

the ZOOM effect



Learn how to use the zoom effect to avoid confusing customers.

By Melanie McIntosh

Imagine a photograph of a Monarch butterfly. When you see the photograph you can immediately recognize it from its black-orange-white wing pattern. If you zoom in with camera and photograph a portion of the wing, you still might recognize the pattern of shapes and colors. But if you look at the wing in a microscope on low power, you start to see the scales on the wing. And on an even higher magnification, you see even more detail.

When you look at the butterfly at such a high level of detail, you can no longer see an image of a butterfly. This is the zoom effect. If you saw this detail first, you would have no idea what you were looking at.

The zoom effect also happens in stores. Often stores have merchandise artfully arranged on tables, shelves and display areas. It's as if the store displays are a bunch of different photographs taken through a microscope. Each photograph is very beautiful.

What's wrong with the zoom effect? Nothing.

The zoom effect is just what you get as you move closer and closer to an object.

The problem is that when we don't understand the zoom effect, customers get confused. A collection of beautiful displays won't be effective, if the customer doesn't understand how the store is organized. An organized shelf won't look attractive if it doesn't seem balanced with the shelves around it.

When the details look good, but the overall layout of the store is confusing, it's hard for customers to understand how each display relates

to another. What they're missing is the big picture.

Shoppers won't show their confusion by stumbling out of the store. But they'll buy less than they would in a store that organizes the merchandise in a way that is easy to understand.

How do you use the zoom effect to organize the store? Start backwards.

Don't start with the displays. Or organizing a shelf. Start with the big picture, and then zoom in. Just like you would with a camera.

There are three *shots* you need for the zoom effect:

- 1) Panorama shot
- 2) Medium shot
- 3) Close-up

Panorama Shot

The panorama shot is the view of the whole store. This is what customers see when approaching the store, or coming in the door. In a glance, customers take in the entire picture. The brain very quickly maps out the organization of the store.

It's important that this panorama view is simple and easy for the customer to take in that glance. If it's too confusing, the customer gets overwhelmed.

Organize the merchandise into three distinct stories. While your merchandise might change every season, each of the three stories will have its own section of the store. These sections will rarely change.

For fashion related goods — such as clothing,

home décor, gifts and tableware — each story would be a color, pattern or style theme. A clothing store might have: casual/weekend wear, basics, urban/career wear.

For a hardware store the three stories might be: yard and garden, interiors, lumber.

A computer store might have: computers and hardware, software and accessories, cameras and camera gear.

The three stories will help customers quickly get oriented to the store layout to find what they want. That brings us to the next level of detail.

Medium Shot

The medium shot is where the customer sees a department or section of the store. Just like a photograph, the medium shot in the store has a foreground, middle ground and background.

The foreground is made up of the fixtures at the front of the department, near the main aisle. These fixtures welcome the customer to the department, and frame the view of the rest of the department.

The front fixtures may be lower than fixtures in the centre of the department, so the viewer can see the merchandise behind them. Tables are often used in this location.

The middle ground is usually the biggest area on the floor. This is everything between the foreground and background. It will consist of most of your floor fixtures. In this area there may be gondolas arranged in rows. In a clothing store it could be four-way racks, tables and other merchandise fixtures. When organizing

MERCHANDISING

these fixtures, it is important that they are grouped to provide a view to the back wall. The middle ground fixture provide a frame for the background.

Within the middle ground, merchandise is organized in categories, or groups, of similar merchandise. It is important to group merchandise together in a way that is logical and based on the way your customers shop. Organize aisles and fixtures so that items that will be used together are placed in close proximity to each other. This makes it easy for customers to find everything they need in one area.

Your garden center probably has categories such as:

- Garden basics – seeds, pots, hand tools, stakes
- General yard tools – hoses, rakes, large garden tools
- Lawn maintenance – seed, fertilizers, mowers

Once all your categories are organized in the middle ground, let's look at the background.

The background is the back wall of the department. At least part of the background should be visible at the end of a main aisle, or above the middle ground fixtures. The background provides a destination.

Often a back wall features a key display and spotlighting to draw customers in through the

store. It could also present department signs or lifestyle graphics that demonstrate products being used. Usually customers will see the back wall of a department from a distance, so large signs, graphics or some displays can be placed above eye level. These elements are used to inform the customer about what they'll find in that department.

Now that we know how to organize the middle ground, let's look at the close-up shot.

Close-Up

The close-up is where you organize the details. The close-up deals with organizing merchandise on a rack, shelf, table-top or display area.

This is where you focus on display techniques that encourage shoppers to touch and browse merchandise. The close-up shots are about creating artistic and appealing presentations. Shelves will present the variety of styles and assortments of color.

In key displays, you will also cross-merchandise products from different categories, to demonstrate how they are used together.

All three shots are needed to tell a good visual story. If you focus on beautiful displays, but don't consider the overall layout and organization of the store, sales may suffer. Create a strong organizational structure with panorama and

medium shots to make your close-ups shine.

The panorama shots give the wide angle view to help customers understand the layout of the store.

The medium shots organize categories in a way that customer find easy to understand. Merchandising complimentary categories together helps boost sales.

The close-up shots are where you create appealing and artistic displays to encourage shoppers to pick up the merchandise.

Just like photographs of a butterfly, the panorama shot helps us to understand the beauty of the close-up. **LGR**



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