



Roadmap to Growth

Convenience Store Cleanliness and
Maintenance

What is the Roadmap to Growth?

In our continuing effort to help convenience store retailers grow their sales, the Canadian Convenience Stores Association (CCSA) has embarked on an extensive project called the "Roadmap to Growth". The Roadmap project focuses on customer perception data collected about the industry that can be used to help retailers identify where they can improve operations to retain existing customers or attract new ones. This project has been broken down into "bite-size pieces" that can give retailers specific, easy to understand operational recommendations on various parts of their business.



Swish products

Why a clean retail space is so important

As a convenience store owner you know competition is fierce – you can't just meet customers needs, you have to exceed them. One important way to ensure customer satisfaction is to provide a clean and welcoming shopping experience. A well-kept and tidy store increases the chance of a return visit or customer recommendation.

The CCSA has worked with Swish Maintenance, provider of quality cleaning products, to bring you this report on what it takes to offer a clean environment for the customers who shop your aisles.

To get started go through the cleanliness checklist provided below.



Swish Go Green Products

Self-Assessment Checklist

This checklist will help you identify factors that have a direct impact on sales related to the cleanliness of your store.

EXTERIOR

- Are garbage cans and recycling containers empty, clean and in good condition?
- Is there waste outside the building visible to customers?
- Are front windows clean and clear so customers can see into your store?
- Are recycling containers available for customers?
- In winter, are your grounds free of ice and snow? Are your ice melt/sand bins full?
- At the gas pumps, are the pumps clean, paper towels and washer fluid dispensers full?
- Are windshield wash brushes in good condition?
- Is gas station concrete surface free from diesel and gas stains?
- Is your fuel spill kit easily accessible in case of spills?
- Do you have a documented standard cleaning procedure for this area?

INTERIOR

General:

- Do you have floor mats?
- Are your mats clean and safe?
- Are the floors clean and dry?
- Are your wet floor signs easily accessible and in good condition?
- Are there any unpleasant odours inside the store? If yes, find the source (e.g., old wet mop, waste bins etc.)
- Are the walls, ceiling and light fixtures clean?
- Are shelves and products clean and free from dust?
- Do you have a documented standard cleaning procedure for this area?

Customer Concession Counters (Coffee Counters):

- Is the counter clean and free of waste and stains?
- Are the napkin dispensers clean, filled and easily accessible?
- Are the waste and recycling receptacles empty and clean in appearance?
- Are the glass surfaces on the food displays clean?
- Do you have a documented standard cleaning procedure for this area?

Food Preparation Areas/Coolers:

- Is the food preparation surface clean and free of debris?
- Are the glass surfaces in the food preparation area clean?
- Do you have a documented cleaning procedure for the food preparation area(s) in place?
- Are food contact points sanitized/disinfected regularly?
- Do you have a documented standard cleaning procedure for this area?

Washrooms:

- Is there an unpleasant odour in the washrooms?
- Is there waste on the floor?
- Are the toilet tissue, paper towel and soap dispensers clean, in good condition and filled?
- Are the floors, mirrors and light fixtures clean and shiny?
- Are there any damaged fixtures/partitions?
- Are urinals and toilets clean and in good running order?
- Do you have a "closed for cleaning" and a "wet floor signs"?
- Do you have a cleaning check list visible for your customers?
- Are baby changing stations clean, in good condition and securely mounted to the wall?
- Do you have a documented standard cleaning procedure for this area?

Receiving and Storage Areas:

- Are receiving and storage areas clean and free of debris?
- Do you have a spill kit?
- Do you have a janitor's cart for quick clean ups?
- Do you have a documented standard cleaning procedure for this area?

NEXT STEPS

Once you've completed the checklist, please refer to our recommendations to help solve the issues or areas of concern in the store.

Recommendations

We provide the following recommendations to ensure you have the right tools to keep your store clean and well maintained.

1. First impressions are key

The way you greet your customers before they even enter your store is an important part of the shopping experience.

- Keep parking lots clean of litter and brightly lit
- Make sure the entrance of your store is well-maintained and inviting with a trash receptacle that is emptied daily. Clean windows are just as important, make sure they are washed and clear of things like old stickers, faded posters and signs, so customers can see into the store
- Stop dirt at the door by making sure entrance mats are of high quality to trap dust and are kept clean

2. Eliminate Clutter

Clutter can be a major downfall of any retail space. It makes your store appear unorganized and unprofessional and can deter customers from shopping.

- If you have a back stock area, keep it closed to the customer's eye
- Shipping boxes, pallets, rolling racks, shipping materials, anything needed for the operation of the store, should be out of sight or neatly stored away
- Make sure you don't overstock or over-merchandise your shelves, you'll overwhelm your customers and also make it difficult for you when it come to item rotation

3. Focus on high touch areas

If you're short on time make sure the areas that your customers frequent most are your focus.

- Your register area is one of the most important area of the store, make sure it's well organized, clean and clear of excess clutter
- Customers notice the majority of items between their shoulders and knees so be sure to make those areas a priority of cleanliness
- Floors are the first thing visitors notice when entering your store, and cleaning experts believe that impressions generated by the cleanliness and appearance of floors produce a permanent opinion of your retail space. Floors must be maintained throughout the day – sweep, dust and mop everyday and brush at least once a week. Clean dry floors are also important for the safety of your customers.

4. Overall maintenance, show customers cleanliness is a priority

A clean store is inviting and will offer a positive shopping experience to keep your customers coming back.

- When accidents happen – such as spills or a bottle breaks – clean them up right away,
- Make sure your store, as well as fridges and freezers, smell clean and fresh. Remember you may have become immune to smells in your store so ask friends or new employees to give you their opinion.

- Shelves, furniture, fixtures and electronics can pile on the dust without a proper cleaning program in place. Assign staff to regularly dust these areas and keep them free of dirt.
- The state of your restrooms is an indicator for how well clean the rest of your store is. If consumers see a dirty bathroom, they'll wonder what else you can't be bothered to clean. Restrooms require constant attention, so set up a schedule for staff to always make sure they are clean and monitored

Conclusion

Competing retail channels, like grocery, big box retailers, dollar stores and pharmacies, are putting strategies in place to get a piece of the action and are collectively growing at a faster rate than convenience and gas. Results from our survey indicated that 58% of consumers would feel more favourable towards the store and 62% would shop there more often, if the store is bright, clean and inviting.

To stay in the game, it's important we start to look at possible solutions that will improve our appeal with existing customers as well as attract shoppers in other segments – like women, young adults, ethnic shoppers and the elderly – who may be going elsewhere for their convenience needs. Creating a safe and trusted environment and a clean, inviting shopping experience are key areas that convenience retailers can focus on to successfully compete with these other channels.