

Win over Your Prospect and Make The Sale!

by AnnaLee Waite

One of the main reasons a potential customer enters your store is visual. Merchandising and display should cause visual enticement which leads to sales. Your job as an owner/manager is to create excitement and curiosity which will make your customer take a closer look. Begin with the basics first which means your shop is clean, neat, well lit and smells wonderful. Next, go to work on creating the display magic which customers love and keep returning to your store to see.

Display is a presentation of your business and the products you sell. Keep in mind it is one of the most important factors leading to the success of your retail business.

The history of display goes back hundreds of years and is thought to have originated with fabric draped mannequins. Display is theatrical and includes product, lighting, sound and cast. The product of course is what you sell in your shop and how you present it to the public. Think of your sales staff as your walking cast members who are part of the shop display. Coordinate their outfits (costumes) by color or style (aprons, matching blouses, tee shirts) that tie in with the overall theme of your display.

When considering where to mount your displays, consider creating a store map to get the most from your retail space. Here are a few details which may help you in perfecting your store set up. Customers go right when they walk through your front door. You might want to create a display area showing new product to the right between your front door and your cash station (which should have a view of store entrance). Signage - your silent salesperson - is another way to direct your customers to displays in the shop. Locating notions and sale items at the very back is the best way to get prospects to walk through your entire store.

Most displays are theme based and include a backdrop, a table or small hutch, and some sort of shelves and lighting. These are the backbone pieces of your display which can be changed, rearranged and relocated so you have something new to excite your customers which causes them to return to the store time after time and make purchases. Backdrops might include foam board covered in fabric, a tall screen, a ladder, a simple book shelf or fabric hung from the ceiling. The beauty of these basic pieces is that you can completely change out their appearance by rearranging or recovering with fabric, vinyl or paint. Presenting your product on a variety of levels is visually pleasing and makes customers want to look more closely. The "Selling Zone"

where you will want to display your primary items is located no lower than 40" from the floor and no higher than 65". Use small boxes, cake platters, crates, baskets, wooden spoons, and small shelves to showcase your products or finished models at these heights. A few of the best places to find basic pieces of furniture and props for display are Good Will, antique shops, yard sales, and craigslist.

Keep in mind that your display should include projects for all skill levels. For the beginning stitcher or teen keep it simple, include merchandise for the intermediate stitcher and, of course, the expert needle worker will be looking for an advanced project. Who will put together these display areas in your shop? Is there someone on your staff who is creative? Consider contacting your local high school or college art/theater teacher to ask them for a student referral. Most students are enthusiastic about working in the field they enjoy and many creative art students need examples of their work for their portfolio. Type up a simple work contract with your student intern and spell out the basics - such as rate of pay, working hours, completion date for the display, materials to be used, and specifics covering ownership of the completed display and photography rights.

Double check fire code regulations regarding lighting in your shop. Lamps with shades, spot lights, as well as decorative bulbs, really enhance displays and catch your customers' attention. Indoor timers are very inexpensive and help you control utility costs for display lighting. Check out other businesses that operate around your store and their hours. If you have a movie theater close by or a Starbucks, consider putting your interior store lights on a timer that shuts off after hours. Lighting of this type allows you to have a "Live" store with passerbys or drive-by traffic seeing your store sign (is it worth lighting at night) and store interiors.

Your Basic Display Tool Box should include:

- 4' metal ruler.
- Fabric Cutter.
- Light staple gun - 1/4" staples (keep staples light so you can rework displays)
- Foam Board - 3/16".
- Utility Knife to cut foam board.
- Push pins, tacks, wire hangers, clear nylon fishing wire.
- #2 pencil.
- Tape measure.
- Blue painter's tape (leaves no glue behind)
- Scissors.



Start a display file to keep track of good ideas you have seen that might work well in your shop. Look online at www.vmsd.com (Visual Merchandising and Store Design) for ideas and inspiration.

Try one new display and remember "If you show it well it will sell."

In the next issue of Needlework Retailer . . . Look for details on dynamic sales and customer service techniques.



AnnaLee Waite is a Houston based needlework designer with 15 years experience in property and retail management.

Prior to founding her design studio she specialized in opening retail stores for Linens n' Things and apartment properties for Lincoln Property Company. She is a designated CPM (Certified Property Manager) whose goal is to impart knowledge and offer support to independent shop owners in order to help them increase traffic and sales thus improving profits.

AnnaLee is teaching "Create Some Mojo in your Shop" at the 2015 Nashville Needlework Show. Visit AnnaLee Waite Designs at www.annaleedesigns.com to sign up for her class. Visit AnnaLee Waite Designs in Suite #208 - Nashville 2015!