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Lyn Falk

Are Your Windows Working for You?

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If someone stopped you and offered you free advertising, with a guarantee that it would get positive results, would you accept the offer or walk on by? If your answer is a skeptical “Keep on walking,” you may not be seeing your windows the same way your customers see them.

Your store windows are potential “wow” spots – assets that can stop traffic, attract new customers, make the local news, reflect community events and otherwise help build your brand and business.

Adopt a Theme

Windows are one of your most cost-effective forms of advertising. Creating a well-designed window display will get results – and it doesn’t have to be expensive. The secret? Have a theme and keep your displays simple. The theme may be seasonal, or revolve around a specific product line, vendor, shape, or color (all shades of blue, for instance). It doesn’t matter **what** the theme is, only that you have one that works for your store and business.

Once you’ve decided on a theme, don’t overcomplicate things. You have a short window (pun intended!) of opportunity to attract people’s attention. You need to get your message across quickly and effectively.

Focal Points Grab Attention

Use a focal point – either a prop or a product – to grab attention. Vertical

Informative window decals prominently display the store name, hours and services on this Platteville, Wisconsin Main Street shop. (All photos courtesy of Retailworks, Inc.)

and/or oversized focal points often work best because they attract attention from a distance, and potential customers will be drawn closer to get a better look.

It could also be one product repeated to fill the entire window, such as 50 tennis shoes, each one hanging from a line of twine. Think: attention-getting!

Composition: Layout Is Important

Consider the layout of the items you present in your window. After a person’s eye hits the focal point, where does it travel next? The eye and the mind work together quickly to make sense of it all. What’s the message and how quickly is it conveyed?

Think about eye movement, layout, and the composition of the individual components. Do all the elements relate to one another? What is the ultimate response to the display? Does the display make the viewer think? Does it entice? Aid the imagination? Make the viewer laugh? Would changing one component or color in the layout make the message stronger?

Consider a Backdrop

If your window is open-backed, you will need some kind of backdrop to stop the viewer’s eye from looking past the display and on into the store. You can achieve this by hanging fabric or posters, or using a large vertical item, such as a holiday tree, to create that “divider.”

Create Levels

Ensure that you vary the levels of the items in your display. This helps move the eye throughout the window. Pedestals and risers add height at the base of your display. Conversely, you can use ceiling grids with monofilament (fishing line) to suspend items from above. Be sure to keep all the risers the same style: all acrylic, or all laminate, for example. Risers are meant to support the products, not detract – or distract – from them.

Lighting Is Vital

Once your displays are installed, don’t forget about the lighting. Track lighting on the ceiling, or uplights on the floor are vital components for a window display.

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play. The displays should be illuminated three times brighter than the surrounding area. A brightly illuminated display will not only help counteract window glare during the day, but create a visual “billboard” at night. In addition to spotlights, decorative rope lighting or small trim lighting can be fun around the perimeter of the window. If you are on a busy street that has traffic late into the evening, make sure to keep the window lights on, even if your store closes at 5:00 p.m. Simply put window lights on a timer to go off at the designated late evening hour. Your fantastic window will have people coming back to stop in during store hours.

Window Decals

You can also use your window to tell others what you do. Use light colored vinyl letters to spell out your product lines or services, such as casual comfort, kids, shoe repair. Place the text in a row along the lower part of the window, where it won't interfere with the window display.

Two-dimensional decals are another way to add an inexpensive pop of fun across a large window that doesn't have

a lot of walk-by traffic, but can be seen from the street.

Finally, be sure to post your store's name, hours, and social media information on the glass door or window, or on a professionally printed sign in the window.

No Excuses

Whether you're a small retailer with few employees and without a big budget, or a multi-store retailer with dozens of windows to dress, there is no excuse for **not** turning your windows into a visual “hit” in your neighborhood or mall. Simply put aside a small annual budget for the windows, along with a calendar for planning, installing, and take-down. Then assign a person to do the work, and voila: You **will** get windows created.

If you don't have someone with the creative knack on staff, talk to the head of the art or design department at your local high school or college. You'd be surprised how many students would love to put displays together. They are looking for credits and ways to beef up their resumes – and many will take photos for their portfolios, and to show potential employers.

Plan to change your windows every month. Visual change gets your customers excited about what you will do

next. Create a buzz that gets consumers talking!

Make Planning Easy

Be sure to document your windows. Creating an album of previous windows can help inspire future ideas and remind you of what's been successful in the past.

Photographing windows can be tough, but a few tips will get you great shots. Make sure to take photos on an angle if photographing during the day. If there is too much reflection, take your photos when it is dark out (which will make you sure all your display lights are working).

Now that you have good pictures of your eye-catching displays, post them on your website and on social media. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest are all good places to show off the latest and greatest footwear – and your customers will have fun re-sending your displays to friends. That sends your advertising out to new places, at no cost. ■

Lyn Falk owns Retailworks, Inc., an award-winning nationally known design firm in Mequon, WI. For more information, visit www.retailworksinc.com, email lfalk@retailworksinc.com or call 262-238-1860.



Eye-catching props draw window-shoppers in to Cakes While U Wait, Pawauke, WI.



Large “Life” poster makes a good backdrop for shoe display at Stan's Fit for Your Feet, Brookfield, WI.



Vertical floral arrangement attracts attention and coordinates nicely with fabric backdrop and fall shoe collection, also at Stan's Fit for Your Feet.