

Retail 101: Looking Good

Your store's *outside appeal* is key to attracting customers *inside*.

LOOKS ARE IMPORTANT. From botox to plastic surgery to liposuction, we are a society concerned with how we look. It's no different in retailing.

Visual merchandising is no longer just about making your merchandise look good. Today, visual merchandising dollars are becoming some of the most valuable dollars invested in an individual sales strategy.

This is because one thing will never change: It always has been and always will be about looks. In retail, as much as some of us might not like it, appearances are everything.

Good display—from the front door to the back door—is the result of planning and coordination. Knowing in advance what to promote and when to promote it are key.

This requires global awareness of what's going on in your community, the country and the world. Retailers must then be able to draw on that knowledge so they can visually create displays that will sell merchandise, build an image and attract positive attention.

Customers, traveling in the fast lane more than ever before, want to be entertained, with their every need served right now. In addition, in the high-tech world of picture cell phones and computer screens available to us in our trucks

and cars, customers are more visually educated and sophisticated and coming to judge your merchandise from that point of view.

Many shoppers set out with a specific purchase goal and destination in mind, while others set out just to sightsee. Both not only want to see something

your opportunity to make that all-important first impression.

Visuals immediately appeal to your customers and, on a subconscious level, tell them, "Here's what we think of you and your needs." A visual merchandising strategy must provide information quickly and correctly about merchandise assortments, establish product and service authority, educate and inform, introduce new products, keep loyal customers while attracting new customers, identify and differentiate brand assortments and present special pricing or special merchandise buys.

In addition, visuals can provide much-needed, welcome, neighborly information to your community by promoting fundraising events, local and school events or other community service activities. Historically, it has been and still is signage that does these things.

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Both of these stores display perfect examples of truly good property signage that's easy to see and read from a distance, such as the highway.



different in a familiar way but they want to see something familiar in a different way.

Specific Objectives

The first step in sales is one called physical "attraction." Selling you, your service, your store and your merchandise depends on it. Your entryway is

not confuse. Both interior and exterior signage must compete with other signs for attention.

Interior signage is extremely important, but exterior signage is the first to clue viewers in on exactly who, what and where. Clearly viewed from the street, highway or a great distance, well-designed outdoor property signage al-

Property Signage

Signage is fundamental to visual communication and should inform,