

# HOW TO **Maximize** THE VALUE OF A STORE VISIT



A guide for large brands and merchandisers wanting to increase the value generated by their field teams.

# Introduction

*Field team leaders know better than anyone the importance of getting the most out of every action taken in the field.*

This is especially true when it comes to store visits, which provide leaders with valuable insights that inform them of how actions taken by reps are supporting their strategic initiatives. That being said, different visits require different levels of investment in the form of time, money, and manpower. They also generate different forms of value. A store visit to conduct merchandising is far different from a visit made to negotiate with a retailer.

If your reps aren't taking the correct actions to maximize the value of their particular store visit, it could cost you big time: 40% of shoppers make their decisions based on a brand's presence in the store<sup>1</sup>, and 57% of customers have stopped buying from a brand because one of their competitors provided a better in-store experience<sup>2</sup>.

So how can you be sure that each store visit your team makes results in the highest ROI possible? In this eBook, we discuss how to maximize the value of store visits by breaking them down into four categories based on the investment they require and the returns they produce.

By doing so, we identify the type of investment each visit requires as well as provide tips on how to maximize return on those investments.

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1 | The Consumer Decision Journey - [www.mckinsey.com](http://www.mckinsey.com)

2 | 19 Customer Experience Statistics For 2019 - [www.iperceptions.com](http://www.iperceptions.com)



# The Four Types of Store Visits

## Data Gathering Visits

Data gathering visits are your reps' most frequent touchpoints in-store and require the lowest level of investment. Think of these visits as routine drop-ins that reps make to collect observational data that they then relay back to managers. Actions taken during data gathering visits may include checking stock levels, evaluating retailer compliance, monitoring competitor activity, and photo-sharing, the most commonly shared data point in Replsly.

Because these visits require little product knowledge or sales chops, brands typically don't have to spend much on each data gathering visit. They can be executed by hourly workers, third-party partners, or even crowd-sourced. Despite costing less to execute, these visits provide managers with valuable insights into the field that can help them make more informed decisions regarding the team's overall sales strategy.

## Merchandising Visits

Merchandising visits require a larger investment of resources and are related to maintaining a strong retail presence. These are visits reps make when they are setting up or breaking down displays, improving product placement and visibility at the shelf, replenishing stock, or conducting in-store promotions.

Merchandising visits involve direct action at the point-of-purchase and require a larger investment than data gathering visits, as they are more time-consuming and should be executed by experienced brand reps. When assigning a rep to a merchandising visit, you want to be sure that they are knowledgeable both of your products and the retailer they are taking action in.

Making simple adjustments to improve product facings when checking the state of the shelf can go a long way. These visits are extremely valuable given the detriment that can come with an out-of-stock as well as the sales boost that can result from an in-store demo.

Keep in mind, for most brands replenishing stock is only half the battle, field reps are constantly fighting for premium placements and incremental facings to drive brand awareness and foot traffic.

## Growth-Based Sales Visits

Growth-based sales visits are the most resource-intensive but can generate some of the highest immediate returns.

Reps conduct these visits in order to negotiate with retailers, conduct a category review, or secure placement of a new product.

A well-executed growth-based sales visit can result in stronger retailer relationships and an increase of shelf space for your product, which supports your team's ultimate goal of growing market share in key accounts or territories

## Project-based Visits

Project-based visits are the type of activities retail service organizations typically support during store visits including brand resets, sampling & tasting events, POS construction, etc.

It's important to understand how these differ from merchandising activities as these are more sales-driven activities.

A successful project-based visit will add visibility to the brand, the retailer, and the service organization into the launching of a promotion, as well as making sure it states execution to drive top-line sales.



# Why Break Visits Down Into Four Types?

*Now that we have identified the four types of store visits, let's discuss why breaking them down this way has significant long-term value.*

As we've established, different types of visits require different forms of investment.

By differentiating between each visit type, you can identify the hidden costs of store visits and plan accordingly to have the highest impact in the field. You can then allocate more effectively in order to minimize wasteful spending and maximize your returns.

Below, we discuss three key resources that directly affect how much value you can get out of your team's store visits:

- **time,**
- **money,**
- **manpower.**

## Time

When we think about time spent in the field, we aren't just referring to the time spent by reps physically in the store.

Think about the admin time that is spent on all of the activities leading up to, during, and after a store visit: time spend planning for a visit (pre-call planning to gather required materials, tasks, etc.), time spent traveling to the location, time spent recording data in the store, and time spent organizing and analyzing said data. Certain visits will be more time-intensive than others.

When planning store visits, be sure to consider all of the different ways a rep's time is spent depending on the type of visit their conducting. You want reps to spend time selling and creating relationships in stores, rather than being spot checkers and filling out forms. This empowers you to use your team's time more wisely based on a more accurate understanding of what each visit will entail.

## Money

Money is the most obvious resource required to conduct a store visit, but just like with time, there are many different ways money may be spent in the field.

For example, merchandising visits may cost more than data gathering visits because of the supplies required to set up a POP display, stock it, and maintain it over a period of time.

For project-based visits, spending is very different than costs during standard rep visits. Pay rates are a huge expense to consider for project-based visits and typically vary by task. For example, there may be an hourly pay rate per rep to do a reset, whereas a six-hour tasting could have a flat pay rate for the completion of a job. Lastly, projects are typically allocated a budget to bring in products, and create booths or kiosks to complete the tasting or sampling.

By understanding the amount of money spent conducting each visit, you will be able to recognize trends in costs vs. benefits of each type of visit over time.

## Manpower

The manpower required to complete a store visit varies from one to the next. You may want to staff a merchandising visit with multiple reps to make the process faster, or perhaps you only need one rep for a data gathering visit but require help from two back office team members to process that data.

Understanding the full extent of the manpower needed for a visit also affects how much time and money you'll spend. By evaluating these three forms of cost together, you'll improve the efficiency of your store visit strategy by knowing when it pays off to spend more in one area in order to save in another.

# Tips for Optimizing Each Type of Visit

*Now, simply identifying the types of visits your reps are making doesn't guarantee they will be perfectly executed. In order to make sure you're getting the most out of each visit, let's discuss some tips for store visit optimization.*

## **Set clear expectations and goals for reps**

The expectations you have for one type of visit to the next will vary based on the goal of that visit, and breaking down visits into four categories makes this clear to reps.

If your reps are conducting visits without any real direction and are acting based on intuition, the results of those visits will be inconsistent. If you instead define to your reps what you expect them to achieve during each type of visit, you'll receive a more consistent flow of data to inform your sales strategy. Additionally, this provides you with a concrete template upon which to evaluate reps' effectiveness in the field.

## **Standardize data collection based on visit type**

Breaking store visits down into four types serves as an organizational tool. Rather than lumping together all of the data you

receive from all store visits, you can instead identify exactly how this data was collected and the amount of resources expended to obtain it.

This in of itself increases the value of a store visit by making data management exponentially simpler and in turn freeing up resources that typically would be spent making sense of unorganized reporting.

## **Make a checklist**

Making a checklist for each type of visit further assists you in standardizing data collection during a store visit. Checklists can be especially helpful during data gathering visits which revolve around collecting observational data. If reps are armed with a set of items to report on every time they conduct a visit, data managers will see an increase in consistency both between different reps' reports as well as over a period of time.

This enables them to better identify trends and provide feedback to sales leaders on how to make smarter strategic decisions.

### **Assign the right rep to the right job**

With a large field team comes a large amount of talent, so use it to your advantage. While it may seem intuitive to simply assign a rep to a certain retailer or territory and be done with it, consider pulling different reps in to perform different types of visits based on their strengths. You may rely on one rep for data gathering and merchandising visits in a given area, but elect a more experienced team member when it comes to making growth-based sales visits. Having your visits separated into these four categories gives you more power to utilize the assets your reps bring with them to the field and more accurately delegate responsibility to the right people.

### **Share data in real time**

We live in the age of constant sharing, and that shouldn't end at pictures from your weekend away or a repost of a favorite recipe. Consider the power that comes with sharing your store visit data in real time with both reps and managers. Rather than waiting for a weekly report to show your team that a certain merchandising technique is increasing success in the field, encourage your team to constantly share information from their visits with each other. This allows you and your team to act on insights in real time and make data-backed decisions.



**With a large field team comes a large amount of talent, so use it to your advantage. Different reps should perform different types of visits based on their strengths.**



# Maximize the Value of Store Visits With World-Class Retail Execution Software

REPSLY'S retail execution software gives brands everything they need to maximize the value they get from each type of store visits.

Our powerful mobile app equips field reps with customizable data collection tools to capture insights from the field. In the back office, managers get real-time updates from the field, plus the data and tools they need to deploy their team to have the biggest impact on sales.

The result? A better understanding of how, when, and where store visits affect sales, so brands can replicate success across their territories.



## Ready to get more out of your team's actions in the field?

Get started with Replsly for free today and join thousands of high performing field teams.



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