

MILLER ZELL

GREAT IN-STORE ENVIRONMENTS

FIVE STRATEGIES TO SOLVE PAIN POINTS AND CONNECT WITH CUSTOMERS





Designing, developing and executing optimized retail environments will never be easy.

Customers are diverse and evolving. Retailers want to showcase their brand at its aspirational best while supporting and anticipating associate and operational needs. Without question, it's a winding process toward the ideal results: fostering customer loyalty and, of course, increasing revenue.

Here are five strategies to overcome major challenges and pain points and create the ideal in-store customer experience as cost-effectively as possible.

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Comprehensive environmental solutions are rooted in purposeful innovation and a hardwired fixation on serving and delighting customers.”

Chip Miller
CEO



Tie your store strategy into your design

For environmental design to be truly strategic, store issues and challenges need to be holistically examined and clearly understood. Therefore, develop a deep understanding of your operational, customer and staff choreography. Observe the shopper journey as well as interview customers and associates about their experiences. The path to answering these questions isn't always straightforward. So consider a variety of methodologies and customized programs that are designed around specific strategic needs.

Customer wants and needs are rapidly evolving and often unpredictable, as is the triangulation between associates, store environments and shoppers. That's why thorough research is the critical foundation for a strategic environmental design process, whether the space in question belongs to a retailer, bank or restaurant.

When done right, this process is dynamic and innovative and built on a foundation that supports scaling to several thousand stores, branches or franchises.

Great retail design doesn't start with sketches. It starts with questions.

- What do customers like?
 - What do they not like?
 - What barriers to purchase need to be addressed?
 - How does existing in-store messaging impact shoppers?
 - What customer needs are not met?
 - How is merchandising perceived?
 - How well did digital displays and the branded app integrate into the experience?

Consider input from:

- Focus groups
- Online surveys
- Shopper intercepts
- Concept testing
- Shop-alongs
- In-depth staff interviews
- Pre-shop assignments
- Exit interviews

Design with customer impact in mind

Thorough research provides a foundation for environmental design. The next step is incorporating these learnings into the creative process.

High-functioning creative teams collaborate with their clients and a variety of relevant in-house associates to ensure that green-lighted store designs are not only aesthetically pleasing and purposeful but also can be practically executed across the entire scope of the brand and at scale.

The collaborative design effort focuses on impacting shopper behavior through the five keys of the sales process: attraction, invitation, discovery, engagement

and decision/closure. This process anticipates a diversity of shopper journeys and creates more alluring and informative messaging to draw in customers with functional engagement through signage, fixtures, furniture, lighting, wayfinding, space planning and color choices.

Adaptable designs will accommodate a diversity of store footprints for an efficient and strategic flow for customers, while also increasing dwell time and basket size.

Great environmental design optimizes multiple, interconnected paths to purchase, eases pain points for shoppers and associates and fosters loyalty while celebrating your brand.



Make connections with digital solutions

Digital solutions in retail require a customer-centric focus and a pathway to meet measurable goals. In other words, it is an opportunity to establish a deeper connection with your customer and drive loyalty.

Successful digital initiatives are both innovative and purposeful and integrate the omni-channel strategy into the physical store. The goal is to eliminate pain points for customers and associates, upgrade operational efficiency and create more engaging and informative experiences.

Digital solutions come in many forms:

- Digital signage
- Content strategy & creation
- Digital content management systems
- Virtual and augmented reality
- Personal device integration
- Experience/environment gamification
- Web, app and in-store integration

Before you begin a digital initiative, however, you need to answer several questions, such as:

- Does digital potentially enhance the desired store experience?
- How does the proposed solution address the customer pain point?
- Will the digital solution provide incremental value to the store and provide ROI?

Answering these questions will bring brand experiences to life within your store.



Don't cut corners with fixtures and décor

Ensure on-brand design and efficient execution of fixtures and décor programs by paying close attention to every detail from ideation through installation. This obsessive focus is critical to guarantee what you see on paper is optimally adopted inside your stores.

Industrial, environmental and CAD designers and architectural services can provide both creative and cost advantages as they develop plans for store layouts, interior elevations, overhead signage, fixtures and décor. Your design engineers bring value by paying particular attention to specifications and fabrication details – and providing value engineering whenever possible. When done right, costs are managed with an eye toward scale and consider program-wide expenses along with

shipping, consolidation and installation.

A deep understanding of the international supply chain is always important but even more so these days. Look to your procurement management for expertise with overseas and domestic partners. They can also navigate quality control processes and shipping logistics to save time and money.

Finally, efficient and high-quality print production often is a cornerstone of décor programs. Whether from a single source or multiple partners, print production should meet both budget and time constraints and provide transparency with quality control and Service Level Agreements that guarantee satisfaction.

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We evaluate each fixture concept to determine its core function. Doing this allows us to identify engineering opportunities that add value while maintaining or improving functionality.

Walter Murphy
SVP, Shared Services



Think big for large-scale rollouts

Executing a large-scale rollout efficiently, precisely and on budget is a challenge, whether it's for 100 or 5,000 store environments.

A clear understanding of procurement and logistical details before you start can eliminate or at least reduce unexpected problems.

Here are a few key steps to take:

- Be informed and aware of the whole cost from design through installation.
- Understand the ideal material selections, as well as the fixture assembly methods and end-user ergonomics that best fit your environment, on-site resources and budget.
- Insist on seeing and experiencing prototypes so you can provide feedback before moving to procurement, production and adoption at scale.
- Secure program managers to ensure coordination, trackability and transparency into the full program.
- Consider rollout-ready, clearly delineated kits of parts that will accommodate a range of footprints and investment levels.
- Design a proven installation protocol guided by project managers who collaborate with design development, procurement, production, warehousing and boots-on-the-ground quality control.



Creating engaging, purposeful and customer-centric environments is a complex undertaking, starting with research and strategy and not ending until installation is completed at scale. It's difficult to manage the entire end-to-end process, particularly when they work with multiple companies that specialize in one or two areas but not others.

Still, the rewards for optimized environmental design and in-store execution are high—great customer experiences, increased brand loyalty and ROI.



Believes Passionately in Innovation

Miller Zell designs, develops and executes branded environments for retailers, banks, colleges and quick-serve restaurants. With true end-to-end services, we deliver strategy and design, design development and production and rollout across hundreds or thousands of locations. Our “no handoffs” approach increases efficiency and reduces complexity to create the ideal customer experience in your space.

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