

The Merits of Shorter Fixtures

As a pharmacy owner or front-end manager, you will inevitably have to [purchase new fixtures](#), whether it's for a remodel or to build out a new store. Many manufacturers will recommend a gondola fixture height of 66 inches and wall fixtures of 96 inches high; you'll notice many chain drugstores use fixtures this high. But what's good for the chains is not necessarily good for a community pharmacy.

Tall vs. Short Fixtures

Based on years of observation and experience, a gondola fixture height should either be 54 or 60 inches high; wall fixtures should be 78 to 84 inches high. Stores with gondolas higher than 60 inches will see a spike in retail theft and less browsing by customers. To avoid a tunnel effect, stores with high gondolas must have extra-wide aisles – negating the theory that tall fixtures offer more shelving space. Tall fixtures encourage overstocking, block the view from one side of the store to the other, and place product out of reach to a number of customers. Placing product at too-tall heights is the same as putting product in the basement – it will go untouched and unsold.



Chain drugstores use tall fixtures because they can get away with it. They have a full-time security team that are paid to watch elaborate security camera systems. (I should know, I have been walked out to my car by a few of them – seems they get angry when you take photos of their store...) Chains also have access to nontraditional products that can be sent back at any time with no fees or penalties. The old adage “Stack it high and watch it fly” still makes sense to them; the chains have little to lose.

Ask Before You Buy

Ask yourself these questions before ordering any tall fixtures: Do you have room for 6 feet of aisle space? Will customers be able to reach the products on the top shelf? Will I need to bring in more lighting? Am I using the shelving to expand my storage space? Since gondola planograms are for 54-inch fixtures, what do I plan to put on the extra shelving? How will I beef up my security? *Do I need to look like a chain?*

Tread carefully if the fixture representative pushes tall fixtures for your pharmacy with the argument “the more product you can display, the more you can sell.” While the rep's fixture sale will always be bigger with taller fixtures, your retail sales may not be (see above).

One final tip: When deciding on a color for your fixtures, choose any color except white. If your floors, walls, and ceiling are any variation of white, your fixtures shouldn't be too – unless you want your pharmacy front end to look like a sterile lab.

-- Gabe Trahan, NCPA Senior Director of Store Operations and Marketing
NCPA's Front-End Overhaul