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WE SELL FOR LESS AND OUR STORES ARE A MESS!

What kind of image do you present when marketing your products? Are you professional and well organized or does your store/site/whatever scream, "sloppy!," to those who matter the most: your customers? Let's see how one leading retailer is winning the sales war, but losing an important battle: store organization.

WalMart is dominant in so many categories with the various products that they sell. In 50 years the company has gone from a local player to a world powerhouse and is on track to expand throughout the land of the largest consumer market in the world, China.

As much as WalMart is conquering new horizons and dominating the American landscape, one problem is arising: their stores are a mess. Visit your local WalMart store at any given time and you will find throngs of shoppers but few workers. Most workers are busy at the front end of the store ringing up sales, while others are scattered throughout the store putting up stock.

Why is this a problem? Quite frankly, WalMart is a victim of its own success. Stock turns over so fast, that the store must replenish during peak store hours in order to keep everything on hand. A good problem to have, right? Not if you are a customer who wants something and you cannot navigate aisles to find what you need as boxes of stock partially block you out.

WalMart's chief competitor, Target, seems to have gotten it right. Their stores are neat; the signs to help you find various sections are big, bold, and color coordinated; and stock replenishment does not take over the aisles. On the other hand, KMart was once an industry powerhouse and many of their stores are old and disheveled. More importantly, KMart is now an "also ran" as other retailers -- including WalMart -- have presented a better place to shop for customers.

As much as price is a driving factor in winning the sales war, store organization and cleanliness can eventually undermine sales as customers are turned off by a messy environment and choose to go to your competitor.

While many customers will accept a lower level of customer service [less floor help available, for example], clutter will drive them away faster than low prices will pull them in. You can tout, "Always low prices, always" in your motto, but your customers will flee if they find your store to be disorganized. Competitors wait in the wings to grab what you will lose: can you afford the loss of sales?

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