

How To Make Your Store Design Pop

By Natalie Hammer Noblitt

Great design can do wonders for the health of a store, says award-winning designer, author and speaker Lyn Falk of Milwaukee's Retailworks Inc. But design must be paired with a great mission, clear focus and goals to get spectacular results. Falk shares her take on today's retail design trends and easy fixes that can help take store design to the next level.

Q. What trends in store design are helping retailers increase sales?

A. The first and most obvious trend is interactive retailing — it is a trend that's here to stay. Retailers are bringing in iPads, kiosks or signage with QR codes that link to apps on

smartphones. When customers are in the space, it allows them to also interact with the store online.

Another term for it is “omni retailing,” which means full-circle retailing, where you make shoppers aware of what's available online after hours. The online aspects of your store can then be integrated into your physical store's design.

Another trend is creating a really strong sign system, where, for instance, all department signs are the same size, font and color, and all sale or promotional signs follow another uniform design. By doing this, you train customers' eyes to recognize what a sign means

Without a system, signs often get created on a whim

(continued on page 5)

Is A
Remodel In
Your Future?
page 5

Want To Remodel? Consider These Questions

For design and displays to be most effective, retail expert Lyn Falk says everything else about your store needs to be in good working order. Before she begins working with clients to remodel their space, she determines whether they are in



Lyn Falk the right location, if they are stocking the right merchandise at the right price points, and if they are providing superb customer service.

“Design does not work in a vacuum,” she says. “It can be a catalyst for positive change and have great impact, but it won’t fix everything if there are other problems in your store.”

Before you look to a remodel to increase revenue, she advises investigating all the reasons sales could be lacking. When you decide it’s time to change your design, Falk shares these questions for you to answer to help make the process a success.

~ **Step back and look at the bigger picture, remembering your store’s history.** Is your mission statement still current? Is your brand still strong? Will it continue to work for you in the future?

~ **What do you want to achieve with a renovation?** What goals will this new design accomplish? Do you want to bring in new shoppers or stimulate existing customers, or both? If you’re looking to attract new

customers, what are their expectations? What will appeal to them?

~ **How will your social media and online presence impact your new design?** How can you integrate technology or keep your store’s personality consistent both online and in your space?

~ **What do your employees and managers (who spend time on the sales floor) need?** What do they think is working and what isn’t? Have you received input from staff before making changes?

~ **Can you incorporate sustainable design?** Lighting is an area where you may see the most benefit. Energy savings from new fixtures and bulbs can help the bottom line.

~ **How do you want to use your space beyond being a traditional area for sales?** Do you plan to host events during the year? How can you make your design flexible enough to accommodate space for hosting a large group or other specific needs?

~ **Some people have good taste and were born with a knack for design, and others can learn great design.** But sometimes there are people who just don’t get it. If you’ve had trouble creating the right design for your store in the past, is it time to ask for help from a professional?

Note: Award-winning designer Lyn Falk has 30 years of experience working with retailers in design, merchandising and display. To find out more about Retailworks Inc., visit retailworksinc.com. You can reach Falk at lfalk@retailworksinc.com.

Fourth Quarter Kicks Off With Optimism

(continued from page 1) events lined up, and our staff is excited and motivated!”

American Express Small Business Saturday is one of the events on retailers’ calendars (Nov. 29, the Saturday after Thanksgiving). Those who participated last year give the campaign high marks, although the consumer still needs to be reminded about it.

“I would highly recommend promoting it, to the retailers who haven’t,” says a South Carolina shop owner. “Last year my Small Business Saturday was bigger than my Black Friday. But I talk about shopping local and small throughout the year because I think it’s so important.”

Others agree that touting small-business support should be an ongoing effort. “We are constantly promoting ‘shop local’ on our Facebook page by giving shout-outs to other small businesses and creating conversation about it year-round. You need to always do it, not just once a year,” says a New York retailer.

Here’s what some shop owners have planned for Nov. 29:

• **Free Gifts.** Customers loved free gifts last year, which is why a Virginia retailer will offer a giveaway this year. “It’s really forced people in on Saturday!” she reports.

• **Specials.** A California shop owner will tout up to 12 “specials” running that day only.

• **Local Emphasis.** Rather than local products displayed throughout the store, a second California retailer will promote all local products in one large display.

Q&A: How To Make Your Store Design Pop

(continued from page 1) and placed without a strong visual plan, creating sign pollution. It becomes visually chaotic and customers stop reading the signs after a time.

Q. Does bringing in technology make sense financially for smaller retailers?

A. Technology doesn’t always have to be expensive. There are cost-effective ways to monitor consumer behaviors in your store. Scanalytics has floor pads that you can place in front of displays or use at the checkout counter to provide data about how long shoppers are spending looking at items or waiting in line.

Other exciting technology is dressing rooms that let you virtually try something on. They are not commonplace yet but are becoming more affordable. Using them could set you apart from your competition.

Q. Who are some of your favorite retailers and what are they doing right with their design?

A. Anthropologie is hands-down my favorite. I go there just to get inspired. They are so creative with their fixtures, props and themed displays. They bring in textures, fabrics, wood and metal, combining them in ways that work so well. It also appeals to both genders. I brought in a home and garden center client, and the six men on our tour had never been in Anthropologie. They were amazed.

Dry Goods is also a fashion retailer with a

look that’s early American chic and has some similarities to Anthropologie. They are always doing unique vignettes, using a variety of materials and thinking outside the box.

Q. What are some of the biggest design mistakes you see in retail operations?

A. I do a lot of work for the National Main Street Center. I provide presentations to retailers, and then spend a few days in the community conducting one-on-one store audits. A lot of the mistakes I see are simple to fix, like lack of color, poor signage or not enough lighting. Other things I see are uninspiring displays, poor maintenance of the store or putting too much on the floor.

Often, if we just clean things up, take some merchandise off the floor, add more lights and refresh the paint, it can make a huge difference. It isn’t always necessary to put in a new fixture system or design a new counter. Sometimes less is more. It’s a fact that when you remove things and reduce visual clutter, people can focus better on the merchandise you display.

Badly written signs and signs taped to windows are other problems I see. Well-printed signs in nice holders make it feel like the business owner takes pride in her signs and how she communicates with shoppers.

If light levels are low and the store is using two-by-four fluorescents, it’s often because the prismatic lenses need to be replaced. When these lenses age, they yellow and start blocking

the light to the sales floor. Adding some track lights, even an 8-foot track with three lights, can help illuminate a wall or focal point display. Dropping fun, decorative pendant lights over the counter can also help.

Q. What are some easy design changes retailers can make without breaking the bank?

A. Using color on the walls! A solid color accent wall can draw people in and speaks volumes about a store’s personality. There’s nothing memorable when everything is white. Paint is relatively cheap and, paired with extra lighting, it can make a big impact.

Focal points are important in every store. The feet follow the eyes, so every 15 feet there should be a focal point. These focal displays will lead shoppers effortlessly throughout the entire store.

When merchandising, you want to avoid visual clutter by having too many items, but you also need critical mass. If you don’t have enough product to fill a shelving unit, then get rid of that fixture and consolidate the product onto another one. Too much and too little product can leave a negative impression.

Q. What advice can you offer a small store about working a dressing room into its layout?

(continued on page 7)

Is poor lighting hurting your sales?

Q&A: How To Make Your Store Design Pop

(continued from page 5)

A. The quickest and most cost-effective way to create a dressing room would be to suspend unique curtain rods from the ceiling. You could place them so curtains can be pulled all the way around, or use two rods coming out from the wall with another one to block off the front where you enter. Rods could also be suspended with fishing wire for a floating effect.

Another idea is using folding screen panels to create a space. Or use rolling racks with curtains, if they are tall enough to give privacy. They would then be portable when you want to repurpose that space.

Q. If you were opening a gift shop, how would you design it for today's consumer?

A. I'd make my store fun, inspiring and ever-changing. I would have my brand be consistent, but elements of it would always change to keep things fresh. For instance, I'd change the color of an accent wall as many as four times a year. I'd want people to come by just to see what's happening.

I'd make sure every display unit is flexible, and that the floor layout can easily be reset. There'd be ways to create space for early-morning coffee events or evening wine parties. My store would smell good, sound good and have a great, memorable look that would make people want to come back.

Note: Award-winning designer Lyn Falk has 30 years of experience working with retailers in the areas of design, merchandising and display. Her clientele represents more than 35 different retail industries across the country. Visit retailworksinc.com. You can reach Falk at lfalk@retailworksinc.com.