to access from nearby shopping and residential areas?
- How many entrances and exits does the parking lot have?
- Does the store have a loading area where customers can easily pull up their vehicles to pick up mulch, sheetrock or bags of cement?

GRADE:

COMMENTS ON EXTERIOR BUILDING AND SITE CHARACTERISTICS:

FINAL THOUGHTS AND ACTION PLAN

What was your overall impression of the store?

OVERALL GRADE:

Overall Visual Presentation of Interior/Exterior

COMMENTS:

Overall Financial/Key Performance Indicators

COMMENTS:

Overall Operation

COMMENTS:

What was the best thing you saw?

COMMENTS:

Overall Inventory Position

COMMENTS:

What is the biggest opportunity you saw?

COMMENTS:

Overall Customer Service/Personnel

COMMENTS:

Can you suggest actionable steps to improve aspects of the business?

COMMENTS:

PLANNING FOR ACTION

Based on this critique, the three things I am going to change at my store are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

FIRST PROJECT

Who is in charge of this project?

What is the first step?

How much money and/or time should be committed?

First Step Completion Date:

Entire Project Completion Date:

What is the follow-up plan?

SECOND PROJECT

Who is in charge of this project?

What is the first step?

How much money and/or time should be committed?

First Step Completion Date:

Entire Project Completion Date:

What is the follow-up plan?

THIRD PROJECT

Who is in charge of this project?

What is the first step?

How much money and/or time should be committed?

First Step Completion Date:

Entire Project Completion Date:

What is the follow-up plan?