

77 Visual Merchandising

TECHNIQUES AND IDEAS

A mannequin is the central focus, dressed in a white button-down shirt tied at the waist, a red turtleneck, and striped shorts. She stands in a window display with a warm, yellow and orange color palette. To her left is a large, abstract sculpture made of yellow, rectangular blocks. To her right is a large, vertical arrangement of red, fibrous material, possibly yarn or fabric. The background features a wall of yellow and orange tiles. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the mannequin and the surrounding decorative elements.

**Guide to
Managing Your
Silent Salesperson**

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Overview of Visual Merchandising

Visual merchandising today is not only limited to floor and window display; it is not only limited to Fashion industry. Visual Merchandising covers all the necessity to capture the attention of the customers by all means from the facade of the store to the location of each product inside the store – may it be a department or specialty store.

To capture attention, awaken the senses, provide the customers a wonderful buying experience, which will bring them back to the store for the next time and become a loyal customer, and make more sales are the major concern of an effective visual merchandising.

No one wants to have boring product display; every visual merchandiser wants to have interesting shop window and indoor display to capture not just the attention of the customers, but their entire senses.

One of the retail elements that greatly affects you visual merchandising effort is the store environment.

According to Dunne and Lusch (2005), store environment is an important element in retailing given that 70% of the purchase was an impulse buying or unplanned purchases.

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General Visual Merchandising Ideas

#1. Do not limit your theme four

Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall may be popular but there are still thousands of visual merchandising themes which you can – actually, sky is the limit when we talk about themes. Try to employ at least six different themes in a year. If you can use varied themes in every month, it is better, but this is quite unmanageable.

Six different themes in a year are more flexible because this will allow you to change your theme every other month. You can inline your theme with special events like Fathers' Day, Mothers' Day, Teachers' Day, Valentine's Day, anniversaries festivals, and other celebrations and holidays.

#2. Use variation to support your theme

Variation will support your theme to avoid boringness of display and decoration. You can use the same theme every year but avoid using the same display and style. You need to create a new look or else you will only annoy your viewers.

Scheme is also best applied to employ variation. A scheme works like a sub-theme. Say for example you theme is Christmas, you can create one White Christmas Window, one Toys Kingdom Window and one Christmas Party Window. All of these three schemes are related to your Christmas theme.

Also avoid using the same material for different themes consecutively. You may keep the materials you have recently used and use it again after few months or put it in other locations or other branch of your store.

#3. Go for unusual and big display

People love novelty, something they haven't seen before. You can search for some visual merchandising ideas in the internet. Copy different ideas, combine

them together then modify. It is copy, combine and modify – not copy and paste.

In South-east Asia, it is common to some popular brands like Milo, Double A, Pepsi, Coca-cola, Tipco and Maggi to conduct merchandise display contest to generate more sales.

On the contest, the participating stores are required to design and set-up displays with oversized props to get the attention of the shoppers. This strategy has been proven to be effective.

#4. Apply the elements and principles of design

Don't forget to apply the elements and principles of design to your projects. The elements of design are space, point, line, shape, form, texture, direction, measure, and color while the principle of designs are emphasis, variety, unity, balance, harmony, proportion, rhythm, and contrast.

Effectively use colors, texture, shape forms and lines.

Establish a focal point on your window display for easy viewing then harmonize each element of your display to maintain neatness and to direct the eyes of your viewer to each element of the display.

Always remember that the elements and principles of design are the keys to a successful visuals.

#5. Integrate dynamic techniques in your display

Integrating printed materials, multi-media, interactive installation and sensory input in your display are known to be dynamic techniques and are becoming the visual merchandising trends, especially in the coming years because of the fast moving digital civilization.

Gone are those days that retail stores rely only on a simple product presentation.

Think about what captures the attention of busy people in this digital age where almost everyone who are passing by your store are walking so quick if not looking slowly while looking at their mobile phones or tabs.

The Store and Environment

#6. Develop external appearance of your store

Allocate extra budget to develop the facade and external appearance of your store because this is the first thing that will be noticed by the people at street.

Maintain the good look your store – the marquees, awnings, signage, banners, entrance and landscapes are the things areas you need to consider.

Don't forget about lights and colors to draw people's attention.

You can use significant color or unique carvings and mouldings that represent your business so that your store can be easily identified among others.

#7. Provide enough and appropriate signage

If you have a big store, provide enough directional signs inside your store and include the local language in your sign and signage system. These are also known as visual indications that direct your customers to roam around your store which often results to unplanned purchase.

Use light-directed signage in front of your store to create a centre of attention for people during the night.

Change the old signage. Dilapidated signages are creepy, and you don't like that impression for your business. Do you?

#8. Have enough space

Enough space inside you store is relaxing.

In addition to a good floor plan, enough height of the ceiling from the floor is also important; 10 feet is ideal but higher than this is better.

If the distance between the floor and ceiling is lower than 10 feet, use shorter shelves to provide enough space for the eyes of your customers wander inside your store.

#9. Keep the appearance of the fixture new

Maintain the good appearance of your shelves, showcases, racks and other POS materials; if one is damaged, do not hesitate to repair it or decorate the part that is damaged.

Using broken furniture for your products is like serving your customers a food in broken plate.

Radius shelving is also becoming a trend of visual merchandising, so it's better if you have one.

#10. Enhance the ambiance of your store

Let your shoppers feel at home when they enter your store.

By adding music, little classic aroma and dramatic lighting inside your store, you can generate good impression to your shoppers.

Who knows, they will share their good experience in your store to their friends, and these friends will also come to your shop.

Displaying the Merchandise

#11. Use the suggestive technique

Show the items in use, make a hamper or group items as one set, like displaying together the chopping board, knives and other cookware.

Help people to quickly decide by showing in your display the benefits that they can get from the product.

#12. Use rack or bin to suggest quality and price

Normally, customers expect that items in the offer bin have lower prices than those in shelves and showcases.

#13. Know the hot spots inside your store

Display some items which have higher profit margin at the endcap, the hub at the end of an aisle or gondola especially in grocery stores.

The third level, which is straight to eye level, of the shelves and cashier's point are the good areas to place the items that are usually forgotten, add-ons, less necessary and unbranded products – obviously you don't need to put rice and sugar in these areas.

#14. Vary the position, arrangement and style of your display

Once a month if can't manage to do it twice a month, change the position, arrangement and style of your display. Variation also helps to avoid boredom to your regular customers.

Make use of shelving, hanging, pegging, folding, stacking or dumping merchandise display techniques depending upon which one works best for the type of your products.

#15. Use quick reference in your display

Add product information or answers to frequently asked question beside or near your items especially when your items have unique specification, exceptional quality or patented because more buyers nowadays are wise buyers and are after of the product quality.

This will also help to lessen the repetitive tasks of sales staffs on giving the same answer to the same question of different customers.

Displaying Signage and Ticketing

#16. Do not hide your price tag

If not the first, price is the second consideration of most customers after good quality, so make it easy for the customers to know the price even without the assistance of the sales staff by putting the price tag at highly visible and expected spot.

Stick the price stickers at the upper right side of the items because eyes are naturally drawn in this area.

For apparel, stick the price at the neck line or collar, at the back portion of the waist line of pants or at the brand or manufacturer's tag attached on the item.

#17. Avoid covering the important text and icon

In a packaging, there are texts and icons that highlight the features of the product. Avoid covering them with your price stickers and make sure that the price stickers are properly stuck and not slanted.

#18. Make the price tags and signage readable

Don't make an insufficient ink as an excuse. Remember the rule for text readability for visual merchandising materials.

#19. Ignite the interest of your customers by using hanging price cards for special offers. Posters and other professionally made signage are have greater impact and sell better than handwritten signage.

#20. Larger font size is advisable for signage that is intended to be placed inside a showcase. Make sure that the signage inside the showcases and on shelves is readable from at least 1.5 meters away and it is advisable that the name of the product should be 1/3 of total area of the signage while the price is 2/3 of the total area of the signage.

Most Valuable Tools

#21. Staple gun tacker and glue gun are used to quickly fasten materials, to hang light objects and to bond parts of your project. Of course, gun tucker and glue gun won't work without staples and glue stick respectively.

#22. Nylon string and cable-tie are also used to quickly fasten materials, to hang light objects and to bond parts of your project. This materials are effective when fastening materials that gun tucker and glue gun cannot do like tying and knotting.

#23. Cutter and scissors have obvious purpose, for cutting.

#24. Pliers and screw driver are necessary especially during the installation of lighting in your display.

#25. Steel tape and pencil should not be left behind when start planning for and making your decoration, display and renovation.

Paper Crafts

#26. Origami is the art of paper folding from Japan. You can create animals, plants, vase and many more which you can add as decoration to your display.

#27. Paper beads are made from paper strips rolled and glued like beads. Paper beads are beautiful and budget friendly decorative props if you only know how to use them.

#28. Paper mache is formed by wrapping a mold with wet paper strips with white glue and removing the mold when the paper is dry.

#29. Paper strip curls can be good space filler which may resemble grass and leaves of plants.

#30. Weaving papers have many ways. You can make basket, tray or vase by waving paper strips or paper straw.

Decorating with Balloons

#31. Use helium to puff your balloon to let it float in the air. It is easy to form arcs by using helium balloon. Remember that floating balloons are to be puffed 2 hours before a event starts, and an 8-inch helium-filled balloon will remain floating up to 13 hours depending on the quality of the material.

#32. Use different size, shapes and color to avoid monotony.

#33. Make a balloon sculpture. This is not difficult to make nowadays because there are already available materials in the market to make an instant balloon sculpture. You can easily form a human figure by simply following instructions included.

#34. Use PVC tube as support if you want to make pillars and arcs of balloons.

#35. Experiment for a new style. This is not only applied when decorating your store with balloons; experimenting is necessary to discover brand new ideas which you can implement to your next projects.

Decorating with Flowers

#36. Create artificial flowers using crepe paper. Creating plum blossoms for Chinese New Year display and decoration is so easy. I have a post on how to do that in my blog.

#37. Collect twigs for free from your backyard and combine them with your arrangement to add height and fill the empty space.

#38. Mix commercial artificial flowers with your own-made artificial flowers using papers to both save your finances and add attractiveness to your arrangement.

#39. Topiary and pomander are also unique style to add in your display and decoration.

#40. Use Styrofoam as floral foam when arranging dried and artificial flowers and ornamental plants because Styrofoam is stronger than floral foam.

Dealing with Styrofoam

#41. Use electric cutter to speed up your work. You can make an improvised one if you find it expensive to buy an electric Styrofoam cutter.

#42. Use just enough temperature of glue gun to avoid melting the Styrofoam when the stick glue is applied into it.

#43. Use handheld cutter when need some Styrofoam carving.

#44. Nail is for wood, barbecue stick is for Styrofoam. In our own slang language, we call it “Magic Stick” because of its versatility it terms of constructing large Styrofoam display.

#45. Spray at about 18 inches away from the Styrofoam when you are using aerosol spray paint to avoid deforming the Styrofoam.

More Techniques for Various Materials

#46. Sponge requires rugby adhesive as Styrofoam requires glue stick.

Making sponge sculptures is also fun. When bonding the edges of foam, apply the two point or areas that you want to stick together with rugby adhesive and set it them aside until the adhesive is almost dry before binding them together. Use spray paint to color your project and insert wires on the portions which you want to have curve or wave.

#47. Letter cutting nowadays are very easy because of new technology, the cutter printer. However, you will be obliged to do manual cutting if you only have a small store because it is unnecessary for you to buy the cutter printer and use it seldom, not unless if letter cutting is one of the services your business offers. The easiest way to cut letters is to use a pattern printed on the used office papers and by tracing it on you material, a vinyl sticker, construction paper (cartolina), bond paper or foil.

#48. When sticking large stickers, spray the adhesive side of the sticker with solution of water and liquid detergent or shampoo to avoid damage. The solution will serve as adhesive repellent while it is wet and will allow you to adjust the position of the sticker without damaging your material. Wipe the sticker with glass wiper until the solution is drained.

#49. Manila paper, a buff or light brownish-yellow paper that is made from Manila hemp (abaca) or wood fibers, is a good material if want to create a rock formation. First, you need to create a foundation by building empty boxes resembling a rock formation. Slightly spray the paper with color black, red and yellow to establish color value then slightly crumple the paper while sticking it on and covering your foundation.

#50. It is good if you have mannequins that are bald than that with built-in hair. The most common colors of mannequins are black and grayish white and by painting the whole body of mannequins with gold or silver will add a difference to your display. It will look like a metallic man. You can also apply a body-paint design to your mannequin if you wanted to.

Cloth Styling Techniques

#51. Crumpling

If you know how to crumple a sheet of paper then this would be easy for you. It is as simple as crumpling a piece of paper while covering the parts in your display areas that you want to hide.

#52. Draping

This is to cover, dress, or hang with or as if with cloth in loose folds – the most popular technique for cloth styling. I am sure that you always see curtains and drapes around you, in the bedroom, hotels, restaurants and offices; you can do similar with your window display using any kind of textile.

#53. Dropping

This is to stick one end of a long cloth at the ceiling and letting the other end to drop. It is nicer to look at if you will combine it with Christmas lights or lit with a spot light. While draping uses loose folds, dropping do not.

#54. Table Skirting

There are many styles of skirting a table; you find thousands of examples in the internet and libraries.

#55. *Twisting and braiding*

The cloth will look like rope when you twist it and braid the two or three different colors.

Painting Techniques

#56. *Marbling*

It is to paint your project resembling marble by applying right combination of light colors and putting some lines like cracks using darker colors.

#57. *Dipping*

When you are painting a lot of deeply carved and small objects with the same color of paint, it is very time consuming to use a paint brush; you better a wide-opened container, pour enough quantity of paint into it then start dipping you the deeply carved or small objects into it.

#58. *Spray*

The most common you can use perhaps is an aerosol spray paint but you can also use a machine. You really need to do spraying if your project is made of sponge.

#59. *Splatters, Sprinkling and Stamping*

This is what I like. Before you apply splatter, sprinkling and stamping, you need to apply first a base color as background and after that, you can start sprinkling different colors or stamping different patterns on it.

#60. *Sponge, String, Cloth and Roller Brush*

Using these materials is another way to create patterns and design. Allow me to further discuss this topic next time.

Lighting Techniques

#61. Only Show Light Beams – Rather than showing your fluorescent lamp or incandescent bulb, hide them in a way that only the beams of light will be seen. In some ways, you can put a Christmas light behind the dropped cloths or wrap the cloth cylindrically around the fluorescent lamps or bulbs. Spotlights are also the best for this purpose. Having soft projected light will let your display to glow evenly.

#62. Chandeliers – If you have available chandeliers, it is good to use to show elegance and luxury. Modern chandeliers are also better but they are quite expensive, however, you can find alternatives.

#63. Use Different Colors – Lights of different colors are indeed more attractive than that white fluorescent lamp alone that is why colored lights are recommended for window display and in some areas of the store.

#64. Modern lighting – Add a little contemporary look to your store and display by using modern lightings. Some that you can use are modern-designed floor lamps and ceiling lights, colored spotlights, LED light strips, neon lights and colored fluorescent lamps. You can surf the internet to find thousands of ideas about modern lighting if want.

#65. Alternative Lights – Instead of using incandescent bulbs and old-type Christmas lights, you better use compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) and LED (light-emitting diode) decoration lights. CFLs and LED lights are energy-saver and are less hot thus they cost-effective and safer to use.

Finishing Touches

#66. Binder Medium (Acrylic Emulsion) – We are ordering our art material from Singapore and they call this TG Medium; in Philippines it is simply called

emulsion. This is like white glue that is usually used as binder of metallic powder, but you will not use this with the metallic powder. You can use the binder medium as finishing coat to have glossy-look projects.

#67. Glitters Powder – It is available in different colors. A tiny luster makes big difference; it keeps your project twinkling.

#68. Ribbons – A balloon display is even better to look at closer with curls of ribbons but ribbons are not only for balloon display, there more uses like space filler as one example.

#69. Space Fillers – Don't leave your window display with awkward spaces. If there are areas that will make you display awkward and you think you have no more materials to add, use curls of paper strips, crumpled cloth, doodles of ribbons or any other stuffs you can find around to solidify and harmonize your display. Those materials you use to cover the empty areas are what we call space fillers.

#70. Captions – You can add some notes to your display. These could be product information, instructions, the theme or a related quotation to trigger more interest to you customers. This idea is similar to the idea number 10.

Integrating Sensory Input

#71. Seeing – Use wobbling instead of static shelf-talker or display moving items rather than those that not moving to get your items noticed because “movement” naturally captures more attention of anybody.

#72. Hearing – You may question why hearing becomes part of “visual” merchandising, but I tell you, it is indirect part but it adds impact. What you're going to do when selling home theater systems, 3D TVs, DVD players or even just a chime? How could you get the attention of your customers without the sound? Let those items with sound be heard, but of course, you shouldn't play

all of them at the same time. Music also has the power to entertain people of all ages; make sure to music played in your store.

#73. Touching – Allow your customers to feel the texture of your products. Let them experience how soft, how hard, how smooth, how rough, how sticky or how dry your products are.

#74. Tasting – This is especially good for those who selling food and drinks. This is quite on another level of merchandising but is still oftentimes difficult to detach from visual merchandising.

#75. Smelling – If you're selling oranges, try to use air humidifiers with citrus scent. Or, you can add classic aroma in your store and please avoid using strong-smelled air freshener and naphthalene or moth balls in your store.

Special Points to Remember

#76. Create theatrical effect and trigger emotion

It cannot be argued that people (including me) response to what is dramatic and emotional stimulus. A theme is very important to do this part. When it is Christmas, decorate your store according to the season and let your shoppers feel the season inside your store. The same is true with any holiday and other special events.

#77. Evaluate the effectiveness of silent salesperson

It is always the best to know if your visual merchandising strategies are working for you or against you to know which one is to be enhanced and which is to be maintained. If it helps increase you sales, then your silent sales person is working well.

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