



Daylighting Benefits

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The overall benefit of Daylighting and the increase of natural light into a retail setting has been proven in multiple studies conducted throughout the last thirty years. An increase in average sales of 40% and higher customer satisfaction have been documented.

Multiple studies have been done since the early 1970's on the benefits of natural lighting and specifically the correlation to the increase in sales when applied. According to Minnesota-based consultancy Design Services Group, a typical large retailer now spends about \$300,000 on lighting – about 10% of total store construction costs, up from 8% a few years ago. Armed with data that shows the right lighting can increase sales, retailers such as Albertson's, Kroger, Safeway, Wal-Mart and Whole Foods Market are using illumination and daylighting tricks to make merchandise more attractive. Whole Foods uses natural light in most of its 171 stores. Wal-Mart builds all of its super-centers to exploit natural lighting. While energy savings are an important draw, the company reports that the improved lighting increases sales. (Business 2.0, September 2005)

Benefits of Implementing Daylighting

- Customers feel more relaxed and are more likely to return.
- Clients spend an average of 40% more during their visit.
- Clients are more likely to purchase a higher ticket item during their visit.
- Daylighting helps turn customers into clients with higher return visits.
- Daylighting can be achieved inexpensively.
- Daylighting enhances the client's experience which translates to improved customer satisfaction.



A 1999 Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) daylighting study analyzed a retail chain of 108 stores where two-thirds of the stores were lit with skylights and one-third were not. All other things being equal, the study found that the day-lit stores had 40% higher sales than those without. (Heschong Mahone Group HMG "Skylighting and Retail Sales" Report at www.h-m-g.com, 1999)

In 2003, a new retail study was conducted to replicate the HMG study with a new (anonymous) retailer. The report stated: However, the more detailed "daylight hours per year" model found that there was a significant dose response relationship between the number of daylight hours per year and the magnitude of the increase in sales (once other factors, such as the size of the parking lot, were considered). Daylight was found to be as reliable a predictor of sales as other more traditional measures of retail potential, such as parking area, number of local competitors and neighborhood demographics.

During the California power crisis of 2001, when the chain operated its stores at half-lighting power, the day-lit stores had an average 5.5% increase in sales relative to the non-day-lit stores. Along with an increase in average monthly sales, the day-lit stores were also found to have a 1% to 2% increase in the

number of transactions per month. Stores with the most favorable daylighting conditions had a 40% increase in sales compared to non-day-lit stores, consistent with the findings of the HMG study. No seasonal variation was detected. Researchers concluded this suggested a long-term customer loyalty effect and not a short-term impetus on sales. Over a dozen large national retail chains are known to be currently (at time of this report, 2003) building skylit stores or developing prototypes to investigate how sky-lighting could best be applied for their format.

In addition, in 2003 the head of store planning for a national department store corporate and seven other major retailers have consulted HMG for advice on including sky-lighting in their stores. ("Integrated Energy Systems: Productivity and Building Science" report prepared for the California Energy Commission Public Interest Energy Research Program by the New Building Institute Inc., October 2003). There are many other studies available including the Piggly Wiggly 2001 study, The Companion Study to the Grocers Study, The Lund Food Holdings Report, the Costco Report in the Discount Store News May, 20 2002 and many more.

In the Companion Study Customers said that they felt more relaxed and enjoyed their buying experience. The interviews

cite that the customers loved the natural daylight as well as a feeling of being less claustrophobic. This led to an increase in customer return visits. When the clients were asked about the products they bought, they stated, they just a feeling of well-being which translated into increased total purchases from the retailers that had implemented daylighting versus those that did not.

This and other information found in studies and their conclusions drive Modernwash to design Car Wash (Retail) spaces with the Daylighting criteria as the main factor. This meant including a Daylight Roof System as well as generous use of Sidewall Tunnel Light in our designs. Our study in which clients were asked about their experiences (Modernwash 2007 Exit Questions) also confirms the previous studies, in that clients felt less claustrophobic and more relaxed when entering and during the Car Wash experience as well. This translates into returning customers who then become a solid client base. The clients seemingly were less upset when an issue did arise during a visit, and the clients seemed more likely to be forgiving of these minor issues. It seems the benefits of the experience overcame the perceived issues.



TIMOTHY HOGUE is the President and Senior Designer of Modernwash Buildings and Solutions, Inc. Modernwash designs and creates multiple Pre-Fabricated structures for the Carwash as well as Retail Industry. They utilize a modern HSS frame System that features a proprietary hidden fastening system.