

Visual merchandising tips for small businesses



Small
Business
Commissioner

Top visual merchandising tips

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Benefits of visual merchandising

Visual merchandising helps business owners present their retail space in the best way possible to entice customers and maximise sales.

From in-store layout and product merchandising, to housekeeping, lighting, music, price tickets, posters and graphics, window display and props, right through to the colour of the walls - all these elements and how they're organised and refreshed are considered visual merchandising.

Large retailers spend big on visual merchandising, but even with a modest budget, small businesses can develop a strategy that gives them measurable results.

The following guide will give you practical tips to help prime your small business space to increase customer foot traffic and sales using limited resources.

NOTE: This guide is not exhaustive or prescriptive as it provides general information only and doesn't replace obtaining independent expert advice.



Tip 1: Shop your shop



External shop front

See your shop through your customers' eyes. Stand outside your store and observe the following:

- Is your store name clear and easy to read?
- What do you sell? As a customer passes can they quickly and easily read your signage?
- Do you display key words outside your store describing the nature of your business?
- Do you look open or closed?



Handy hint:

Use flags, bunting, greenery, A-frames or oversized props to alert customers that you are open for trade.

Be sure to check with your local Council about what's permitted.

- ▲ This small business retailer clearly displays their store name, contact details, along with a colourful and eye catching window display to attract customers.



Tip 2: Work your windows



Window basics

There's only a limited amount of time (about 4 - 6 seconds) to capture a customer's attention via a window display.

- Aim to merchandise a bold and eye-catching display about who you are and what you sell.
- Change your window displays every 2 - 4 weeks to keep it fresh and inviting.
- Check every day for dust and dead flies.



Handy hint:

Conducting visual merchandising activities on a regular basis keeps the product on offer fresh, inviting and in constant rotation.

▲ This watch retailer is working their window space by creating a bold statement with an oversized watch graphic – without this large graphic you could easily miss the (small in nature) product on display.



Tip 3: Colour me happy



Colour and visual merchandising

Use colour to stand out from the crowd and stop customers in their tracks. Create drama and draw attention to your window and in-store displays via large blocks of colour.

Colour fills empty spaces and draws attention to your shopfront - particularly if you have a large window area or empty blank walls.

You can also create eye catching displays by grouping products together via colour type. Often referred to as colour blocking, this technique creates 'wow' factor and provides an easy shopping experience for the customer.



▲ Retailers fill their windows with solid blocks of red colour. Take the colour away and would these window displays be as eye catching?

Tip 4: Tell a story, sell a story



Cross merchandising

Merchandising a collection of products from different categories that complement one another can generate additional sales.

When merchandising a product range in your window or on a key promotional table ask yourself, what 2 - 3 other items do I have in my store that will complement this item? And there is your story!

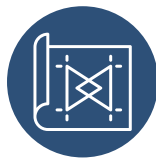


- ▲ This retailer has very cleverly cross merchandised a range of red and white kitchenware items; a customer may be shopping for a red and white plate, and what they also find are other products alongside that complement the plate.



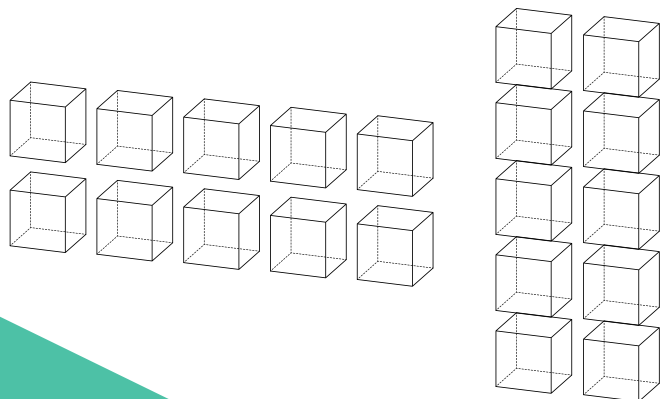


Tip 5: Visual organisation using shapes and patterns



Visual merchandising technique

Be sure to engage a visual merchandising technique when displaying product in windows, tables or on shelves. Commonly used visual merchandising techniques include pyramid shaped displays and/or organising products in a vertical or horizontal format across your store.



▲ Customers respond positively to visually organised displays – it is easier to shop from and ultimately buy from.

Tip 6: Hot zone merchandising



Where is your hot spot?

A store's 'hot zone' consists of a table or fixture located at the front of a store that greets a customer as they enter.

The hot zone is a customer's first impression and first point of physical contact with your merchandise. Display new arrivals, promotional/seasonal items or sale items to catch a customer's attention.

Do not neglect or under-merchandise this area of your store, as it can lead to unnecessary loss of sales - make a positive first impression.



▲ A hardware store brings their hot zone to life with a mannequin and green grass to promote their lawnmower product range.



Tip 7: Promotional merchandising



Work your retail calendar

To keep your retail and goods offer fresh, take advantage of the retail calendar to visual merchandise key events.

There is always an event (whether global or in your local region) that offers an opportunity to promote your merchandise, plus encourage and boost sales. For example, Mother's and Father's Day, Valentine's Day, Christmas, Easter, Winter sales, seasonal launches, and going back to school..

Create your own retail calendar and select events relevant to your business, and merchandise your product ranges accordingly.



▲ A retailer promotes the seasonal change via their window display.



Tip 8: Signs and tickets



Activate your customer

Ensure products and key display points are sufficiently ticketed or labelled to provide customers all the information they need to make a purchasing decision

Remember clear and easy to read signs and price tickets are a great way to assist customers with their purchasing decisions.

Keep it simple and don't clutter your store with too many tags, tickets and messages - it can turn a customer off.

◀ This is an example of what not to do. There is too much going on in this window. The tickets and signs are difficult to read and organised in a haphazard manner.

Tip 9: Housekeeping



Senses merchandising

Take a good look around your store and observe what has gathered over time that is not for sale yet is within customer view. If you see any clutter, remove from sight.

Create a regular housekeeping routine:

- vacuum floors
- dust shelves
- wash glass windows
(this can transform a retail space)

Remember: your housekeeping practices directly affect how customers perceive your store and the products you stock - ensure it's a positive experience.



▶ How much are these bugs and what other colours do they come in?

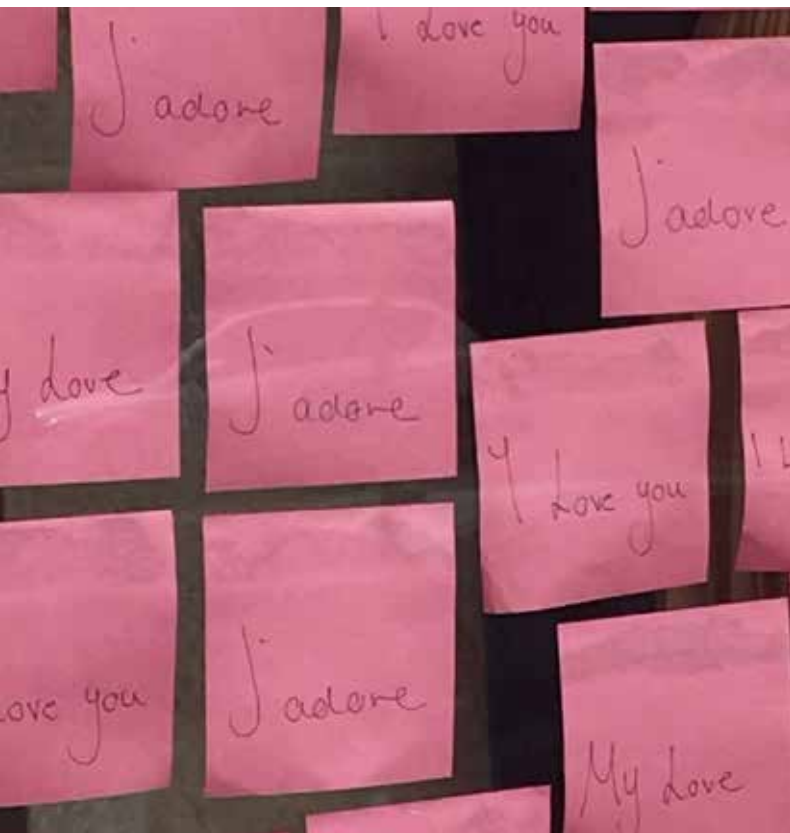
Tip 10: Tips and tricks



Get motivated

If you are lacking visual merchandising inspiration or you just don't know where to start, consider jumping onto Pinterest or Instagram and similar sites. You'll be inspired by the wonderful ideas and creative displays from around the world. Whether you're retailing hardware, health or fashion, there is something for everyone.

- ▼ Found on social media, this clever window display was created for Valentine's Day using just post-it notes.



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