



Lyn Falk

Display Props That Pop

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There are many different types of displays to put in a store and store window. And many of these displays need a good visual prop/pop to really grab attention. Which displays warrant a prop, where do you find them, and how best to use them?



First let's explain what a prop is...or what it isn't. It isn't a shoe display riser, a countertop fixture for scarves, or a basket for shoe polish. These are merchandisers.

A prop is the item you purchased or found that:

- > Attracts attention from a distance.
- > Elevates and/or adds dimension to the display.
- > Reflects/supports the store's brand.
- > Makes the customer feel good.
- > Makes the product look better.
- > Helps sell the product.

But there's a fine line between bringing the RIGHT props into your store, and just getting props. I've seen far too many cheap and cheesy-looking artificial flowers in mis-proportioned vases, or décor from the Walgreen's seasonal aisle, next to \$200-

Stan's Fit For Your Feet in Glendale, Wisconsin, uses a variety of props in its shoe displays – 3-D words, filled mason jars and colorful blocks.

plus shoes. Décor can cheapen a store's interior and brand, just as it can elevate it.

I repeat: Décor can cheapen a store's interior and brand just as it can elevate it.

You no doubt took time to select and specify the right design elements for your store's interior, ie: flooring, wall colors, fixtures, furnishings, signage, and lighting, so why stop there and not address your "prop décor"? This isn't rocket science. It's finding someone who has a good eye/aesthetic and putting them in charge of your displays and prop procurement. Here are some rules to follow:

1. Look at your brand, product lines and price points. Do the props properly reflect all of these? Consider your target market and their expectations of your brand. You want them to have your shoes in their closet. You might as well want them to have the props in their homes too!
2. Consider props part of your advertising and marketing budget. This will force you to think differently about their purpose, where you buy them, and how you use them.

3. If you have storefront windows that can house a nice display, bring in quality backdrops such as a luxurious piece of fabric, a mid-century folding



Window decor at Stan's Fit For Your Feet in Brookfield, Wisconsin, features a duck decoy, and a faux tree, backed by a fabric backdrop.





Becker Shoes in Midland, Ontario, displays shoe care products in threes, with foam-core floral uprights.

screen, or a piece of foam core covered with a fun patterned wall covering. Fun mannequins (so many modern versions to choose from these days), interesting chairs, tables, floor lamps, can create an attention-getting scene and vignette for your latest and greatest shoe lines. The larger props can have many lives by reusing and repurposing over the years. But don't hang on to them TOO long. Once you train your customers to look for your new window displays, they'll quickly get bored if they don't see "fresh" each season.

4. Once inside the store, it's imperative to set up focal point displays throughout the store to get customers to move effortlessly from Point A to Point B. Remember, the feet follow the eyes. Figure out where you need to position these displays to get people looking and walking. These focal point displays should be changed often (every few weeks with heavy traffic), and contain the following elements:

- A featured shoe line.
- Coordinating products, ie: scarf, purse, hat, socks, shirt.
- New merchandisers, ie: nice head form for hat, neck form for scarf, half bust for shirt (no Styrofoam forms, and no old, chipped fiberglass forms).
- A simple printed sign in a nice sign holder (using a brand font).
- Fun, unique seasonal prop(s).

5. Audit your props. Go through your store room or warehouse and pull out all your props and inventory them. Keep what still looks fresh and in good shape. Keep things you can upcycle. Donate everything else or sell on Facebook Marketplace.

6. What kind of props should you be considering?

- Table runners, lots of them; step it up a notch from homemade sewn cotton runners or purchased placemats, and find unique, heavier fabrics that lay flat and come in a variety of coordinated colors and patterns (think carpet squares).
- Stacks of hard covered books.
- Smaller umbrellas.
- If you must use florals, they must be plentiful, silk/fabric and NOT plastic, and placed in impactful vases, or a grouping of coordinating small ones.
- Think in terms of LARGE, odd numbers, or multiples of one item as these are tricks of the merchandising trade.
- Fun shaped blocks that are colorfully painted or covered with vinyl or wall covering are great for any occasion.
- Large 3-D letters spelling out a word.
- Unique vessels (solid or clear) of different sizes filled with unique things like golf balls, dice, fake ice cubes, confetti, sea shells, skeleton keys, etc.
- A big (quality-made) toy dump truck (think work boots).
- Several of your branded paper bags standing up and filled with tissue (think gifts).
- Pickleball racquets (paint them and stand three up in a row).
- Bright home décor pillows in the latest trend colors (think women's fashion).

The list is endless.

Start taking notes when you're out shopping the buying shows or visiting other stores. Look on Pinterest. Ask your artsy friends. You'll be amazed how fast your list of cool, interesting props will grow.

Finally, where do you store all these props? If you're tight on storage space, then see if neighboring stores (or the local Chamber) have some extra space you can use. Maybe you can find another store that would have props you two could share?

Don't think of props as a necessary evil that just cause headaches and take up storage space. Think of them as adding branded beauty to your space, attracting attention, and getting customers to smile and get involved in a display. In the long run, the props will more than pay for themselves. They'll help elevate your entire store's look and the customer's shopping experience.

So don't underestimate the power of well-procured props that pop! ■

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