

Don't be a victim of product line extension creep! Only the Boldest Brush With Cinnamon Flavor (Seriously?)

I did not make that title up. “**Only the boldest brush with cinnamon flavor**” is a tagline found on the website for a leading toothpaste manufacturer. In a quick search, I discovered 49 different kinds of toothpaste by one manufacturer. Aside from choosing your flavor and size, one must choose from 3D White Arctic Fresh, 3D White Brilliance, 3D White Brilliance Boost, 3D White Brilliance Mesmerizing, 3D White Foaming Clean, 3D White Luxe Diamond, 3D White Luxe Glamorous, 3D White Mild, 3D White Radiant, 3D White Whitening Therapy Enamel Care, 3D White Therapy Sensitivity ... my head is still spinning.



Only the boldest say **NO** to line extension creep! The line creep starts innocently enough by adding a new version of an old item. This is done by introducing a new flavor, size, strength, ingredient, or all of the above. If you stocked every toothpaste available to mankind, the department would stretch from your front door to the pharmacy bench and creep into the backroom. Yes, new items are important and, in some cases, imperative to keeping your store up-to-date. Line extensions? Not so much.

How do you stop line extension creep? Do your planograms and research them well. First, choose the correct size of the category you are looking to update. Remember, what is in a 4-foot section is in an 8-foot section, what is in an 8-foot section is in 12-foot section, and so on. The larger the section, the more potential for the dreaded “creep.” When looking at a planogram, it is your job to identify the bestsellers, the new items, and the obvious line extensions. Think twice and then think again before expanding a category simply to make room for a line extension. Do your planograms, bring in new items, limit line extensions, and make room to double-face your private label. Make sure **you** choose the size of your department; don't let the size be determined by your shelving space or a particular manufacturer.

One more thing about line extension creep: When one brand introduces a new line extension, then the competing brand will feel they need one, too. And so, it grows. Don't become a victim of the creep.