

# Debunking permanent and semi-permanent POP myths



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As humans, it is in our nature to have preconceptions about people, objects and situations. Be it the common understanding that it takes seven years to digest chewing gum or the belief that Danish pastries originated in Denmark (they are from Austria) – the world is full of such interesting quirks and trivia.

While in most cases these notions are dismissed with a laugh, doing so with business related issues often affects company bottom lines. In my experience, business related myths and preconceptions are often due to lack of awareness and quantifiable or supporting data. From “to be successful you have to be first” to “I’ll just open my store and people will stream in off the sidewalks and buy from me” – we’ve heard generic myths like these or more specific ones at one point or the other.

However, today, I want to set the record straight on some persistent myths about the permanent and semi-permanent Point-of-Purchase (POP) industry and units.

## Myth #1: Permanent and semi-permanent POP is not sustainable

A while ago, I remember reading an article about how Wal-Mart’s house brand division asked suppliers to assess products on four dimensions of sustainability: resource use; impact on climate change; impact on ecosystems throughout the product’s supply chain; and impact on human health. Wal-Mart was planning on using this data as basis for sustainability ratings that would be posted so shoppers could compare brands in the store aisles.

Now this to me is sustainability and the true form of both green and business intelligence.

I am all for recycling and think everyone should practice it. But as a POP business proposition, wouldn’t it be better to invest in products that can be reused rather than produced and recycled many times over? Coles and Woolworths shopping bags are a perfect example. Would they have been

better off making several paper bags consistently or making reusable bags from materials that would last for a couple of years?

But beyond the environmental arguments, permanent and semi-permanent POP displays also present a strong business case. Smart architecture that can stay in-store for longer periods of time are most definitely attractive, as is flexible furniture in the retail space. These can be manufactured from recycled plastic. Energy and material use is drastically reduced, as would production and logistical costs over time.

From a macro perspective, economies of scale can be achieved through usage of the stands for different brands or occasions. An example is the CIS ¼ pallet, which Cadbury has been using for Easter, Christmas and several other occasions. Cadbury has been successfully using these ¼ pallets for four years now by just changing the graphics around them.

## Myth #2: Temporary POP is more convenient

How so? You can source a pre-packed lightweight product that can be set-up really quickly due to ease of architecture and can be re-branded just as easily. I just don’t get how people are willing to go through the exercise of developing completely new units every few months when they can just buy a single unit and design stunning graphics around it.

Decisions should be based on a more holistic manufacturing, time and investment cost of creating new display systems every quarter. In a time-poor market or company, it is very easy to go with what seems like a quicker solution for the moment. But sit back and see how much you save monetarily and from a time management perspective in the longer run.

If you are a retailer, you can just as easily rent permanent and semi-permanent stands out to brands. It could be DVDs for Twentieth Century Fox one month and a book stand for Harlequin the next.

## Myth #3: Product flexibility is limited in permanent or semi-permanent POP

Henry Ford once said that people could have the Ford Model T car in any colour, as long as it is black. Although this level of product rigidity isn’t feasible or economically viable today, I thought it an interesting concept. If people had to buy this car in 2010, they might do so with added accessories that give it personality. The point is that people might still buy the car as its core architecture is sound, it is financially viable and you can personalise as you see fit.

The same goes with permanent or semi-permanent POP displays – product flexibility is very achievable and economically sound.

Using a solid base architecture like the CIS ¼ pallet, the brand has the opportunity to create the wow factor through its graphics and headers. This way, promotional programs can be re-dressed in-store, rather than having to return a stand to a pack centre. A whole leg of the merchandising process is eradicated, reducing transport time, costs and emissions.

If the design is smart, the time to assemble and disassemble is reduced, as is the space needed for storage between promotional periods. And the beauty of the product is that with a simple change in graphics, it will function across categories, including but not limited to: UHT milk and juices, confectionery, batteries, DVDs and impulse drinks. Options on the same unit could encompass hang-sell with hooks to shelving, as well as shelf extenders or pods for new SKU promotions.

For me, everything we do in business is about sustainability, our legacy and the ROI. Like Wal-Mart did, brands and companies should start assessing the ecological and economical footprint of using repeat short term POP solutions compared to more sustainable long-term solutions. While it is tempting to give in to the quickest decision in the marketing process, take a step back to review the long-term repercussions on the bottom line. 🛒

