



# VISUAL MERCHANDISING MAIN STREET IOWA TECHNOTES

As you know as a business owner, products and services don't always sell themselves. It takes a lot of effort on your part to make that product or service look enticing. That is where visual merchandising comes into play. Visual Merchandising reinforces your company's image through all products and services. It can determine the success or failure of a retail store.

Visual Merchandising includes everything the customer sees both exterior and interior. It affectly communicates to the customer what your store is all about.

### Exterior Presentation

The exterior of the building should give the customer an idea of what they will find inside. Consider the following: Are the sidewalks clean, safe, and accessible? Are the signs clean and readable? Does the storefront need cleaning, painting or touch up? Are the outside entrances clean and accessible? Are the windows clean, bright and inviting? Are the window displays themed and changed frequently?

Approximately 75% of first time customers remember a store's entrance, which provides the first and last view of the store's interior. A properly designed canopy or porch not only protects the customer in bad weather but can add to the aesthetics of the building.

Landscaping should lead the customer's eye to the focal point using color and texture to provide contrast and harmoy. Landscaping can also screen undesirable sights, such as

trash recepticles, power transformers and refrigeration equipment.

Window displays should be changed often and kept with one theme. They are free 24 hour advertising and a great opportunity to grab a customer off the street. Window displays should attract attention, create interest and invite people into the store to purchase goods. Be careful not to crowd too much merchandise into a window, as customers find it difficult to determine the message and what items are being promoted.



### Principles of Design

Selling space is the most important part of a store. The more square footage you have the bigger the selection and the greater chance having what a customer needs. Promotion and advertising dollars are less effective when efforts are not made within the store to effectively merchandise products.

Good merchandising also assists customers in navigating through the store. Advertising near the mer-

chandise has a large influence on the purchase of an item. Effective displays can be created by suppliers or brand-name manufacturers, while others are developed from scratch.

The main principles of design used in display are balance, emphasis, proportion, rhythm, color, lighting and harmony. These principles apply to all displays--window and interior.

**Balance** involves the equilibrium and weight of element between two sides of a display. **Emphasis** is the point of initial eye contact. From this spot all other eye movements flow. **Proportion** is the ratio of the parts to the whole display. **Rhythm** or flow involves the measurement of organized movement; a self-contained movement from object to object, background to foreground, and/or side to side.

**Harmony** is a coordinating umbrella principle that can cover and incorporate every other principle. Harmony is agreement in feeling and consistency in mood.

An effective way of attracting customers to a store is by having good displays, both exterior and interior. Every display should be planned and have a theme. Good design makes a visual presentation come together. This means the design attracts attention in a way that strengthens the store image, as well as introducing merchandise to the customer. Consider the following: What is the store's image? What type of customer is being attracted? What is the concept of the merchandise to be



presented in the display? Where is the display going to be set up? How will the location determine the design? Why is this merchandise being put on display as opposed to other merchandise? Highlight sale merchandise for small periods of time only.

## Color and Lighting

Color contributes significantly to people's impression of a display, as well as a store's overall appearance. Color in a display can catch the eye and make people look. The color combinations of the ceiling, wall, floor covering, and the overall decor can affect the atmosphere of a store. Changing the color scheme can change people's attitudes and perceptions of a store, and can increase or decrease business.

Warm colors excite, stimulate, and promote cheer. Reds, yellows, and

oranges make up the warm palette. They make a room feel warm and intimate. Blue, green, violet and colors containing blue make up the cool color palette. These help create a relaxing atmosphere. Cool colors are especially pleasing in smaller rooms.

There are no absolute rules for choosing and combining colors. The type of merchandise featured, such as hardware, jewelry, clothing, etc., will have an effect on the type of color schemes that can be used and the extent to which they can be used.

Lighting is essential in calling attention to merchandise in a display. Lighting treatment may be used to draw attention to part of the display area, a specific item in the display, or to coordinate parts of the total display area. Lighting can also be used to direct shoppers through the store.

## Props, Fixtures, and Signage

A prop is something used with a product in a display that clarifies the function of the merchandise being sold or the story being told. A display prop may be something that is not for sale, such as floor coverings, wall treatments, backgrounds, mannequins, shelves and steps. They may also be merchandise that is for sale. When using sellable merchandise as a prop, be sure it is appropriate for the theme of the display and that sufficient quantities exist to meet an increase in demand arising from the display.

Merchandising is not just about making things look nice. Effective merchandising and product displays have a direct impact on sales. Product presentation and location within the store affect sales. Even the location of the cash register within the store impacts the customer experience. Easy to navigate stores are more customer friendly, making it easier for customers to find various items. Effective signage and descriptions help explain the goods to the customer. Understanding some of these concepts and how merchandise display and presentation affects sales will help make your business more profitable.

### EMOTIONAL RESPONSE TO COLOR

Color	Emotional Response
Blue	A cool color (makes room seem cooler). Calms and relaxes excited people. Makes time seem to pass quickly. Tends to stimulate thought processes and encourage conversation.
Green	Easy on the eyes. A cool color. Restful and tranquil. Stimulates conversations. Makes time seem to pass quickly.
Red	Excites and stimulates. Induces aggression. Makes time seem to pass more slowly.
Yellow	A cheerful color. Creates a feeling of warmth and happiness. Draws attention. Boosts Morale.
Orange	Friendly, warm and vibrant. Exhilarating.
Violet and Purple	A cool color. Tends to lend elegance and sophistication. Royal
Brown	Relaxing and warm.
Gray	Depressing. Cool.

#### For More Information:

*Design Consultant, Main Street Iowa  
Iowa Dept of Economic Development  
200 East Grand, Des Moines, IA 50309  
515-242-4762  
515-242-4792*