



OUTSIDE
THE *Vines*

INSPIRATION FROM BEYOND THE POTTING BENCH

The GLAM of Customers

By Ana Olvera

When customers walk into Uniform, a men's boutique in Boston, they step into a relaxed environment, welcoming to all.

Gary Ritacco, store owner, ensures everyone entering into his store feels comfortable as they walk throughout the store and shop, no matter where they fall in his wide-ranging customer base.

"Within the first few seconds that someone enters the store, we always greet them with a nice 'Hello!'" Ritacco says.

Ritacco and his staff employ a strategy called GLAM: **G**reet the customer, **L**isten to why they came in, **A**ct upon what they are listening to and achieve **M**ultiple sales by understanding a customer's interests and getting the right items to the fitting room.

Such a retail approach can work no matter what it is you're selling.

Customer Relations

"We foster an environment that lends itself to people being relaxed and comfortable when they're in the store," Ritacco says. "I work with them, and my team works with them on a personal level. We have a lot of fairly close relationships with our customer base.

"The most important thing is listening to people," Ritacco adds. "Every time someone walks into a store, they have a reason [for doing so]. You just need to make them feel comfortable about their environment."

Ritacco says part of making customers feel comfortable includes "not having a predisposed idea of what someone or who someone is like or how they are going to react and shop in a store when they come in.

"There are a lot of bloggers out there and style editors that try to show off all these do's and don'ts, and I don't agree with that at all," Ritacco says. "I don't like telling people how they should dress; it's trial and error.

"They're here for a reason, and it's all about kind of figuring out why by asking questions and making them comfortable."

Something for Everyone

The store's name may be Uniform, but its customer base — which ranges from men in their 20s to men in their 60s — is anything but. Uniform is not targeted toward a specific style of menswear, body type or fit.



"What do you do when you get up in the morning? You put on your uniform," Ritacco says. But that uniform (or style) looks different for each person. "Everyone is an individual."

If a customer feels comfortable, they might try out an item that they normally wouldn't have gone for, Ritacco says.

"Many of Uniform's customers wear Levi's and when they see Levi's items at the store that aren't typically found in department stores, they think 'I could never wear those,'" Ritacco says.

"Nine out of 10 times they try them on and walk out with a pair."

Those sales are achieved by making all customers feel comfortable and merchandising the store in a way that makes the clothing accessible.

"If you look good in it and you feel confident in it then that's the best thing we can do for you," Ritacco says. "It's so gratifying when someone leaves the store happy."

Visuals aid in enticing customers and making them walk through the door, he adds.

"Merchandising, that's what gets the guy in the store. They see something they like in the window and that brings them in," Ritacco says.

Throughout the store, clothing and accessories are displayed in visually appealing stories or vignettes that highlight different lifestyles.

"If you're looking at everything that's next to [a display], it all comes together," he says.

Ritacco draws in new customers and introduces new items to its established customer base by hosting two to three trunk show events per season.

Held on Saturdays, the trunk shows bring in special pieces to the store that Uniform wouldn't normally carry.

Brand ambassadors attend the event to interact with Uniform's customers. Drinks, discounts on products and gifts are offered to customers throughout the day.

From a GLAM staff approach to having the customer always in mind, Uniform has found a way to keep shoppers coming back for the experience. **LGR**