

FRONT-END OVERHAUL



Bring those bedpans out of hiding

by Gabe Trahan



Question: *Can you tell me where I can find a bedpan?*

Answer: *Just left of the bagels; if you go past the paper towels you've gone too far.*

Bedpans in the grocery store. I had a hard time understanding this placement theory. Are bedpans an impulse or a companion sale item? I didn't think they were either. Then I thought it through. Put them where you can't miss them, then when the time comes you will remember where you saw them last!

This must be some of that New Age merchandising I've been hearing about. It's a stretch, but it does make sense. This makes me think it is time we start considering breaking a few of the old merchandising rules of thumb. Let's start with bedpans, bath safety, and durable medical equipment. In general, these categories have a history of hiding in a pharmacy back corner. The category is a bear to merchandise, and it has always been thought of as a destination line. If

people need it, they will ask for it. Or maybe not. America's aging population, in particular the baby boomers, are feeding the interest in bath safety and mobility options. Cash sales are growing! Time to bring the product out of the shadows! Let's relocate and add new awareness and life to your "Home Health, Comfort, and Safety Department." Not sure where to move it? Consider the front right-hand corner of your store, which is the right-hand side as you enter the store. Start from the front closest to the window with bath safety, then reachers and activities of daily living products, along with canes and mobility aids.

While you are at it, consider breaking the unwritten rule that incontinence products go next to the DME department. Vendor and manufacturer sales data show that incontinence products do best next to the feminine hygiene category, citing statistics that women purchase the majority of incontinence products. They also mention that incontinence should not be merchandised next to baby care or baby diapers.

It's also time to move your vitamin and supplement categories away from the front of the prescription counter. Vitamins do best across from cough and cold or in line with antacid laxatives. The prescription counter front area can be headquarters for those with diabetes by offering sugar-free options, therapeutic foot care (such as socks), along with specialty skin care.

If your waiting area is simply a few chairs at the end of an aisle, then it's time to move the chairs. Best practice is to create a waiting area in a corner near the pharmacy along a side wall that will enable waiting customers to have a clear view of the pharmacy.

Here's some thoughts about remodeling and/or moving a department. Yes, customers hate it when you move something. You know how it goes, for the first time in 10 years you move the facial tissue to a lower shelf and a customer yells out "*I can't find the facial tissues, you people are always moving things. Now I can't find a thing!*"

Then there is this: in my 42 years in the industry, I've never seen a store's sales go down because of a remodel. Go ahead, create a new look for your store. Be well and good luck. ■

Gabe Trahan is NCPA's senior director of store operations and marketing. Gabe uses more than 40 years of front-end merchandising experience to help NCPA members increase store traffic and improve profits. Visit www.ncpanet.org/feo to watch videos, read tips, and view galleries of photo examples by Gabe. Follow him on Twitter @NCPAGabe for additional tips.