

## Shelving in a small world

The tighter the space, the more important it becomes to choose the right fixtures for merchandising.

By Joseph Tarnowski

Not every retailer enjoys the luxury of having 100,000 square feet of floor space to use for merchandising. Most have to make do with less, usually much less. So those who are interested in growing the number of product offerings must be creative in how they use their merchandising area or risk overwhelming customers with too many choices crammed into too little space. Today's consumers don't have the patience to sort through a chaotic merchandise mix.

"Everyone is so busy these days, you don't have time to spend shopping," says Tony Kadysewski, communications manager at Trion Industries, Inc. in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. "Consumers must be able to find products and their corresponding prices easily. More than 70 percent of purchasing decisions are made at the shelf edge, so you have to use that space effectively."

Differentiation is key, especially when a retailer can't compete on price. Grocers must look for different ways of separating themselves from their competitors, and smart-looking shelf systems can accomplish that, according to Kadysewski. "You want to make the store look good inside—display with appeal," he says. "Part of that is billboarding your brands and defining your in-store destinations. You want your customers to know when they arrive that this is the gourmet food section, this is the hair coloring section. Each section should have a different sense of place to it."

The type and number of products in a category—as well as the retailer's budget, of course—help determine what shelf systems will work best. "A good shelf system will provide product density and organize a complex area," says Kadysewski. "It will also compel the shopper to make a purchase or to bundle another product with their selection."

For vitamins and other small products that need to be well-organized, a simple wire or molded shelf system is all

products are chosen is by the hair color on the box, so you want the entire category perfectly faced at all times."

### Obvious out-of-stocks

Automatic feeders deliver other benefits, as well, saving labor by eliminating the need to send floor personnel to face out products. When something is out of stock, it is obvious because it says so on the feed pusher, and it is also obvi-

five items that are self-forwarded. They are always faced and you can keep a minimal number of them, but still present them as a product choice."

Pullout shelves, which slide on tracks like drawers, enable a great deal of product density. Hardly any clearance is needed between the shelves, and they are auto-loading, so products remain faced.

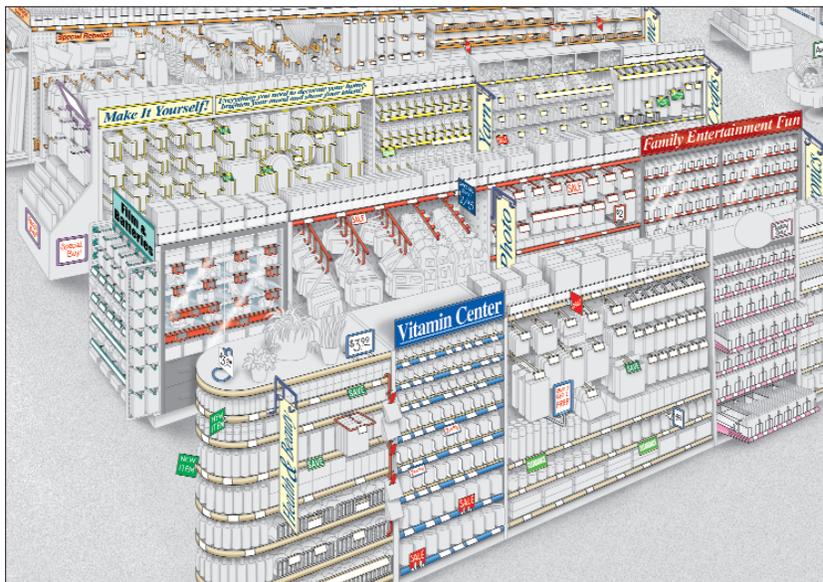
For high-turn areas, like beverages, Kadysewski recommends gravity-flow shelves. "People impulse-buy beverages,"

he says. "You want the rest of them to roll forward when the front ones are pulled, so they are always faced and easy to scan."

Even bagged items like salty snacks and salads would benefit from the extra organization these systems provide, says Kadysewski. "These items are big and bulky, and quickly become sloppy after someone searches through them. There are dividers that hold them up erect, and they billboard themselves well."

Straight entry hooks allow retailers to increase product density on pegboards and slat walls, because they can be inserted easily into spaces between other products, unlike traditional hooks.

What it comes down to is a question of how much a retailer wants to merchandise. "Retailers who buy odd lots and sell items based on price are not trying to merchandise," says Kadysewski. "But if you have to compete with someone who is offering more selection, and you need to squeeze more items into every square foot of space—and still catch the eye of the customer—then specialized shelf systems are ideal." ■



This illustration shows a variety of the shelf systems available to help grocers make the most of their merchandising space. From simple wire shelves to pull-out shelves with auto-feed capability to straight-entry hooks for pegboards, there is a solution available for each kind of product.

that is needed. For many health and beauty care products, where image is just as important as organization, Kadysewski recommends clear acrylic systems with automatic self-feeders. "If someone is scanning hair color products, there can be a hundred or more choices," he says. "Plus, the boxes are expensive in design and very well-printed. How these prod-

ucts that the product hasn't simply been pushed to the back of the shelf. And when it comes to high-ticket items like CDs and gaming systems, "You don't want the entire shelf stocked 24 items deep when they are in a high price range," says Kadysewski. "The automatic feeders help reduce a retailer's inventory by enabling them to have three, four, or