

# Natural retailer learns lesson in effective “silent” selling strategy

By Natalie Tan

Donna Yamamoto owns and operates a small neighborhood natural foods shop in North Vancouver called Good Nature Health Foods. Known for her wide selection of natural food items and gluten free products, Donna has indeed set her shop apart from competitors. However upon observation, the shop’s key to success lies in her ability to relate to all types of customers walking in. She efficiently identifies their needs and provides what best suits them. More importantly, Donna gives her customers the best of both worlds. Most retailers fail to deliver a wide selection in a sale, she adds in a variety of products into the customers’ bag. It could be a healthy bar or decadent organic chocolate but whatever it is, customers appreciate the added surprise!

## Silent selling

With terrific active selling in place, Donna and her team can count themselves as part of the few that still deliver excellent service. In a time wherein staff shortages are common and service becomes a luxury rather than a minimum standard, delivering high intensity service levels is indeed uncommon. Not all shops can be as fortunate as Good Nature in attracting and retaining good sales associates. It therefore becomes crucial that an effective silent selling strategy be implemented.

The goal of silent selling is to ensure full penetration of the shop. This means minimizing any challenged areas and maximizing all selling opportunities. Better yet, effective silent selling multiple times sells to each customer at every occasion.

Starting with layout, a good flow influences how customers walk and therefore, shop the store. Long and narrow continuous aisles deter shoppers from fully penetrating the depth of the store unless the back wall houses a destination item. Floor units that block access to the wall make it challenging to shop tall shelving units.

In the case of Good Nature, they have a wide range of food items they want to display. However, spatial limitations make this difficult to achieve, hence the long gondola unit in the middle of the shop.

The desire to offer a wide selection is common amongst all retailers. However, it is important to realize that a well-mer-

chandised section where products can be easily seen may perform better than having a wide variety.

Upon review of Good Nature’s layout, it is recommended that within the current design limitations, it is ideal to reduce the number of floor units to enable access to the far right wall. Layout 1 shows how this may be achieved.

While merchandise intensity may be compromised with the recommended layout, better accessibility and shopping ease is achieved.

If more food item selection is crucial to the health of the business, Layout 2 may provide Good Nature with another option to consider. The cash desk is moved closer to the back room to keep all operational sections together while the left selling section is lengthened.

Categorization at Good Nature Health Foods is fairly good. Products are grouped tight for the most part in an organized approach. However, this type of category adjacency and product placement may require a higher level of service intensity than some retailers may be able to deliver. Customers can become co-producers of service when subcategories are tighter and an effective sign hierarchy is in place.

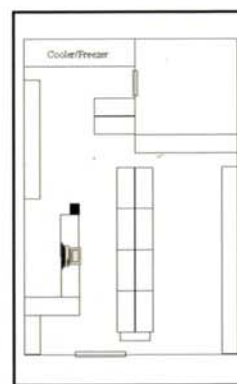
*Laara Ong (left) of Good Nature Health Foods in North Vancouver attended the conference seminar, The Key to Increasing Sales, at the 2008 Expo West in April in Vancouver. Ong was the winner of a three-hour in-store consultation with the presenter Natalie Tan (right).*



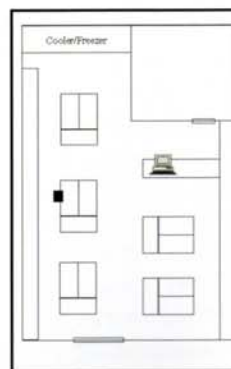
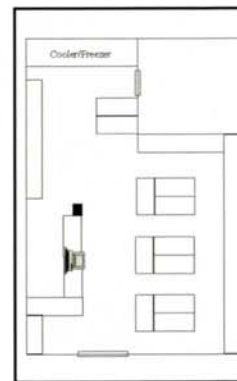
*Natalie Tan is a retail specialist with over 25 years of active and silent selling experience. She works with both local and international retailers, shopping centres and airports to provide them with effective selling spaces and a productive retail team. Aside from conducting seminars and workshops, Natalie is an instructor at the BCIT School of Business, teaching Merchandising & Display Strategies. She has served on the board of Retail BC and is currently a member of the BC Shopping Centres Association Board of Directors. Contact Natalie through her website at [www.retailexcellence.com](http://www.retailexcellence.com).*



*Good Nature Health Foods in North Vancouver, B.C. has long and narrow continuous aisles, which may deter shoppers from fully penetrating the depth of the store.*



*The top diagram illustrates Good Nature’s current layout and fixturing plan while the diagram below shows how accessibility to either side of the shop may be improved.*



*Here’s another option for Good Nature to consider*