



Lyn Falk

Is Your Store “On Trend”?

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What, exactly, does it mean to be “on trend”? It means your store is keeping up with the times, speaking to the styles that are in fashion in the apparel and home-decorating worlds. You’d be surprised how many customers – consciously or subconsciously – are judging your business on how well you keep up with the latest design trends. It’s a reflection on your ability to understand the consumer market – their tastes and desires. Yes, it’s a little like “keeping up with the Joneses,” but since you’re in the world of comfort and fashion, it’s imperative your store reflects some of the latest in the fashion/decor industries.

Here’s a similar analogy – we worked with a retailer who sold carpets, but his customers wanted to know that he knew everything about the latest trends in home décor, so even though the majority of his customers might end up buying a traditional beige carpet, they felt better about their purchase because they bought it from a knowledgeable retailer. So we created a trend wall, featuring four current home design trends. Each panel on the wall featured a wallcovering, paint color, decorative accessory, and piece of carpet. In front of each panel was a chair that matched that décor style. The customers loved the added visual feature, and they felt educated about

the trends, thus feeling “in the know” with what is currently in fashion: a win-win situation!

Most of you probably attend at least one shoe show a year, getting to see how shoes’ styles are changing/trending. But what about the 3-D environment?

My team is fortunate enough to attend multiple industry trade shows each year, i.e., High Point Market (largest furnishings industry trade show in the world) in North Carolina, Neocon (world’s leading commercial design show) in Chicago, the International Gift & Home Furnishings Market in Atlanta, the New York Now Show (featuring Home, Lifestyle, Handmade) in New York City, Visual Merchandising show in New York City, Hospitality Design show in Las Vegas, International Housewares Show in Chicago, and GlobalShop (the retail

industry’s largest design and merchandising trade show) in Chicago.

From these shows, we can see what’s trending for the next season in all things related to fashion, interiors, display and decor. (It may be worth sending one of your employees to one of these shows once a year, to see how your store interior could be updated to stay current with the changing styles. Some of the design elements he or she will see are: colors of the year, patterns/shapes, styles/decor, wall finishes, floors, ceilings, lighting, furniture [tables, chairs, benches, ottomans], and fixtures [wall, free standing], countertops, cabinetry, lighting [LEDs, ambient, accent], and signage [illuminated, digital, tactile]). They’ll also see merchandising props, mannequins, forms, risers, and all things needed to sell a product.



Natural textures like macramé and wicker are back in style.

Maximalism's "more is more" contrasts with Minimalist style, in which "less is more." This trend should be used with care!

Here is a compilation of what is trending this year:

> Maximalism, where "more is more" as opposed to the minimalist style of "less is more." The aesthetic is built around "excess and redundancy." It's a layering of colors, patterns and textures. Maximalism is for those who want to express their personalities and brand in a bold and confident manner. They seek



Draped fabric and a floor lamp create a nice backdrop to a fancy retro seating unit. A hexagon ottoman serves as contrast to the circular chair.



interiors that are colorful, adventurous and expressive. Of course, we have to use this idea sparingly in a retail environment, so as not to overwhelm the customer. This trend can be successfully incorporated into a higher-end women's boutique department, or a kid's department, via wall covering and seating upholstery.

> In furniture, "channel tufting" and mixed materials are making a statement in seat backs. Mid-Century modern along with up-cycled/vintage pieces continue to be popular styles. Curved benches and round ottomans are abundant. If your store is large enough, mix up the types of seating you offer your customers; for instance, place a long curved bench in the kids department, some swanky ottomans in the women's boutique section, and some sporty chairs in the outdoor department.

> In fabrics, velvets, faux fur and textured fabrics like bouclé are coming back in style. Bring some textural fun into a high-fashion accessory department. If you have good chairs, re-upholstering is a great way to keep on-trend.

Colors in vogue are blush, pink, tone-on-tone neutrals, emerald green, moss green, and indigo blue.

Metallics – for those of you who

lived through the brass/gold finishes and green plant era of the 1970s, it's back! Move over, brushed aluminum, and hello, gold (matte and polished)! Polished chrome (think '60s – and fingerprints – oy) is also coming back around.

Curves and arches are making architectural statements. And since we (humans) are attracted to curves, and they help people move through a space more effortlessly, this is a good thing for retail. Free-flowing forms are seen in furniture, light fixtures, mirrors and accessories.

Natural materials like leather, raffia, macramé, and rattan continue to take front stage, especially when combined with metals, particularly in fixtures and furniture. Both "living" and fake succulent greens continue to reign.

Colorful resilient (vinyl) floors in fun patterns (e.g., herringbone) continue to be popular. Carpet tiles in varying sizes of rectangular planks and gradated patterns bring all sorts of design options to a store with multiple departments. Area

continued on page 16

On Trend
continued from page 15

rugs (custom designed) bring a softness and acoustic absorbing value to stores with hard floors. (Make sure they are under half an inch high and securely fastened to the floor, so as not to create a trip hazard.) Ceramic and porcelain tiles can be cut and printed to look like wood planks or decorated to look like ancient Greek tiles. Heavy-duty extra large vinyl tiles are made to lay flat without moving, so no adhesive is needed. And finally, resilient floors like vinyl are being made thick enough that a transition strip is not needed between it and an adjacent carpet floor.

LED lights are ubiquitous at this point. They come in every type of light fixture imaginable. And they are able to be dimmed so one can create different moods for different events, e.g., evening wine and cheese trunk showing. And the variety of styles that pendant lights, chandeliers and table lamps are available in is pretty much whatever the imagination can conjure up. Although the naked Edison bulbs and round frosted balls still find their way into many of the styles. LEDs are also available in many color outputs, but 3500K remains one of the best for a retail environment. And be sure to get a fixture that uses bulbs that have a color rendering index of 85 or higher.



Toned-down colors and neutrals with natural fibers create a soft, organic feel.

As far as decorative merchandising & display elements go:

Holiday trees filled with large everyday objects are turning heads.

Anything made of or wrapped with yarn or soft fibers is "hot."

Risers and sign holders are being made out of many types of materials to match a store's brand. So think outside the "acrylic box."

Mannequins in yoga and running positions are available in a variety of

colors. Updated dressmaker forms are being used to hold multiple styles of necklaces or scarves.

And having discussed all of these "hot trends," I now have to say how important it is to maintain your brand identity throughout an interior upgrade/renovation. Being on trend doesn't have to drive the entire process. It can be just a noticeable touch here and there – i.e., a strip of wall covering, new upholstery, perimeter fixture style, and/or decorative lighting.

It's important to simply show the customer that you know what's going on in the world of fashion and décor . . . in whatever way you feel it fits into your overall brand/look. And when you do it right, your customer will sense the added intangible value brought to the products you're selling. It's an amazing phenomenon! ■

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Humans are drawn to curves, and these furniture pieces are certainly attractive in this minimalistic setting.