

LYN M. FALK ON STORE DESIGN

REFRESH? OR RENOVATE?

Consider these factors when deciding how much to invest in a new look for your pet store.

When is the right time to refresh your store's look? Or to undertake a larger renovation? That depends on several factors: its style/theme; product lines, price points and number of turns in a year; location and competition; target market; length of lease if applicable; and of course, revenue.

If you do rent space, first consider your lease. Will you get a return on your investment in any refresh or renovation before it ends? For example, if you own a boutique selling trendy merchandise out of 1,000 square feet and opened five years ago and have another five left on your lease with an option for five more, and sales are good, then start with a "refresh." Hold off on the costlier renovation until year 10. That will still give you another five years to recoup that higher cost.

If you own a larger pet store with more of a warehouse format and a lot of competitively priced inventory in a building you own outright, and have been around for 15 years or more, then refreshing every eight years or so is fine, with a renovation every 15 to 20 years. In this type of store, customers aren't drawn to shop-

ping for aesthetic and experience as much as they are to shopping for price.

Whether you refresh or renovate, spend only as much as you can afford without putting the business in jeopardy. The cost and extent should be directly related to current sales volume and margin, projected sales, and expectations of your target market. As soon as you finish one refresh or renovation, start saving for the next. Ideally, the cost should be paid for well before with an increase in sales.

So what does a refresh involve? Generally, items tackled in-house, or without a general contractor. New paint, new layout, a new "face" for the front of your checkout counter, and new signage. It may also include bringing in some new fixtures and implementing new merchandising strategies. It might be de-cluttering the service counter and re-organizing departments. It will definitely include a deep clean and repairing any damage. These changes can bring a renewed look to your space, and the process can take one weekend or one month, generally without having to close the store during regular business hours.

A renovation will often require trades-



TIPS FOR REFRESHING

FRESH COAT: Don't be fooled by those who say you should "paint your walls white because you have such colorful merchandise." Color speaks volumes! It brings warmth and personality to a space. Consider one accent color as a key focal point to engage the eye and draw in customers. And neutral doesn't always mean white. It can be beige, taupe or light grey. The right colors are key – they need to match your brand palette, support your product lines and appeal to your target market.

MAKE SOME MOVES: Reposition a few fixtures to see if customers find products they didn't before. Swap the location of two departments to see if sales go up in one or both. Change out a few old fixtures and rehab others with life left in them. Bring in new



fixtures for fronts of departments to capture attention. Of course, make sure they complement others in the department. They shouldn't visually distract.

OPT FOR A FACELIFT: Relocating a checkout counter can be problematic due to power/phone/data lines. However, updating its face can be an inexpensive "pop" that enhances the entire area. Paint the front, or reface it with a material that works with your aesthetic such as corrugated metal for industrial. You also can adhere fabric or wall coverings. Even a textured vinyl floor covering can look cool. As long as the material is durable and reflects your brand.

people, such as for new lighting, moving walls, new flooring and new built-in fixtures. An architect may need to review a store designer's drawings in a significant expansion and/or if paths of egress will change. Plan on a minimum of three months (or longer these days!) for city permitting.



LYN M. FALK is owner/president of Retailworks, Inc., an award-winning design, branding and display firm. She is an international speaker, registered interior designer and consumer behavior specialist. You can reach her at lfalk@retailworksinc.com.



true tales

'NO PEE ZONE' VIOLATION

A little boy was mad at his dad for whatever reason and urinated in the nest boxes we had displayed for sale on the bottom shelf of the bird supplies rack. **Liz Harris, Creatures Feat- ured, Madison, FL**



pet peeves

ANONYMOUS VENTINGS FROM PET BUSINESS OWNERS AND MANAGERS

BAD MATH

Employee: I require full-time hours! Also employee: I need the following 47 days off this year!