

INCREASE YOUR

Setting your sales floor to sell — where does that rank on your list of priorities? Here are nine tips to make it happen.

By Rich Kizer & Georganne Bender

SHELF ESTEEM

Shopping today is all about the experience — shoppers can buy what you sell in any number of places, so you have to be right. And ready. Your sales floor and displays require constant reinvention so shoppers don't get bored and go somewhere else. We bet your sales floor could benefit from a little reinvention in 2014. Let's take a look at areas that typically need attention. Don't worry; they're some easy fixes.

1 Let's start with store windows. Your windows should entice a customer who hadn't intended on stopping to come in and shop. Fill your windows with ideas and inspirations! If you don't have space to set an actual display, then blow up a photograph and hang it in your window. Companies like TruckSkin.com make it easy to create low-cost window cling masterpieces.

2 Just inside your front door is a 5-foot space of "no man's land" called the Decompression Zone. It's no man's land because customers breeze right through it without stopping; never seeing anything that you place there. You may, for example, wonder why your cool new class isn't filling up — there's a big sign right inside the door. That's the problem: people

are not focused on shopping yet, so they don't really see anything until they are at least 5 feet inside your front door — anything you place in the Decompression Zone is essentially invisible.

We've been in plenty of stores that have important product merchandised in the Decompression Zone that just doesn't sell. But once it's moved just a few feet in it suddenly gets noticed. This isn't an opinion; it's a cold, hard retail fact. The next time you're at the mall, check out the front end of your favorite chain stores. Every retailer should respect the Decompression Zone.

Know what else doesn't belong in the Decompression Zone? Baskets. People who shop with a cart or a basket spend 25 percent more than they originally intended to spend, and they spend up to 15 minutes longer in the store. Locate your baskets just past the Decompression

Zone and throughout the store, so they're handy when a shopper decides he or she needs one.

3 Customers who enter your store make a value judgment about it in 10 seconds or less; in that 10 seconds they are determining whether or not it's a good place to be. What does your store "say" in the first 10 seconds? Do customers immediately know what you sell? Is the sales floor interesting? Do your displays invite shoppers to play with the product? Stand inside your front door and take an objective look — like the saying says, you never get a second chance to make a first impression.

Meet Kizer & Bender at the 2014 Independent Retailer Conference in Las Vegas and New York City.



4 Did you know that typically 50 percent of your sales floor is never seen by shoppers? Not if you take control! Once shoppers are on your sales floor, where they go next is up to you. If you are like a lot of retailers, you probably utilize a Free Flow layout because it offers you unlimited opportunities to highlight merchandise and create display vignettes. A Free Flow layout

MERCHANDISING

has no set aisles — shoppers roam the sales floor freely, influenced by your placement of fixtures. Avoid straight lines when you can; instead angle your fixtures so shoppers are unconsciously directed throughout the store. The more they see, the more opportunity they have to buy!

Do yourself a favor and create a schematic of your sales floor, devoid of fixtures; if you have a blue print, better yet. Mount it to a piece of foam board, and overlay it with tissue paper. Now you can merchandise, and re-merchandise, your sales floor on paper before you ever touch a fixture.

5 It's a proven fact that 90 percent of people enter a store and look or turn to the right — this area is prime real estate, or as we like to call it, Lakefront Property. Too many retailers use this area as just another space to house merchandise. Or worse, it's where we find the checkout counter. (Checkouts, by the way, belong on the left side of the store, at the natural end of the shopping experience. If this physically does not work for you, just reverse the flow, making the left side of the store your Lakefront Property. If you need help luring people to the left side, special lighting can do the trick.) Use your Lakefront Property to feature new items; to tell product stories; and to display high-demand, high-profit items.

6 Just beyond the Decompression Zone, front and center on your sales floor, is the area to place your Speed Bump Display. The Speed Bumps job is to slow down shoppers and refocus them on the task at hand. Speed Bumps are also used to set the flavor of what shoppers can expect to see throughout the rest of the store. Use a single small table or cluster a few together for a bigger impact. Add product from different departments to create fun-to-shop, "I have to have that!" displays. Change your Speed Bumps at least once a week, whether they need it or not. Remember, this display is a BIG part of your store's ambiance.



"Vow to keep your sales floor fresh! Get a blank calendar and plan your merchandising moves. Tweak your Lakefront Property, and change your window displays on a monthly basis. Refresh your entire sales floor at least once every quarter, making changes to customer flow as necessary. Change your music and aromas to fit special events or the season."

7 Cross-merchandise everywhere you can. Merchandising complementary products together helps shoppers visualize how the items will work together. Plus, it encourages add-on sales! Cross-merchandise items on Speed Bumps displays, end features and on j-hooks and clip-strips throughout the store.

8 Did you know that the music you play in your store has a job to do? Music does more than just entertain shoppers; it provides a psychological lift that encourages them to buy. Companies like Muzak employ "audio architects" whose job is to create the right mix of tunes to keep us shopping. And it works. In our opinion, disco is the sound of money. Young or old, it makes shoppers smile.

Before you crank up the tunes, you need to check with the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) website. ASCAP holds the "public performance" rights to 97 percent of the music played in the United States.

Playing music in your store without a license can result in big fines. According to the National

Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) website there are "two 'small business exceptions' that allow certain small businesses to play radio or television broadcasts in their establishments without having to pay any additional licensing fees. The exceptions apply to: any establishment with less than 2,000 gross square feet, and any food service or drinking establishment with less than 3,750 square feet, and any business establishment with greater than 2,000 square feet, and any food service or drinking establishment with greater than 3,750 square feet provided that they use fewer than 6 speakers or TVs, no more than 4 of which are in any one room, and with a screen size of less than 55 inches." Visit NFIB.com or ASCAP.com for all the limits and legalities.

9 Take a good whiff on your sales floor. What do you smell? If you said, "nothing" then aromachology — the science of scents — can help you increase sales. Remember that old retail adage: "If it smells, it sells?" Turns out its true: Pleasant-smelling environments have a positive effect on how we shop. The scent of grapefruit energizes shoppers, vanilla is calming, and cinnamon is said to attract money. So put out the potpourri or purchase scent diffusers and place them throughout the store. Visit ScentAir.com for even more scentsational ideas.

Vow to keep your sales floor fresh! Get a blank calendar and plan your merchandising moves. Check your 10-second impression daily. Change your Speed Bump displays at least once a week. Tweak your Lakefront Property, and change your window displays on a monthly basis. Refresh your entire sales floor at least once every quarter, making changes to customer flow as necessary. Change your music and aromas to fit special events or the season. Have fun! And remember, if you're not sure what to do first, give us a call! We're always good for an idea or two. **LGR**



INDIE PRIDE

What: Independent Retailer Conference
Where & When: Las Vegas, March 16-19; NYC, April 14
Website: www.independentretailerconference.com

The Independent Retailer Conference is the nation's only retail conference dedicated entirely to the unique lifestyle and responsibilities of indie store owners with a focus on delivering in-store and e-commerce operational insight and expertise that can help independent merchants further succeed in their retail goals.

The flagship event in New York City at Scholastic Auditorium on April 14, 2014, will be an action packed event that provides retailers and community leaders the chance to engage, learn and connect with retail experts, industry leaders, service providers and like-minded entrepreneurs. Attendees can expect an interactive experience that leaves them better educated and more inspired — with takeaway tools to bring back to their stores and retail communities.

In addition to the flagship event, the Independent Retailer Conference is teaming up with the ASD Show in Las Vegas at the Las Vegas Convention Center, March 16-19, 2014. The ASD Show is the nation's largest consumer merchandise trade show to deliver independent retailers a comprehensive experience of buying for their stores while also gaining practical insight, education and opportunities to help their businesses thrive.

Visit www.independentretailerconference.com to learn more about this educational event at both locations, see the impressive speakers' lineups and to register — use promo code **LGR**.

Rich Kizer and Georganne Bender are professional speakers, authors and consultants whose client list reads like a "Who's Who" in business. **KIZER & BENDER** (www.kizerandbender.com) are well known for their unique and intensive consumer research. You can reach them at 630.513.8020.