**PDF BEVERAGE CATEGORY EXPANSION TOOLKIT FOR C-STORES**

**Expert tips, checklists, and templates to help you grow your beverage category**

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**SECTION 1: PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

**Current Performance Audit**

**☐ Sales Data Review**

* [ ] Track beverage sales by category (energy, soda, water, coffee) for last 3 months
* [ ] Identify top 10 best-selling beverages by volume
* [ ] Calculate average margin per beverage category
* [ ] Note seasonal trends and peak selling times
* [ ] Compare performance to same period last year

**☐ Display Evaluation**

* [ ] Assess current cooler organization and cleanliness
* [ ] Check temperature consistency across all coolers (35-38°F optimal)
* [ ] Evaluate lighting quality and visibility
* [ ] Review signage effectiveness and placement
* [ ] Test door seals and gaskets

**☐ Competition Analysis**

* [ ] Visit 3 nearby competitors and document their beverage selections
* [ ] Note pricing strategies and promotional tactics
* [ ] Identify gaps in local market offerings
* [ ] Research customer complaints about competitor beverage selections
* [ ] Photograph competitor displays for reference

**Customer Feedback Collection**

* [ ] Survey regular customers about beverage preferences
* [ ] Ask staff for customer requests and complaints
* [ ] Monitor online reviews for beverage-related comments
* [ ] Track customer traffic patterns around beverage areas

**SECTION 2: COOLER OPTIMIZATION TEMPLATES**

**Eye-Level Placement Strategy**

**Prime Real Estate (Eye Level - Shelves 2 & 3):**

* High-margin energy drinks
* Premium water brands
* New product launches
* Seasonal promotions
* Limited-time offers

**Secondary Placement (Top & Bottom Shelves):**

* Bulk water cases
* Value brands
* Established sodas with strong brand loyalty
* Slow-moving inventory
* Heavy items (bottom shelf only)

**Category Organization Template**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Cooler Section | Product Category | Organization Strategy |
| Section 1 | Energy Drinks | Group by brand, highlight new flavors |
| Section 2 | Premium Waters | Organize by size, feature health benefits |
| Section 3 | Sports Drinks | Color-coordinate, seasonal flavors prominent |
| Section 4 | Traditional Sodas | Classic layout, diet options together |
| Section 5 | Juices & Teas | Health-focused positioning, organic labels visible |

**Temperature Maintenance Checklist**

**Daily Tasks:**

* [ ] Check cooler temperatures (35-38°F optimal)
* [ ] Verify door seals and gaskets
* [ ] Clean glass doors for maximum visibility
* [ ] Rotate stock using FIFO (First In, First Out) method
* [ ] Remove expired or damaged products

**Weekly Tasks:**

* [ ] Deep clean cooler interiors
* [ ] Check and replace burnt-out lights
* [ ] Adjust shelving for new products
* [ ] Review temperature logs for consistency
* [ ] Inspect and clean air vents

**Monthly Tasks:**

* [ ] Professional cooler maintenance check
* [ ] Review energy efficiency and costs
* [ ] Update product facings based on sales data
* [ ] Assess space utilization and optimization opportunities

**SECTION 3: CROSS-MERCHANDISING COMBINATIONS GUIDE**

**High-Impact Beverage + Snack Pairings**

**Energy Drinks +**

* Protein bars (67% combo purchase rate)
* Nuts and trail mix (54% combo rate)
* Beef jerky (43% combo rate)
* Breakfast pastries (38% combo rate)

**Sports Drinks +**

* Energy bars (61% combo rate)
* Bananas/fresh fruit (45% combo rate)
* Salty snacks (chips, pretzels) (58% combo rate)
* Sandwiches (41% combo rate)

**Premium Water +**

* Healthy snacks (granola bars, fruit) (47% combo rate)
* Salads (35% combo rate)
* Vitamin supplements (29% combo rate)
* Organic options (42% combo rate)

**Coffee Drinks +**

* Donuts and pastries (73% combo rate)
* Breakfast sandwiches (51% combo rate)
* Mints/gum (33% combo rate)
* Newspapers/magazines (28% combo rate)

**Island Display Setup Template**

**1. Base Level:** Ice-filled tub with premium beers/sodas

**2. Side Racks:** Complementary snacks (chips, nuts)

**3. Top Display:** Promotional signage and new products

**4. Surrounding Area:** Napkins, ice, bottle openers

**Placement Strategy:**

* Position 6-8 feet from entrance
* Ensure 360-degree access
* Maintain clear sightlines to register
* Include waste receptacle nearby
* Allow 4-foot walking space around display

**Cross-Merchandising Success Metrics**

* **Attachment Rate:** % of beverage buyers who also buy snacks
* **Average Transaction Value:** Revenue per beverage customer
* **Units Per Transaction:** Items per beverage purchase
* **Category Growth:** Month-over-month beverage category sales

**SECTION 4: SIGNAGE & PROMOTION TEMPLATES**

**Effective Signage Guidelines**

**Cooler Door Signs:**

* Maximum 3 colors
* Bold, readable fonts (minimum 24pt)
* Clear pricing and promotions
* Weather-resistant materials
* Eye-level placement (48-60 inches from floor)

**Sample Sign Templates**

🔥 NEW! 🔥

MONSTER ENERGY

Ultra Paradise

$2.99

Try the tropical twist!

💧 STAY HYDRATED 💧

Premium Spring Water

2 for $3.00

Pure • Natural • Refreshing

⚡ ENERGY BOOST ⚡

Red Bull + Protein Bar

Save $1.50 on combo

Limited time offer!

**Seasonal Promotion Calendar**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Season | Featured Categories | Promotion Ideas | Duration |
| Spring | Energy drinks, sports drinks | "Spring Training Special" | March-May |
| Summer | Cold water, iced teas, sports drinks | "Beat the Heat" bundles | June-August |
| Fall | Hot coffee, energy drinks | "Back to School" combos | September-November |
| Winter | Hot beverages, energy drinks | "Warm Up" promotions | December-February |

**Promotional Pricing Strategies**

* **Bundle Deals:** 2 drinks + 1 snack = $X savings
* **Volume Discounts:** Buy 3, save $1
* **Time-Based:** Happy hour pricing 2-4 PM
* **Loyalty Rewards:** 10th drink free with punch card

**SECTION 5: NEW PRODUCT LAUNCH CHECKLIST**

**Pre-Launch Preparation (2 weeks before)**

**☐ Market Research**

* [ ] Survey customers about interest in new categories
* [ ] Research competitor offerings and pricing
* [ ] Identify target demographic for new products
* [ ] Set realistic sales projections
* [ ] Determine optimal pricing strategy

**☐ Space Planning**

* [ ] Determine optimal cooler placement
* [ ] Adjust existing product facings
* [ ] Prepare promotional display materials
* [ ] Train staff on product benefits and features
* [ ] Create staff talking points and FAQs

**Launch Week Activities**

**Days 1-2: Soft Launch**

* [ ] Introduce to regular customers only
* [ ] Gather initial feedback
* [ ] Monitor staff questions and concerns
* [ ] Track early sales performance

**Days 3-4: Full Promotional Launch**

* [ ] Implement complete display strategy
* [ ] Begin promotional campaigns
* [ ] Distribute samples if applicable
* [ ] Update all signage and pricing

**Days 5-7: Feedback & Adjustment**

* [ ] Collect customer feedback
* [ ] Monitor sales performance
* [ ] Adjust placement based on early results
* [ ] Plan continuation strategy

**Performance Tracking Template**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Metric | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4 | Target |
| Units Sold |  |  |  |  |  |
| Revenue Generated |  |  |  |  |  |
| Customer Feedback Score |  |  |  |  |  |
| Staff Confidence Level |  |  |  |  |  |
| Repeat Purchase Rate |  |  |  |  |  |

**SECTION 6: SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIP TEMPLATES**

**Vendor Evaluation Scorecard**

**Supplier:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | Score (1-5) | Weight | Weighted Score | Notes |
| Product Quality |  | x3 |  |  |
| Delivery Reliability |  | x3 |  |  |
| Pricing Competitiveness |  | x2 |  |  |
| Marketing Support |  | x2 |  |  |
| Customer Service |  | x2 |  |  |
| Payment Terms |  | x1 |  |  |
| Total Weighted Score: |  |  | **/65** |  |

**Scoring Guide:**

* 5 = Excellent, exceeds expectations
* 4 = Good, meets expectations consistently
* 3 = Average, acceptable performance
* 2 = Below average, needs improvement
* 1 = Poor, unacceptable performance

**New Supplier Onboarding Checklist**

**☐ Documentation**

* [ ] Complete vendor application and agreements
* [ ] Verify insurance and licensing requirements
* [ ] Establish credit terms and payment schedules
* [ ] Set delivery schedules and procedures
* [ ] Obtain emergency contact information

**☐ Product Setup**

* [ ] Determine initial order quantities
* [ ] Establish pricing and margin agreements
* [ ] Plan promotional launch strategy
* [ ] Train staff on new products and vendors
* [ ] Set up inventory management codes

**☐ Relationship Management**

* [ ] Schedule regular review meetings
* [ ] Establish communication protocols
* [ ] Set performance expectations and KPIs
* [ ] Create feedback and improvement processes

**Supplier Performance Review Template**

**Quarterly Review Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Strengths:**

**Areas for Improvement:**

**Action Items:**

**Next Review Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION 7: 30-DAY IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE**

**Week 1: Assessment & Planning**

**Days 1-2: Current State Analysis**

* Complete performance assessment checklist
* Document current cooler organization with photos
* Review 3 months of sales data by category
* Identify top 3 improvement opportunities

**Days 3-4: Market Research**

* Visit competitor locations and document findings
* Research new products and suppliers
* Survey customers about beverage preferences
* Develop expansion budget and ROI projections

**Days 5-7: Strategic Planning**

* Create detailed reorganization plan
* Design new cooler layout and signage
* Train staff on new procedures and goals
* Order necessary supplies and materials

**Week 2: Infrastructure & Setup**

**Days 8-10: Physical Optimization**

* Implement new cooler organization strategy
* Install improved lighting if needed
* Set up temperature monitoring systems
* Create designated spaces for new products

**Days 11-12: Visual Improvements**

* Install new signage using 3-color rule
* Implement eye-level placement strategy
* Set up cross-merchandising displays
* Create promotional material and pricing

**Days 13-14: System Integration**

* Begin supplier negotiations and agreements
* Update inventory management systems
* Train staff on new product knowledge
* Test all new procedures and processes

**Week 3: Launch & Promotion**

**Days 15-17: New Product Introduction**

* Launch new products with strategic placement
* Begin promotional campaigns and signage
* Implement staff training on upselling
* Monitor customer response and feedback

**Days 18-19: Marketing & Promotion**

* Run special promotions (e.g., "Beat the Heat")
* Implement cross-merchandising strategies
* Collect customer feedback and testimonials
* Track early performance metrics

**Days 20-21: Fine-Tuning**

* Adjust product placement based on early sales
* Refine promotional strategies
* Address any operational issues
* Expand successful initiatives

**Week 4: Review & Optimize**

**Days 22-24: Performance Analysis**

* Analyze sales data and performance metrics
* Compare results to baseline and targets
* Identify most and least successful changes
* Calculate ROI on investments made

**Days 25-27: Strategy Refinement**

* Double down on winning strategies
* Modify or eliminate underperforming initiatives
* Plan expansion of successful programs
* Adjust product mix based on performance

**Days 28-30: Future Planning**

* Plan next month's improvements and initiatives
* Update supplier relationships and agreements
* Set goals for continued growth
* Document lessons learned and best practices

**Success Metrics to Track**

* **Revenue Growth:** Month-over-month beverage sales increase
* **Transaction Size:** Average dollars per beverage customer
* **Category Mix:** Performance of different beverage categories
* **Customer Satisfaction:** Feedback scores and repeat purchases
* **Operational Efficiency:** Time savings and process improvements

**BONUS: QUICK REFERENCE CARDS**

**Daily Beverage Display Checklist**

* [ ] Check cooler temperatures (35-38°F)
* [ ] Clean glass doors for visibility
* [ ] Rotate expired products using FIFO
* [ ] Restock popular items and maintain facings
* [ ] Update promotional signage and pricing
* [ ] Monitor cross-merchandising displays
* [ ] Track customer feedback and requests

**Upselling Script Examples**

**Energy Drink Customer:** *"That energy drink pairs perfectly with our protein bars - they're right here and we have a combo special today."*

**Sports Drink Customer:**
*"Would you like to add some salty snacks to go with that sports drink? Perfect combo for staying hydrated and energized."*

**Water Customer:** *"We have a special on waters today - 2 for $3. Would you like to grab another one?"*

**Coffee Customer:** *"Fresh pastries just came in this morning - perfect with that coffee!"*

**Emergency Procedures**

**Cooler Breakdown Protocol:**

1. Move perishables to backup cooler immediately
2. Post "temporarily out of service" sign
3. Contact repair service and document issue
4. Track lost sales for insurance purposes
5. Implement temporary display solutions
6. Communicate timeline to customers
7. Follow up on repair completion

**Product Recall Procedure:**

1. Remove affected products immediately
2. Secure products in separate, marked area
3. Document lot numbers and quantities
4. Contact supplier for return instructions
5. Post customer notice if required
6. Track financial impact for reimbursement

**Supply Chain Disruption:**

1. Contact alternative suppliers immediately
2. Communicate with customers about shortages
3. Adjust product mix and promotions
4. Monitor competitor availability
5. Document impact for supplier discussions

**IMPLEMENTATION SUCCESS STORIES**

**Case Study 1: Sarah's Corner Store**

**Challenge:** Declining beverage sales, poor cooler organization

**Solution:** Implemented eye-level strategy and cross-merchandising

**Results:** 43% increase in beverage revenue in 30 days

**Key Changes Made:**

* Moved energy drinks to eye level (shelves 2-3)
* Created protein bar displays next to energy drinks
* Improved signage with bold, 3-color design
* Staff training on upselling techniques

**Case Study 2: Mike's Express**

**Challenge:** Low average transaction value, poor product visibility **Solution:** Strategic product placement and promotional bundling **Results:** Average transaction increased from $8.50 to $12.80

**Key Changes Made:**

* Reorganized coolers by customer shopping patterns
* Created "grab and go" combo displays
* Implemented seasonal promotion calendar
* Improved lighting and temperature control

**Case Study 3: Jennifer's Market**

**Challenge:** High competition, need for differentiation **Solution:** Premium product focus and superior customer experience **Results:** Became #1 performing store in district

**Key Changes Made:**

* Focused on premium and healthy beverage options
* Created educational signage about product benefits
* Implemented loyalty program with beverage rewards
* Staff became beverage consultants, not just cashiers

**CONCLUSION**

This toolkit provides a comprehensive system for expanding and optimizing your convenience store beverage category. The key to success is systematic implementation, consistent measurement, and continuous improvement based on real performance data.

**Remember the Core Principles:**

1. **Customer Psychology Drives Placement** - Eye level sells, convenience matters
2. **Cross-Merchandising Multiplies Sales** - Related products drive larger transactions
3. **Consistent Execution Beats Perfect Planning** - Start implementing immediately
4. **Data Drives Decisions** - Track everything and adjust based on results
5. **Staff Knowledge Equals Customer Satisfaction** - Invest in training

**Next Steps:**

1. Complete the assessment checklist in Section 1
2. Begin Week 1 of the 30-day implementation plan
3. Track your results using the provided templates
4. Adjust strategies based on your specific customer base and local market

For ongoing support and advanced strategies, visit: [**www.cstorethrive.com**](http://www.cstorethrive.com)

*© 2025 - This toolkit is designed to help convenience store operators systematically improve their beverage category performance. For best results, implement one section at a time and track progress using the provided measurement tools.*