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Keys to Captivating Displays

Discover easy tips for great merchandising that can attract customers, boost sales and allow you to exercise your creativity.

By Maura Lodes

1 Do Something Different

This phrase can have a couple of meanings.

Don't be a copycat. You should absolutely do your research and see what's trending, but don't forget that this is your store — it should reflect your personality or brand.

Draw inspiration from a few sources (hello Pinterest!), but ultimately do your best to create a display that has your stamp on it. By creating uncommon displays, you're setting yourself apart from competition in the eyes of customers.

Don't let your displays get stale. While it can sometimes be a chore to rearrange displays, I can't stress enough how necessary it is to keep things visually interesting and fresh for shoppers.

Changing a product's location in your store or merchandising it with a different group of items can give it a whole new life.





2 Aim to Astonish

Think of ways to use props and products in ways that no one would expect. This has a few different benefits.

First, there's the "wow" factor. People can't resist stopping to "ooh" and "ahh" over a clever idea. As the source of that clever idea, you'll gain merchandising credibility and boost your top-of-mind awareness among shoppers.

Second, it makes people see the product in a different light. For example, if we simply displayed the 6-inch Art Pots above with plants dropped into them, it would have been fine, but expected. We see these as so much more than pots, and we wanted our customers to see that potential as well.

A variety of our pots were featured as gifts-to-go based on the messaging or artwork.

Some themes we focused on were "get well" (filled with tissues, tea, honey), "Mother's Day" (kitchen utensils, chocolates) and "teacher" (classroom supplies, apples).

You can also cross-merchandise these pots with some mini picks (butterflies, pinwheels, etc.) to boost your average sale. Merchandising products in unexpected ways will allow your shoppers to see that there is more to certain items than meets the eye.

Finally – and most importantly – intriguing displays call attention to product. Unique merchandising draws people in and keeps them there to absorb the whole picture. The longer they look at a display, the more items they will see, which provides great potential for increasing sales.



3 Buy It Like You Believe In It

For a lot of independent retailers, space is limited and making a big statement is easier said than done. But there's a reason people dedicate a large amount of space to certain displays; it sells product.

If a hot item is hidden in a small display in the back corner of your store, it will quickly lose its status as a best-seller.

If you buy in big, it shows that you believe in a certain product or collection, and it will make your customers believe in it too. Take your best-selling line, favorite product or an exciting new item and shine the spotlight on it!

It is so important to give your star products the real estate they deserve. One of the lines we do this with is Gypsy Garden, our collection of miniature garden items. Ironically, it's our tiniest products that take up the most space in our showroom.

The line earned the space it's been given, so we support it with eye-catching displays that cannot be overlooked.

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MERCHANDISING



4 Pick a Theme and Prop Accordingly

Merchandising by theme can help you create a focused, cohesive look that's attractive to shoppers. It's not just about choosing products that have a similar theme — your props should fall in line with that theme as well.

Never underestimate the power of great props to enhance the overall look of a display. Many times the most unexpected (and inexpensive!) items can create the most buzz and grab the most attention.

Once you have a theme in mind, almost any prop can be transformed to complement it.

Check out the extreme makeover we did on some old rubber tires (above) for our Frolic display.

In this case, the product really lent itself to a playful polka-dot theme. This is a brand-new collection for us, so we really wanted to make a splash with the display.

With just sealant, a few coats of paint, some styrofoam and moss, we turned old tires into a bright, colorful, stop-you-in-your-tracks display.

5 Cross-Merchandise Using Color

Merchandising by color can make for some of the most attractive retail displays — and it's so simple to pull together!

Choose an on-trend hue, like indigo, and create a color story with the products you carry in your store.

The beauty of using color as your theme is that you're able to show a wide variety of product categories together. This way, shoppers see the whole picture instead of just looking at a single item, which bumps up your cross-sales big time.

Look at it this way, if you create a display of only pots, a customer will likely make a choice between them and only purchase one item.

But if you use color to tie multiple products together (like shown at right with Art Pots, garden flags, birdhouses, Art Poles, etc.), the customer can easily understand how all of these products can coordinate and is more likely to buy multiple items.



Maura Lodes is a photography and display stylist at Studio M, a manufacturer of artful home and garden products based in St. Louis, Missouri. The company won a Visual Display Award for its showroom at AmericasMart in January. She can be reached at maura.lodes@studio-m.com. LGR