



POINT AND SHOOT YOUR WAY TO PROFIT

By Abby Kleckler

A lot of time, energy and money go into choosing the best products for your store and displaying them in the most desirable way possible. One thing you, however, may be missing is captivating photography of these products.

"If you're trying to bring people into your store, they need to know what you have and what the store actually looks like," says photographer Richard Cadan, whose clients include Sony, Toys "R" Us and Saks Fifth Avenue. "If someone looks at a beautiful picture, it's inviting and it makes them want to come to your establishment."

With everyone having some sort of online presence (website, Facebook, Instagram), it's more crucial now than ever to amp up your images — photos that can be repurposed for signage, marketing materials or contest entries as well.

If your store doesn't want to invest in professional photography, Cadan and nature photographer Iza Korwel have some tips and tricks to point and shoot your way to profit.

Create a Canvas

Professional retail photographs often look put together, but that's not to say the entire store was in tip-top shape.

"The thing that makes a professional's picture and an amateur's picture different is not really the gear, but the things you pay attention to," Korwel says. "An example is if you have a lot of gardening tools next to the flower, everything will pop up on the picture and take your eye away from what you really want to show."

Cadan recommends taking a step back and identifying three key components worth capturing: color, light quality and texture.

"Try to organize things as if it were a painting rather than if you were taking a photograph," he says. "I try to remove myself from my environment. I'm interested in seeing how I can compose something in my viewfinder to make it more interesting."

Both photographers agree a wide variety of shots can showcase what the store has to offer. Cadan makes sure to capture the exterior of the store and then focuses on groupings, or what he calls vignettes, once moving inside.

One tip he has to make these stylings stronger is to quite literally heighten the photos.

"Think about your level of height, depending on what is in front of you," he says. "You might have to get higher on a ladder to show more of the overall."

Steady & Focused

Whether capturing a section of the store or one single product, some parts of the day are better than others to take your camera outside.

"Do not ever photograph midday on a sunny day; the colors are washed out," Korwel says. "Wait for close to sunset, or use cover."

Simply moving the subject into the shade or investing in collapsible screens can provide this cover and lead to sharper photos.

Korwel suggests beginners use natural light. She says photos do not look as good with the flash on the camera, and an off-camera flash

takes practice.

Once you've set up your subject, you want to get the steadiest shot possible by reducing the camera's motion. Purchasing a tripod, even a small tabletop tripod, and then using the self-timer can make a clear difference.

"By using the self-timer, it's almost like what I would use with a release cable," Cadan says. "I'm no longer touching the actual, physical camera, and that allows for a longer exposure to have no shake or movement in it."

Implementing these ideas in your next photo shoot costs very little. Korwel says not to splurge for a DSLR camera if you plan to keep it in auto mode the whole time, and Cadan agrees there are other options.

"I think the point-and-shoots that they're making these days are just fantastic," he says. "You might have some control over your exposure, but at the same time these cameras are kind of dummy-proof at this point."

Whether hiring a professional photographer or tackling the task in-house — with confidence now — investing in strong imagery is key to any retail business.

"If there's an image that says 'Wow' right in front of you," Cadan says, "That's going to make people click online, and that's what brings customers into your brick-and-mortar store." **LGR**

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