

REITMANS TAKES THE LEAD, THE COMPANY THAT HAS EARNED THE TRUST OF COUNTLESS CANADIAN WOMEN UNDERSTANDS THAT WHILE STYLE MATTERS, IT'S ALL ABOUT FIT

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DID YOU KNOW?:

- » Petites, a category that comprises 23% of Canadian women.
- » The average Canadian woman is a size 14.
- » 1 out of 3 women confesses having to unbutton her pants after a big meal... problem solved with Reitmans' Comfort pant.
- » Canadian women are almost equally concerned about finding clothes that fit their shape (92%) as they are about finding styles they like (93%).
- » Reitmans came first in Lou Lou magazine's 2009 survey on who offers the best service.
- » The source of Reitmans' ever-growing expertise, comes during the fit sessions they regularly hold from coast-to-coast where 12 to 20 customers participate in evening sessions, trying on clothes and offering their priceless feedback.
- » Inspired by role models not supermodels, at Reitmans we offer affordable stylish fashions that are designed to fit everybody and every body™.



What's the biggest fashion problem women face today? It isn't style or taste or the amount of money they have to spend. According to Reitmans, the Canadian specialty women's retailer with more than 365 stores coast-to-coast, it's a question of fit. Reitmans' experts estimate that more than one-third of Canadian women are wearing the wrong size clothing, most aren't sure what shapes flatter them most, and far too many settle for less than perfect-fitting garments.

"Many women are wearing one size too big to hide perceived flaws or a size too small to emphasize what they think are their best features,"

says Brigitte Martin, Merchandise Manager, Reitmans Division.

"They just don't know what size they are."

To complicate matters, a great many women don't fall easily into the standard industry categories of petite, regular and plus. A woman who considers herself to be a regular size may have a petite proportioned torso or legs and as a result she never quite finds the right fit. Small wonder so many women simply give up.

The problem, however, can be solved. Reitmans, always more focused on fit than the average retailer, made the decision to make fit their passion – and their platform.

"It was our customers who led us in this direction,"

says Martin, commenting on the leadership role Reitmans has taken and their reputation as being the unrivalled fit expert.

"A number of years ago our customers began telling us that when they came to Reitmans they could always find something that fit them. That was all we needed to hear to propel us forward."

SOLUTIONS TO THE CHALLENGES OF REITMANS' CONSUMERS

THE PROBLEMS: SIZE, SHAPE AND PROPORTION

For far too many women, buying the wrong size is a very common mistake and that usually means buying a garment that is too big for them. Whether worn for comfort or camouflage, the result can be sloppy and unattractive.

"But you can be just as comfortable in something that fits you properly,"

Martin says.

It's shape rather than size, however, that challenges women most. According to a recent Ipsos survey of 2,100 Canadian women, when it comes to choosing a store to shop in, they are almost equally concerned about finding clothes that fit their shape (92%) as they are about finding styles they like (93%). Reitmans identifies a wide range of body shapes including hourglass, rectangle, pear, apple and triangle.

"It can be complicated and confusing for women,"

Martin says,

"and choosing the wrong garments for their body shape results in a poor fit."

A blouse designed for a woman with an hourglass shape (more fitted at the waist), for example, will be too big at the shoulder and tight at the waist for a woman who is more rectangular.

Proportion is the third fit challenge. Too many women aren't aware that moving to a specialty size would solve their proportion issues. A woman of 5'6" who is, essentially, a regular, may have a short rise and short legs and should, therefore, be wearing a petite pant.

SOLUTION #1: IT STARTS WITH REITMANS' DESIGNS AND CONSTRUCTION

One thing on which fashion industry experts agree: there's likely no retailer as exacting before a garment reaches the store. Rather than relying on their manufacturers, Reitmans develops each block pattern themselves. And when a pair of pants arrives from their manufacturer, for example, Reitmans' fit technicians check more than 30 measurements from rise and inseam to styling details.

In-house fit sessions, where multiple employees try on each garment and answer a number of questions about comfort, fabric, preferences and, of course, fit, lead to numerous technical adjustments by the fit team and fabric adjustments by the sourcing team. But the real test, and the source of Reitmans' ever-growing expertise, comes during the fit sessions they regularly hold from coast-to-coast where 12 to 20 customers participate in evening sessions, trying on clothes and offering their priceless feedback.

SOLUTION #2: A STRONG FOCUS ON SPECIALTY SIZES

If there's truth in advertising, you'll find it in one of Reitman's familiar slogans: **"Fashion for everybody and every body."** No other Canadian specialty women's retailer cares about fit like Reitmans does and none can fit such a wide variety of shapes and sizes. **Five years ago Reitmans turned their attention to petites, a category that comprises 23% of Canadian women, according to Alvanon, consultants to the apparel industry.**

"Petites are generally classified as 5'4" and under,"

says Sandra Léveillé, Reitmans' Petite Senior Buyer.

"But that's just the beginning. It's as much about proportion as it is about height. You could have long legs but a short torso, in which case petite is for you. Or you might be petite on the bottom only."

To the untrained eye, petite clothes are simply a smaller version of regular sizes. In fact, and particularly at Reitmans, the petite garment is both complex and specific, designed for the fashion concerns of the petite woman. Take pants for example: the openings at the bottom of boot cut pants are narrower and rises are shorter, with the waist definition higher. Sleeve lengths are shorter and tops are cut shorter for her proportion; armholes are placed a little higher and, from shoulder point to point, a top is narrower.

Along with cut, details are carefully considered. Reitmans avoids "bulky details" such as large pockets, and prints are scaled down for her. There's an emphasis on feminine styling details, such as open v-necks.

"The petite customer may be small, but she doesn't want to look like a teenager, she wants to look like a woman,"

says Léveillé.

With the average Canadian woman now a size 14, according to Alvanon, Reitmans has taken plus size seriously. Market studies, and Reitmans' own experience, have shown that there is a greater variety of shapes in plus size women than in other size categories.

"Dressing the plus size woman is not about covering up,"

says Lisa Singer, Merchandise Manager, Reitmans Plus Size Division.

"It's about showing curves. In general, her body is curvy and she doesn't want to hide it – but there are things she wants to de-emphasize."

Like the petite customer, garments are designed and engineered specifically for her, not just sized up. Armholes, for example, are cut to allow for fuller upper arms, and sleeves are both generously proportioned and often cut to hit the most flattering point in the arm. Necklines are often scooped to show the décolleté and details are toned down to ensure that garments aren't too "busy."

SOLUTION #3: THE TRUE EXPERTS ARE REITMANS SALES ASSOCIATES

Reitmans may be able to fit just about everyone, but helping customers find their way to what specifically works for them is the domain of Reitmans' carefully trained sales associates. The company came first in Lou Lou magazine's 2009 survey on who offers the best service for a reason: Reitmans is passionate about training their sales associates to understand both the fashion needs and sensitivities of their customers.

Customer service begins with fit sessions: Reitmans sales associates, themselves an intentional range of shapes and sizes, have fit sessions when new clothes arrive, trying them on so that they have first-hand understanding of what they're selling.

"A lot of women are afraid to try something new and we're there to give them options and encourage them,"

says Martin.

Long discouraged by their inability to find clothes that flatter them, many plus size women have been reluctant to try their purchases on in the store, but at Reitmans that has changed.

"She wasn't always comfortable coming out of the fitting room but that's not the case at Reitmans,"

Singer stresses.

"Our sales associates better understand her challenges and fit issues. Some are just great listeners. We'll tell her when something doesn't work for her, and then find her something that does. We're here to solve her problems, and give her a very positive experience."

REITMANS

Reitmans offers affordable, stylish fashions designed to fit everybody and every body. Operating 366 stores; Reitmans, Canada's largest women's apparel specialty chain and leading fashion brand, has developed strong customer loyalty through superior service, insightful marketing and quality merchandise.

Reitmans, designed for real life.®

www.reitmans.com

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