

In the first of a two-part article, CSD Associates' Ashley Evans discusses the need to continually evaluate and evolve when it comes to branch layout and design.

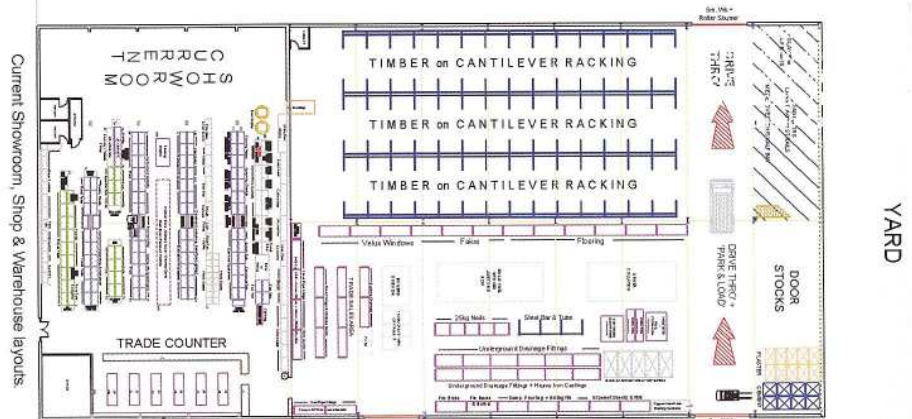


Figure 1

## Forward planning?

I was recently reminded of a discussion with a client who had taken my SWOT<sup>1</sup> article seriously, done his own analysis and decided the biggest 'Threat' to his business was 'standing still' — he was the son and, as sons often do, had decided that Dad had let the business stand still for too long. "In fact", he said, "it's stood still so long it's going backwards!" He perceived their main problem as not having enough self selection space, given their large showroom and ever-expanding lightside ranges. He bullied Dad into looking into an extension, which was when 'Dad' contacted us...

They intended to build a 'conservatory' right across the front of the main building on the basis that it was a low-cost 'temporary building', minimising any planning restrictions and the glazing would be good for a showroom. We had reservations about a couple of things but were prevailed upon to do the showroom design, followed by a modified layout to the self selection area.

As you can see from the illustration (fig.1) this area was already quite a good size and part of a much larger building. The second illustration (fig.2) shows the 'Conservatory Showroom' across the front of the building. We were quite happy with the showroom layout and it would obviously make the front of the building look much more attractive. It would also mean that all visitors to the Trade Counter would be 'exposed' to the showroom whereas the current one was 'tucked away', not only from the customer's sight but also from where staff were normally located — meaning that customer service was often poor and / or sales opportunities lost.

BUT, in our opinion, it ignored all sorts of other issues — 'Weaknesses' and 'Opportunities' to revert to the SWOT jargon.

However, I did the presentation on the showroom layout and the client was pleased with it but, by the end of the meeting, he had picked up the vibes that I was not comfortable with things. He asked me to explain our reservations so I brought out my notebook where I had jotted down my thoughts following my initial visit...

### Ashley's Notebook: 'SHOP'

Showroom tucked away / should be in a higher traffic flow area — if near the door it allows the Trade Counter to be more centralised (making service better) without putting more stock 'in danger of being nicked!' Low ceiling over half the self selection area makes it feel oppressive, particularly when wall-height racking is used in shop centre. Plus, gondola runs are close together — at best a nominal 4ft which is too narrow, particularly with higher racking. General level of lighting is poor which, added to the two points above, really does not attract the customer into the sales area.

Trade Counter is (unnecessarily) large, enclosing a large area behind. Lots of stock needs to be sold OTC<sup>2</sup> which increases the CTS<sup>3</sup>, reducing the amount of stock IDOBS<sup>4</sup> including items such as boxed & pre-packed door furniture, electric cable / reels, boxed fixings (eg: nails, screws, bolts), etc.

### WAREHOUSES (see Fig.1)

Left hand warehouse is fully racked with cantilever and provides an effective large timber storage facility, however the right hand warehouse is a mess — APR<sup>5</sup> down both sides; left hand reasonably used and whilst well used, right hand had mish-mash of racking in front stopping FLT<sup>6</sup> load / unload; Aga + solid fuel stoves spread one-high across large floor area

### Jargon Buster

- 1 **Swot = Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (See PBM Oct/Nov 2006)**
- 2 **OTC = Over the counter**
- 3 **CTS = Cost to sell**
- 4 **IDOBS = In Danger of Being Sold**
- 5 **APR = Adjustable Pallet Racking**
- 6 **FLT = Fork Lift Truck**

