

Visual Merchandising Part II

Add new life to your displays by knowing how people browse and shop



By presenting color in columns, your customers can view a wider selection at eye level.

Ready for Part II of your Visual Merchandising education? (If you missed Part I, see *Craftrends*, June 2003.) Consider the following about store displays and more.

There are two ways to merchandise product placed on shelves – horizontally and vertically. A vertical presentation is almost always your best bet.

For the sake of demonstration, let's say that you have a 2½-foot section of gondola with four shelves, and you have four different products to display in this space. If you choose a horizontal presentation, placing just one product per shelf, then you severely limit the amount of items a customer is likely to see as she scans a shelf. If she only glances at the second shelf, she will only see that particular product.

Any time you display product vertically, you expose the customer to a greater variety of the assortment at any eye level. And since we are naturally inclined to read from left to right, Vertical Merchandising encourages purchases because customers will see your entire selection of merchandise

wherever they look.

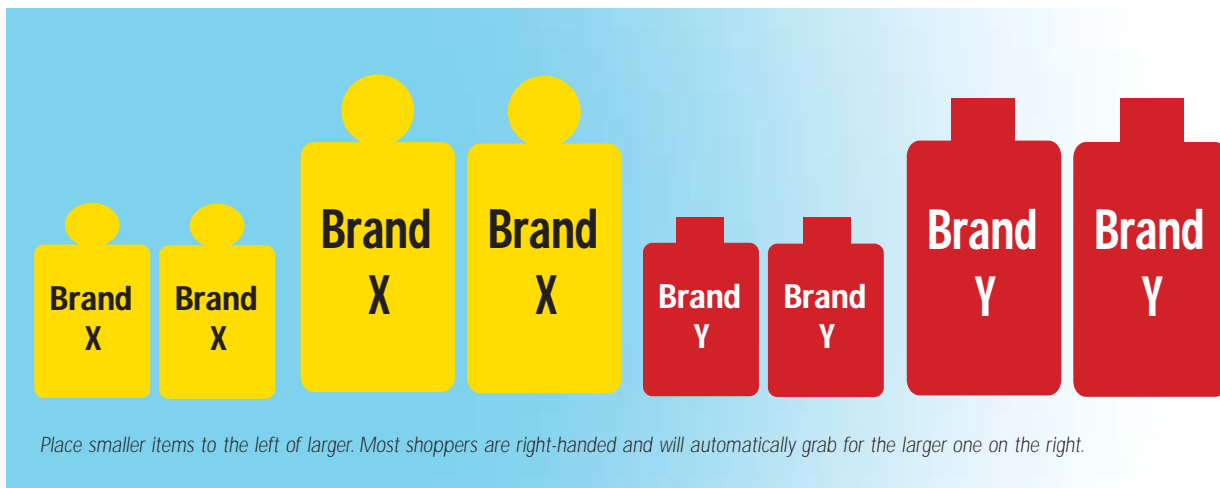
RIBBONING & BLOCKING

A word about color. We are attracted by color, so any time you can make an impact displaying product by color, do so, and sales will increase. When you merchandise colors vertically, customers will be exposed to your full color assortment. Visualize the silk flowers in the floral aisles, or a display of scrapbooks presented face out. Vertical use of color is called Color Ribboning, and it's always a better choice over Color Blocking, the horizontal use of color.

SMALL, LEFT; LARGE, RIGHT

Stores that sell similar items in various sizes obviously profit from selling the largest size because it's likely to be the higher priced item. When displaying similar items in various sizes, always place the small size of the product on the left, and the larger size on the right. This trick works because most customers are right handed, and will

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unconsciously reach for the item closest to their right hands, rather than reaching across their bodies or shopping carts. This trick can be used in many areas of your store including your paint and candle departments.

HOT SPOTS

Every section of every fixture has what's called a "Hot Spot Cross" – the part of the fixture that sells the best. This is a good thing, because customers have a tendency to stop at the center of the category, and the Hot Spot silently points out important merchandise.

To locate the Hot Spot in any fixture, simply draw an imaginary cross through the center of a fixture. Incidentally, fixtures such as gondolas with many sections, will have a Hot Spot in each one of the sections.

Remember this: "Hot Spot and one to the right." Since most customers will reach for product with their right hand, the position just to the right of the center of the cross is an equally hot display area. Use this space to display new items, and to energize classic

product that might be suffering from sagging sales.

SHELF HEIGHTS

Is the shelving on all of your gondolas set at the same height? If so, then you are likely putting customers to sleep! Vary the shelf heights on longer gondola runs to highlight product and get the customer's attention. In addition to exposing customers to more of your product assortment, a variety of heights will help you better manage your display space.

THE VISUAL CURVE

Visual Curve Merchandising involves the use of slanted shelves to increase the customer's strike zone – the amount of product the customer sees in just one glance.

Look at the different areas of your store. Do you have interesting product laying flat on straight shelves? That's too bad, because most customers will miss it as they peruse the aisles.

Call your favorite fixture company and invest in inexpensive plastic "fencing" that will hold the product in

place and allow you to slant your shelves. You will be amazed at the difference it will make in presentation and in sales.

CROSS-PROMOTION

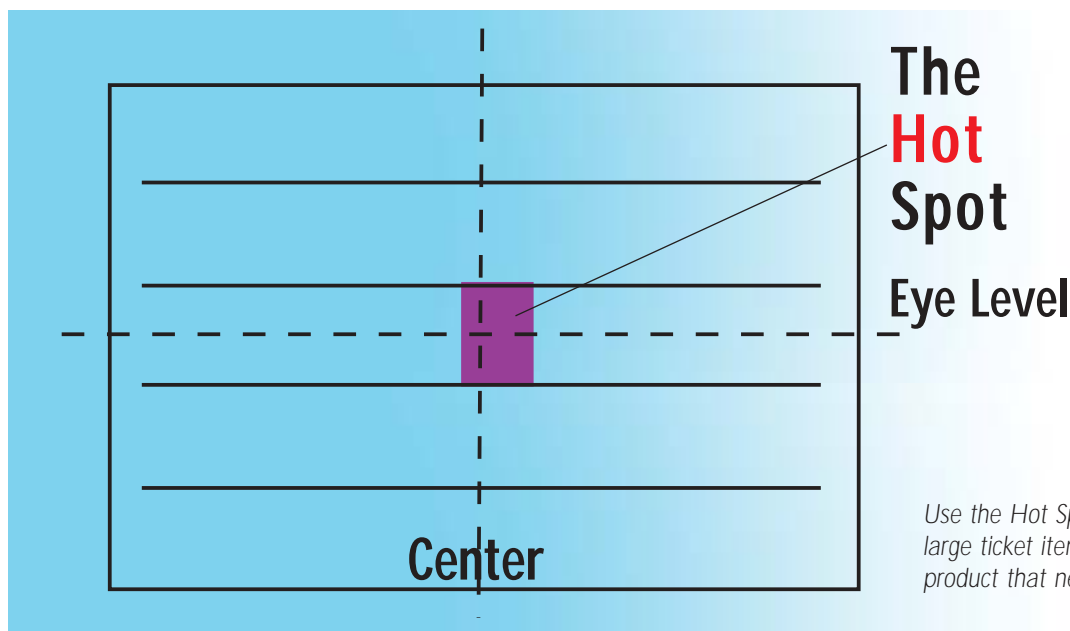
Cross-merchandising is a very underutilized technique that mixes different product categories together: customers see and buy more because they can easily visualize how the items will work together.

When we consult with retailers we like to walk the aisles and point out missed opportunities to cross-merchandise. Drug stores are our particular favorite because they miss them all the time.

If you had a cold, and came in for cough syrup, might you also need disposable spoons, Kleenex, or juice? And when you're feeling lousy, you don't want to have to walk the whole store!

Walk your own aisles and look for opportunities to cross-merchandise. You'll sell more, and time-starved customers won't have to make annoying trips back to the store for items they

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need to complete their latest project.

MAKE IT HAPPEN

There are so many ways to improve your store through Visual Merchandising. The problem is that we all tend to get what we call Retailer Tunnel Vision. We get so involved in the day-to-day business of running the store that we tend to miss the things customers see every day.

Before you begin your next in-store change – whether a complex retrofit or the smallest counter set – take the blinders off and look at your store through your customers' eyes.

During regular business hours,

dress as customers dress. If it's cold outside, put on a heavy winter coat.

Leave the store and drive around the block.

- How does your store look from the parking lot?
- What happens in your first 10 seconds inside the front door?
- Once inside, mimic a typical customer: if they shop with kids, push a stroller through the store; reach for product on high shelves; stand in the checkout line and buy something.

In other words, shop your store in the same way customers shop your store. We guarantee you will become frustrated in some areas and you will find many areas that can be improved.

Your Visual Merchandising can't be left to just any sales associate, you have to know what you're doing to do it well. It's your job to make sure that the people you trust to set your displays know what they're doing. That will involve trial and error, training, and follow-up.

One more thing! If you want to make changes in your store but aren't sure what to do first, e-mail us (info@kizerandbender.com) photos of your Visual Merchandising challenges, and we'll e-mail back ideas to help get you started.

We know that once you put on a Visual Merchandising hat, you'll never take it off! ♦

Rich and Georganne will teach a class on visual merchandising (Creating Store Layouts that Sell, Sell, Sell!) at the MemoryTrends Trade Show in September. They also will present a full-day customer service seminar and two other 90-minute sessions – Selling Smarter, Selling More and 20 Power Ideas to Keep your Customers Close. If you register for the MemoryTrends Trade Show by July 31, you'll be eligible to win an in-store consultation with Rich & Georganne. You'll also be entered in a drawing to win a free trip to the show! For more information, visit www.memorytrends.com.