



# GET NOTICED! Post Signs That Sell

by LYN M.  
FALK

## ASK YOURSELF

- » How many signs are currently on my selling floor?
- » How many are on my storefront window and door?

Design and placement guidelines promote maximum impact.

Sign pollution is alive and well in retail environments. Symptoms include:

- » Too many signs in the space
- » Poor designs in a profusion of colors, shapes and sizes
- » Unattractive handwritten signs
- » Signs with an overabundance of words
- » Signs not located in key focal point areas
- » Excessive vendor signs
- » Faded, outdated signs

Customers' brains will simply bypass reading the signs because it takes too much time and energy to make sense of them.

Several times a year, retailers should conduct a sign audit. This means checking each sign to see if it's still necessary and relevant. Also make sure every sign meets the design guidelines for its type. Design guidelines coordinate elements so all staff members are on the same page when creating and posting a sign. The result should be signs customers will actually read. The brain will be able to see and quickly absorb the meaning of the sign.



**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP** Front door glass: easy-to-read white vinyl noting logo and hours. Clean sign holders. Laminated sign. Simple black and white layouts used with readable fonts. *Business: Material Matters, Thiensville, WI. Photos by Retailworks, Inc.*

## CREATE DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE SIGNS IN YOUR STORE

### 1. Categorize all your signs.

- » Logo
- » Department
- » Product information
- » Vendor
- » Promotional
- » Sale
- » Directional
- » Services offered
- » Store policies
- » Digital info: website, social media icons, hashtags

### 2. Establish design criteria for each category.

- » Overall size
- » Font type and size
- » Number of words
- » Color(s)
- » Graphic(s)
- » Material: paper, cardstock or sturdier substrate; vinyl on window or wall
- » Frame and/or sign holder

When you consistently use a coordinated set of design elements, you train your customers to look for the “promotion” sign or your “product info” signs.

Placement of signs is also important. For instance, department and directional signs should be easily visible from the store entrance, and your logo and service/policy signs should be on the wall behind the transaction counter or hanging above it.

If you offer services such as special orders, custom work, shipping, longarm rentals and classes, have this information on a large sign on or around your checkout counter. This is critical for new customers, but regular customers also need reminders of all you offer.

Don’t be shy about placing your logo in several places throughout your store to reinforce your brand. Also, be sure all permanent signs are well-illuminated.

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**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Examine signage wherever you go, thinking about what makes it work, to gather ideas you can adapt for your business. It's important to have your store name above or behind your transaction counter, so Fred's Beds and More, Mayville, Wisconsin, prominently highlights signature colors behind the counter in a large logo sign displayed as art. Katzenbarkers in Wausau, Wisconsin, uses purple vinyl letters on an exit door to thank customers as they depart, ending visits on a positive note. Herzing University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, incorporates their logo as a wall mural, making it a prominent part of their décor. Seed to Table in Naples, Florida, is a grocery store that includes restaurants, bars, and nightly live entertainment. Within the larger store, Hops & Vines is a play-on-words department sign for the store's beer and wine section. Sustainable Seafood uses crisp, fresh colors, décor, and sign lighting to attract shoppers while highlighting one of the store's core values, sustainability. *Photos by Retailworks, Inc.*

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## Design Tips

- » **Less is more.** Incorporate symbols, photos and graphic images to communicate messages through fewer words.
- » **Don't handwrite your signs.** Unless you are changing prices daily as a deli or café, and have someone who has exceptional handwriting, these are a no-no. They decrease the value of your brand.
- » **Proofread.** Always check signs before you post to eliminate spelling and grammatical errors.
- » **Don't tape signs to anything.** This cheapens the image of your store. Instead, use frames or acrylic sign holders for a more professional look.

Designate one person to be sign director to oversee the creation and installation and removal of signs. No sign goes up without the director's approval. No vendor can install a sign without permission from the director. Just as communities and shopping centers have criteria for exterior signs, your staff and vendors need to abide by your sign rules.

Even after creating these guidelines and designating a director, you still need several sign audits throughout the year. Signs get left up beyond their time line, vendors put up additional signs, or the store runs out of standard sign holders and someone improvises. The consistent use of design elements is key to keeping your sign system looking good, and consistency in implementation is key to keeping the program running smoothly.

Think before you just slap up a sign. Ask yourself: Is it necessary, is it well-designed, does it match our brand/sign guidelines, and will it be seen by customers when they need to see it? Training your customers to find, read and understand your signage via the consistent use of design elements is a powerful sales tool.



Lyn M. Falk is the owner and president of Retailworks Inc., a registered interior designer and a retail consultant.