

I'll Take That, Too!

How Impulse Items Can Get Customers to Go Beyond Their Shopping Lists



Stepping through the automatic doors and into the pharmacy, a customer who's original mission was to pick up a prescription is now moving past aisles and aisles of products that are calling out to her. Before she knows it, her basket is full with a cold energy drink, snacks and a few beauty products. When she gets to the register, her total has more than tripled, but she is happy to pay the extra cost for the items she wanted and realized she may need.

Whether shopping in a pharmacy, a big-box location or the local home improvement store, consumers are drawn to purchase impulse items for a variety of reasons.

In fact, a 2016 poll by CreditCards.com found that five in six Americans say they have made impulse buys, most commonly in person. And those impulse buys aren't always inexpensive, either.

Your customers may not browse every aisle of your store, but impulse items and merchandising tactics can

get through to even the busiest shoppers, adding to your overall transaction size and boosting store profits.

To take a closer look at the impulse category and to inspire you to discover even more ways to take advantage of impulse opportunities, *Hardware Retailing* reached out to retailers across North America and asked them to share the impulse tactics they use in their operations.

On the following pages, you will see the photos and comments readers submitted. Discover how food and local items can catch a customer's eye, why seasonal items make great impulse themes and how integrating a selection of discounted products can encourage shoppers to buy even more.

To learn more about how impulse shopping works, head to TheRedT.com/impulse-psychology to gain insights from Kit Yarrow, author of "Decoding the New Consumer Mind" and an expert in consumer psychology.



Add Flair to the Ordinary

Some of the best impulse items are not unique at all: they are everyday items, such as basic tools, cleaning products, batteries and other commonly used goods.

Stocking products like lightbulbs and flashlights on endcaps or near the checkout is a great way to remind your customers of items they either need or will need at some point. However, it's important to remember that impulse can occur throughout the store.

Instead of letting these goods go unnoticed, think of creative, eye-catching ways to merchandise the products, which is what Ace Hardware in Normal, Illinois, has done with their unique flashlight display.

"Our small flashlight sales have increased since we put up this display," says Ashley Doll, assistant manager of the store. "Before, we had the small flashlights in the aisle and no one really saw them unless they were already looking for flashlights. Now, I see multiple people stopping and looking at the different types and sizes."

However, don't limit your impulse assortment to be just items a customer expects to find in a hardware store. Whether you add pool accessories in the summer season or keep a selection of personal care products, like toothbrushes, by the register, your customers will appreciate the fact that you offer them goods they need, saving them a trip to another store.



RETAILER TACTICS

1. CREATIVE DISPLAYS ATTRACT ATTENTION

At **Ace Hardware** in Normal, Illinois, assistant manager Ashley Doll boosted sales in flashlights by putting them in a colorful display.

By taking an item most everyone would need and finding a creative way to display it in the power aisle, the business has been able to increase sales.

2. SEASONAL ITEMS INCREASE BASKET SIZE

At **Grand River Home Hardware** in Caledonia, Ontario, impulse sales are focused on everyday necessities at low price points and near the front of the store.

According to Erin Joynt, customer service associate, supplying customers with impulse items like windshield wiper fluid and seasonal goods like bug spray are sure ways to add additional sales as people wait to check out.

3. GIFT ITEMS INTRIGUE CUSTOMERS

Unique gift items make effective impulse sales at **Akard True Value** in Zionsville, Indiana.

Leigh Ann Akard, co-owner and manager of her family business, added an impulse area behind the paint counter. The items are great as gifts and reasonable in price, she says. Popular finds include decorative home signs, wine bottle holders, scarves and much more.

 **Impulse Products**
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Price It Low, Watch It Go

Several retailers have invested in impulse opportunities by creating displays for low-priced items. Whether you create your own dollar area or use shelf signage to call out items that have been reduced in price, your customers get the sense that if they don't get it now, the deal may be gone when they return.

At the Ace Hardware in Carlinville, Illinois, manager Chad Strubbe says the business features an impulse area in the back of the store that is frequently shopped by customers. All of the items in this are less than \$5, which leads to customers purchasing multiple items, he says. It might not be expensive add-ons, but multiple low-priced products can increase transaction sizes and sales.

On top of the deals, have items that attract shoppers' children. Positioning toys closer to ground level where children can see them is a great way to get parents to buy toys. Hoffman Ace Hardware does this at their checkout area with an entire island of toys that kids can see at eye level.

At Akard True Value in Zionsville, Indiana, the impulse display located at the front of the store and near the paint department has created impulse sales. According to Leigh-Ann Akard, many of their customers own a lakehouse or know someone with one, so adding fun items like signs, decorative towels and wine holders has attracted more attention.



RETAILER TACTICS

1. CREATE AN IMPULSE DESTINATION

At **Ace Hardware** in Carlinville, Illinois, customers often are drawn to the impulse deals located in the back of the store, says store manager Chad Strubbe. By keeping products at a low price point in one prime location, customers see it as a destination to shop.

2. KEEP KIDS ENTERTAINED

At **Hoffman Ace Hardware**, a wide selection of toys near the checkout keeps parents and kids happy. According to merchandising manager Steve Pfeiffer, the staff looks for items to stock to keep impulse fresh and fun. It's important to always be sourcing new items.

"We try to cover all the bases to stock must-have items," he says. "We review items monthly to make sure our mix is current, fresh and flying off the shelves with good margin."

3. KNOW WHAT YOUR CUSTOMER WANTS

At **Akard True Value**, many customers head to vacation homes during the summer, says Akard. To appeal to this audience, she adds fun items that are lake-, boat- or cabin-themed to ensure additional sales.

"These gifts are unique items for our customers to browse before a vacation getaway. They are different, cute and affordable," Akard says.

Impulse Products

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Merchandising Options:

- Grow in-line sales with permanent placement in the snacks section
- Capture the shopper's impulse purchase—display near checkout

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The 7-11 Effect

Convenience store and gas station retailers know that food and drinks are a profitable impulse category, and they fill entire stores with them. These retailers can provide a good lesson if you're looking for a way to increase impulse sales. One of the most common areas to promote and display food and drinks is near the checkout, whether products are placed on shelves in a checkout line or sitting under the counter. However, don't forget about service counters and other areas frequented by contractors. Use clip strips with salty snacks and offer ice-cold drinks so they have something to grab before returning to work.

To add more flavor to this category, many retailers are adding a local twist to the food offerings they sell. Locally canned pickles or jams and jellies are great additions to your impulse offering. Your customers will know they likely can't find these items at the grocery store or a big-box location, which is another reason they may add these treats to their shopping carts.

And locally sourced non-food items can do well, too. Many retailers have experimented with this, adding items like handmade candles, artwork, jewelry and other unique finds. With signage and proper merchandising, these items can end up becoming big impulse purchases among customers seeking to help another local business.



RETAILER TACTICS

1. CREATE A CANDY DESTINATION

Pete Rabbitt, manager at **Buchheit** of Jackson located in Jackson, Missouri, says the store created an impulse destination with a candy display that started ten years ago.

"Impulse is huge in our business," Rabbitt says. "The margins are pretty high, and we have impulse in almost every aisle, with clip-strips and everything. We're really working on expanding impulse opportunities."

2. LOCAL GOODS LEAD TO IMPULSE

Susan Harlan, owner of **Vickery Hardware** in Smyrna, Georgia, sells impulse throughout the store with local goods.

Customers can find locally sourced items, like soaps, crafts and honey. Impulse items are not always destination items, so it's important to place them in highly visible locations.

3. KEEP DRINKS COLD

At **Norwood Park Ace Hardware** in Chicago, drinks sold faster after store manager Marty Gaynor began selling them cold. They used to sell drinks warm, but, "as soon as we were able to get a refrigerator for our drinks, they became some of our best-selling impulse items," he says.

The store sells drinks like Red Bull, as well as old-fashioned root beer. Customers are more likely to buy a drink if it's cold, so keep that in mind if you decide to add drinks. ➡