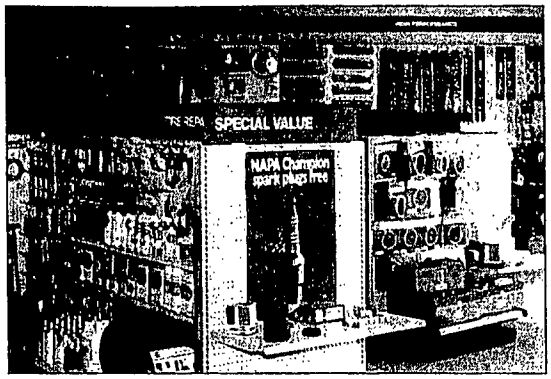
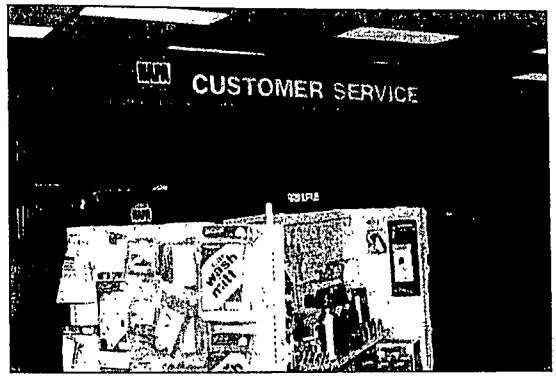


Angled gondolas and the blue sign channels encourage customers to browse and enable them to find items easily.



The 'CUSTOMER SERVICE' banner is an excellent way to direct customers to where they need to go when assistance is needed.

Most consumers are comfortable with those things which are familiar and easily recognizable. Customers are more inclined to shop in stores where they know that a uniform appearance means that they are going to receive the same kind of service and can purchase the same kind of quality products. A uniform appearance that is attractive and clean is a confidence builder for customers and, in the end, is a traffic building and sales increasing tool for a store.

The above information is something that NAPA AUTO PARTS store owner Louis "Spike" Boehle understands. And, it's the main reason that he is a firm believer in the NAPA Store Design Program (Pipeline Graphics). Boehle is such a firm believer that he relocated to a brand new NAPA AUTO PARTS store. The store, located in Anderson, California, opened for business on March 11.

"The idea to use the Pipeline Graphics came out of my serving on the NAPA Advertising and Marketing Council," said Boehle, who served a one year term on the council. "The need for common store identification within the NAPA system was something all of us on the council felt was important. The council, which has several jobber members, knew what common store identification had done for other businesses and we knew it could do the same thing for NAPA stores in all 50 states."

So when Boehle decided his former Anderson location was too small and that an expansion was needed, he pulled out all the plugs and relocated. With the relocation, he felt, came the ideal opportunity to utilize the Pipeline Graphics. "Using the Pipeline Graphics was one of the best things we've done. Granted, it took some time and a great deal of effort but, in the end, I have to say it was worth it."

Working with his D.C. (Sacramento) and the NAPA Store Design Group, Boehle planned his store carefully according to the Pipeline guidelines. The end result is an 8,750 square foot NAPA AUTO PARTS store, which includes a machine shop, that makes people turn around and take a second look.

And, according to Boehle, people are responding with more than just that second look. "People are attracted to the store and we're beginning to see them come in and browse around. As the employees and I walk around the store, we hear customers say things like 'I never knew an auto parts store could be this attractive'. Our walk-in traffic has increased quite a bit."

The general public isn't the only group which has taken notice — so has the competition. "Most of our competition has dropped by to take a look at the store. They've offered various comments which are positive but they all share one negative comment, 'You're going to take business away from me'. I tell them that's what I intended to do. And, considering that in the first month we were open business increased by over 25 percent, I think that the competition has a right to be a little nervous."

As he has a right to be, Boehle is very pleased with the way his NAPA AUTO PARTS store looks. The basic grey color of the building with the blue trim and gold pipeline stands out from other businesses in Anderson and it's easy to tell that the store is noticeable when drivers slow their vehicles to take a look when passing by. His signage is easy to read and leaves no doubt in a viewer's mind that this store is part of the NAPA system. Boehle was careful to take full advantage of his location and NAPA signage by going a step further. He placed a large "NAPA AUTO PARTS" pole mount sign next to the store. The sign is easy to see from miles around and especially visible from Interstate 5, which goes through Anderson.

Boehle, however, didn't limit his use of the Pipeline graphics to the outside of his store. The grey, blue and gold colors are carried to the inside of the store, highlighting the sales area and the machine shop. The walls are NAPA Grey, trimmed with the band of NAPA Blue. The grey works to hide dirt and grime and the blue band makes the sales area appear larger.

Boehle also makes use of the blue band as a sign channel to direct customers to product displays. On the walls and on the gondolas, the blue sign channel tells customers exactly where to look for the item(s) he or she wishes to purchase. So when a customer needs products to tune up his car, he simply looks for the blue sign channel reading "TUNE UP" and goes in that direction, following the loop pattern established by the arrangement of the gondolas. The loop pattern not only gets the customer where he wants to go but also encourages him to browse. And, it results in customers who are able to find what they're looking for and more time for employees to spend with customers who need assistance. "We've angled the gondolas and are displaying more products in more effective ways. The combination of the store's attractiveness and the products being easier to locate encourages customers to look around and notice things they wouldn't have noticed otherwise. We hear a lot of people say, 'I didn't know you had this'. And that has helped to increase impulse buys. We've also used banners in the sales area. So if a customer does need assistance he knows exactly where to go — right to the banner that reads 'CUSTOMER SERVICE'."

Boehle is currently planning the conversion of several of his other stores and, eventually, would like to use the Pipeline Graphics on all eleven of the NAPA AUTO PARTS stores he either owns or is a partner in. "I can't state too strongly how well the Pipeline Graphics works. The increased awareness that this program promised has happened. The program works just as it is supposed to. And, for any other NAPA Jobber who is thinking about using the Pipeline Graphics, I say it's worth the time, the effort and the experience you have to put into it. Take the trouble to apply the Pipeline Graphics and apply them a hundred percent. It's one of the best things you can do for your business."