

10 Retail Merchandising Best Practices to Follow in Your Store

Good retail merchandising optimizes how products are displayed in-store and ensures that their features and benefits are highlighted.

By Francesca Nicasio

Retail merchandising can make or break the success of your garden center. When implemented correctly, visual merchandising can lead customers to the right products, entice them to buy, and create an excellent in-store experience. But if you do it wrong, you'll drive people away.

To help keep people in your store (and convert them into paying customers), we've put together some expert-backed tips and insights on retail merchandising. Go through the pointers below and see how you can apply them to your retail store.

1 Make Your Window Display Count

Already have a strong merchandising concept in mind? One

of the best places to bring it to life is your window displays.

First, choose the right theme for your windows. As Meaghan Brophy, a senior retail analyst at Fit Small Business puts it, "Window displays need to grab the attention of passersby while also being welcoming and inviting. Retailers can accomplish this by using bright colors, sticking to a theme, and steering clear of clutter."

In addition, remember the saying "Eye level is buy level." Pick out the key products you want to showcase in your display and position them at eye level.

2 Turn Staff into Retail Merchandising Statements

Visual merchandising isn't just about fixtures and displays; your employees should also play an active

role in showcasing your products. This is particularly useful when you're selling slow-moving stock, says Christine Guillot, a retail consultant and the founder of Merchant Method.

Guillot says your sales team can be used as "mobile merchandising statements that help move your products."

For example, she says that if you sell kitchen and entertaining merchandise, you might have seasonal print aprons that are slow-moving. "Your week-long focus could be around hosting a dinner party, and maybe your employees could wear those seasonally focused aprons all week long while on the sales floor. Doing this gives a reason and an occasion to speak about a particular item more," she says.

3 Leverage Informational Signage

Put retail signage to good use by making sure it aids the shopping experience. Stan Tan from Selby's recommends leveraging informational signage to make it easy for customers to locate the items they need.

Signage shouldn't be complicated, fancy or require any AI or technology, Tan says. "It is back to the retailing 101 basics — improve the customer's shopping experience."

4 Keep Things Fresh

"The easiest thing retailers can do to improve their merchandising strategy also doesn't cost a thing," Brophy says.

"Change your product displays regularly to keep customers interested and products looking fresh. Focus on the big displays in the front of your store; change them up to highlight new and seasonal products once a week. And don't neglect your window display. Make sure you're showcasing timely, popular and interesting products."

Stay on schedule by using a merchandising calendar. And remember that the frequency for how to update your merchandising also depends on the season. Most experts recommend changing up in-store displays once a week, and window displays at least twice a month. However, if you're in a high-traffic location or in the midst of an important holiday shopping season like the end-of-the-year holidays, you may need to do these things more often.

5 Implement Cross-Merchandising

Identify products in your store that would go well together and put them in a single display.

In addition, view your merchandise from a customer's perspective — especially a new gardener. For example, place the appropriate fertilizers within plant materials so customers know which ones to grab.

6 Use Props

While products should often be the focus of your merchandising displays, using props — even when they're not directly related to your



Directional signs at Grandma's Gardens.

merchandise — can make your displays pop.

7 Implement 'Try Before You Buy'

For garden centers that sell demonstrable products like salsa or oils, offer a try-before-you-buy approach. Showcase your products in such a way that people can sample the merchandise for themselves.

8 Monitor Your Sales Per Category

Earlier we talked about using customer survey data to inform your merchandising initiatives. But once your campaigns are out there, it's important to continue gathering data to further optimize your visual merchandising efforts. There are many useful retail metrics and key performance indicators to track, but one thing you should never ignore is your sales per category. See www.vendhq.com/blog/retail-metrics-and-kpis for more details.

“Sales per category or sales per department measures your total sales for each type of product. This information is useful because it shows which types of products are bringing in the most money, and usually points to your most popular products,” Brophy says.

“If one or a few categories are consistently outselling others, feature those items more prominently in displays. When it comes time to restock products or introduce new merchandise, buy more products in the categories that are selling well.”

9 Create Experiential Retail Displays

The best retail displays aren't just visually rich; they're experiential, too. You can level up your in-store merchandising by adding experiential elements like a selfie station or other area that invites customers to take a photo (and then perhaps share it on social media, giving you extra marketing momentum).

10 Don't Forget About Compliance

Last but not least is ensuring that your merchandising efforts comply with your company standards as well as any agreements you have with other brands and vendors.



Sunnyside Gardens' signage reminds customers to use cages and fertilizer — and then places fertilizer within easy reach.

“Ensuring retailer compliance is paramount to making sure retail merchandising strategies are effective,” says Victoria Vessella at Replsly. If agreements on shelf placement and special promotions are not being upheld (either by the retailer or the supplier), then both parties are missing out on a huge opportunity to drive sales. Monitoring compliance with in-store data collection tools keeps both retailers and suppliers

accountable for executing on their retail merchandising agreements.”

Francesca Nicasio is a retail expert and content strategist at Vend (www.vendhq.com). She writes about trends, tips and other cool things that enable retailers to increase sales, serve customers better, and be more awesome overall. She's also the author of “Retail Survival of the Fittest,” a free eBook to help retailers future-proof their stores.