

New Year's Resolutions For Merchandising Success In Your Pro Shop

By Sheryl Bindelglass

With holiday shopping winding down, many retailers may be tempted to relax after the rush is over. We make resolutions in our personal lives, so it makes sense to set some for our business as well. Smart store owners can take the time to start the year off right by getting their “Front Nine and Back Nine Resolutions” in gear for the New Year.

THE FRONT NINE

- **Clear off the counter** – Every shop's counter is a magnet for clutter. Having too many things scattered on top of the counter is a turn-off for buyers and makes your shop look disorganized. Vow to keep clear surfaces for easy sales transactions.
- **Improve shop signage** – It's tempting to dash off a quick sign to mark down merchandise or post shop hours. But hand written signs can give the appearance of an amateur operation. If you must make your own



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signs, type them up on the computer. It is easy to find professional quality fonts that can make all the difference in the appearance of your shop.

- **Maintain appropriate inventory levels** – After the holiday rush, restocking your shelves may be the last thing on your mind. Take the time to review your inventory and make sure the store looks full, not picked over. This is also a good time to look at your buying plan for the coming year.
- **Keep all merchandise priced** – In the rush to stock the store for the holidays, some merchandise may have escaped being priced. Go through your inventory to make sure customers can easily know the prices of all items.
- **Make merchandise price tags uniform** – Ease of shopping is a key factor for today's customers, who are often buying on the run. Make sure that your merchandise prices are easy to locate and are uniform in size, color and location on products.
- **Keep clothing displays neat** – The easiest way to accomplish this daunting task is by having uniform hangers. Believe it or not, just having merchandise hanging in the same direction can make all the difference in the appearance of the store. What's more, this small step can increase sales in a big way.
- **Tuck tags daily** – The difference between a good shop and a great shop is in the details. Keeping merchandise tags tucked into clothing (sleeves, collars, etc.) helps present clothing in the best light and makes it more appealing to buyers.
- **Put products in size order** – Nothing frustrates a customer more than not being able to find his or her size in a pile of merchandise. Have staff go through the store daily to ensure that all items get back in order.
- **Think themes when creating displays** – It seems that these days, there is a holiday or special event for every season. Use those occasions to create displays that feature merchandise in a unique way.

THE BACK NINE

- **Display clothing items in layers** – When you dress a mannequin, don't just include the basics. Add a vest, sweater or jacket over a shirt. Use complementary colors that are visually appealing and give customers ideas for mixing and matching clothing items.



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- **Accessorize your displays** – No display is complete without the right finishing touches. Add a great pair of shoes, belt, golf gloves and a tote bag to top off an outfit. Use merchandise from your store for props to encourage sales.
- **Rotate merchandise more often** – Even when you aren't adding new stock, you can change the look of your store and increase your sales by moving your merchandise around. A new location can make all the difference in selling stock.
- **Redesign a small area of the shop** – Along with rotating merchandise, take the time to make over part of your shop. Changing even the smallest section can make a world of difference in featuring key merchandise.
- **Give your shop a "spit shine"** – Nothing turns a customer off faster than having to blow the dust off of an item before picking it up. Get your staff in the habit of cleaning cases and chasing out the dust bunnies.
- **Revisit the fitting room** – Customers need a clean, well-lit fitting room with adequate mirrors and hooks so that they can try on clothes. Be sure that your fitting room reflects a high quality operation.
- **Increase special services** – Businesses often offer such services as shipping or gift-wrapping during the holiday season. Post season, shop owners may want to consider continuing and even expanding those kinds of services that make customers feel special.
- **Get more familiar with guests** – Repeat customers are priceless to your business. Take the time after the holidays to get to know your customers better. Conduct

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an informal survey, or review your point of sale system to reveal customers' favorite purchases.

- **Invest in your staff** – A well-trained, well-informed staff will improve your bottom line. Use the slower times in your store to have staff meetings. Keep employees up to date on your plans for the future. Listen to staff suggestions and ideas to increase sales.
- **Establish goals** – It is important for the growth of your business to have well-defined goals, both for your staff and for the business itself. Involve staff in setting their own goals and let them help you to craft achievable business goals as well.
- **Have more fun** – We spend most of our waking hours at work. We may as well make the place we work a great place to be. Your leadership can create an atmosphere that customers and staff enjoy coming to, time and time again. □



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