VISUAL MERCHANDISING

Retail Store Display: In-store Visual Merchandising

It is extremely important that we have an established theme that begins with our windows and translates to all areas in-store nationally. The in-store areas are just as important as our windows and provide our customers with information and entertainment.” John Gerhardt, Creative Services Director, Holt Renfrew
Introduction

• In-store visual merchandising is the process used to lead customers through a shop in a logical order, encouraging them to stop at designated points and, hopefully, to make a purchase.

• Ask shoppers why their favourite store should stand so high in their estimation and many will probably explain that the space is easy to shop in, the product is simple to find and the signage is clear and informative.

• Each of these answers demonstrates effective in-store visual merchandising.
Introduction

• As a VM, your input into the merchandising of the store will vary depending on the type of shop in which you are working.

• In a small boutique, you may be called upon to refresh the layout in order to encourage customers to browse, and you will be more likely to follow directions from head office, which will often relate to buying programmes, store promotions and seasonal events.

• Specialist stores may rely on the visual merchandiser working with the buyers to lay the floor according to the new season’s product and trends.

• Whichever type of store you are in, the same disciplines of in-store merchandising will apply.
Introduction

• Key to successful in-store visual merchandising is a successful floor layout.
• First you need to establish product adjacencies before you can start to plan your floor layout.
• There is then a series of options from which you can choose your fixtures and fittings, as well as some basic rules or product handling to help you display your merchandise effectively.
• Hot shops are in-store displays, and point of sale and add-on sales will help merchandise your shop.
• Signage and graphics can also help in-store visual merchandising, as can the creation of ambience.
• Finally, care and attention needs to be given to maintenance standards.
Product Adjacencies

• The starting point is product adjacencies.
• This refers to which products sit next to each other: hoisery next to lingerie, kettles next to toasters and fruit next to vegetables.
• To maximise the space and use of the selling floor, the customer should be guided through the fixtures and aisles from one product to the next.
• By placing products that have empathy with each other, customers will not get confused and possibly pick up other items for which they may not have specifically been shopping.
• Clever use of product adjacencies will reinforce the appearance of the area and give it authority.
• A handbag fixture positioned next to scarves, gloves, hats and purses suddenly becomes an accessory department.
Product Adjacencies

• Before starting to lay out the floor, always check which products categories and brands are available to you to merchandise.

• The best and most effective way to start is by making a list. Taking a floor plan and tentatively noting where the products should sit will make the task more manageable.

• As well as product adjacencies, you might want to think about the location of strong product categories or key brands, which should ideally be positioned in prime locations.
Product Adjacencies

• These brands and products will help the customer gain awareness of what the shop, department or space is selling and reinforce the strength and quality of the merchandise on offer.

• A wall of denim with strong branding, like Levi’s for example, will make a statement and guide the consumer to the area where other brands of jeans are for sale.

• In the same way, a wall of pillows will inform customers that they are approaching the bed linen department.
Product Adjacencies

• As well as product adjacencies and the use of merchandise to guide the customers around the store, the other area to consider is customers’ comfort level.

• A boutique selling both men’s and woman’s clothes could have the two ranges merchandised together.

• Yet men might feel uncomfortable browsing through ladies clothes to find their own.

• Therefore a sensible approach might be to split the shop in two and dedicate one area for menswear and one for woman swear.
Product Adjacencies

• The two areas would have to meet somewhere, and at this point the cash desk could be used to divide them, or you could feature products that could be classed as unisex, such as magazines, jewellery or T-shirts.

• Getting the product adjacencies incorrect could be costly to the store. And also drive customers away.
Product Adjacencies

• Finally, if you are positioning named brands, it is best to understand where they see themselves on a floor plan.
• Large brand owners may have very strong views and the clout to exercise them.
• Egos can clash when dealing with prestigious brands which will expect prime locations; their demands should never be overlooked.
• Many smaller brands, on the other hand, often wish to be placed adjacent to brands to which their customers aspire.
Positioning the Products

• Always start by placing the largest categories and key brands first.
• They will undoubtedly take up the most space and, hopefully, generate the most sales.
• With the adjacencies in mind, the next step is to fill in the gaps.
• One key factor to remember when doing so is the need to vary the pace – to create gaps between products or to introduce a different type of fixture, for example.
• This will keep the customers’ attention, preventing them from becoming bored if every rack of clothing looks the same, or even overwhelmed if there is just too much crammed into the space.
Fixtures and Fittings

• The use of the correct fixtures is paramount in producing sales.
• Selecting the correct fixtures may at first seem daunting.
• Choosing a structure that holds the correct amount of products and shows them to their best advantage is never easy.
• There are two universal styles of fixtures that most retailers will use: mid-floor and linear.
• They can be used in conjunction with each other and both come in various forms.
Mid-floor fixtures

• Mid-floor fixture is free-standing and can be used not only to carry merchandise but also to steer customers through the store.
• They can be shopped from all angles, making them a useful merchandising commodity.
• Ideally they should not be so high that they obscure other areas of the store.
• Their proportion should also suit the products they are housing.
• Small items may get lost and look insignificant on a large fixture.
• There are many different types of mid-floor fixtures, ranging from purpose-built gondolas to tables and found items, some of which are more suited to displaying fashion and some to homeware, while many can be used for either.
Gondolas

• A gondola fixture is most commonly used in home and food stores.
• Gondolas can be any size, but most are rectangular and have shelves on all four sides.
• The ends are referred to as gondola ends or end caps.
• The shelves are often adjustable, making them flexible and able to house most product categories.
• Gondolas can be repositioned nearby, ideally under the unit.
• Themes and stories can easily be presented using gondola fixtures.
• It is important never to use too many different products.
• A clearly defined offer will have more impact.
Gondolas

• It is wise to remember that a gondola fixture should be filled to its capacity.
• It is a selling tool, not a display instrument.
• On many occasions retailers stock the lower shelves with smaller items that are more difficult to make a strong selling point with, or create a group of products on the top shelf that may be easily tampered with.
• Larger items should always be placed at the bottom of the gondola, with smaller items at the top.
• The lowest shelf should be at least 30cm off the ground.
• Customers should not be expected to stoop down to shop.
• Many gondolas have slots at the top where signage can be placed, which should state with the gondola is carrying.
Tables

• Tables used as merchandise fixtures can be purchased or hired.
• They are an interesting way of breaking up a floor and are easily browsed.
• It can be a good idea to place a lower, smaller table partially underneath a higher one, creating two height levels that will give more impact than one.
• Customers often feel comfortable shopping from a table because it is an object that will be familiar to them in their homes.
Tables

• Folded garments or items of homeware suit tables best.
• Clothing items should not be stacked too high; one of each size will generally suffice.
• Homeware items can be piled higher.
• It should be remembered that tables are high-maintenance.
• They will need constant attention to keep them presentable.
• Spar’s Bakery often uses a table to present breads.
Furniture

• Cabinets and cupboards are often used to present merchandise.
• They can be used to create theatre whole also functioning as a useful selling fixture.
• Jeans, for example, can be neatly folded and placed on the shelves of a cabinet, as can homeware items.
• A cabinet can also be chosen to coordinate with the merchandise: china should be placed in a glass-fronted display cabinet while a capture collection of clothing could be hung in an open wardrobe.
Furniture

• It is wise to remember that a cabinet may have an unattractive back to it that is best hidden by the back of another the same size.
• Care should be taken to light the merchandise inside a cupboard because it is enclosed.
• It can be tricky to do so, so it is sensible to ensure that there are sufficient overhead spotlights to focus on the product, or even to add under-shelf lighting.
Found Objects

• Trunks, crates and plinths are just a few found objects that can be used to present merchandise.
• They may have nothing in common with the majority of the other fixtures but can often change the pace and appearance of parts of the store if utilized well.
• Such as antique pieces used alongside contemporary fixtures to provide contrast.
• They can also be cost-effective and may be recycled too.
• It is important that found objects are there to serve a purpose.
• A personal favourite from home is not acceptable unless is can help sell.
• Can even sell these objects at a mark up and then replace.
Vendor Fixtures

• A vendor fixture is given by the supplier to the retailer to house and display the vendor’s branded products.
• These fixtures can be either permanent or temporary.
• The advantage of using a vendor fixture is that it will not cost the retailer anything.
• It will be designed to carry specific product and in the correct quantities, added branded recognition for the customers.
• On many occasions retailers will have no choice but to use them if they wish to carry the brand.
• Such fixtures can, however, be a hinderance.
• Although they may enforce the brand name, they may not fit in with the store appearance.
• A branded fixture is, however, best used to its full advantage and when not hidden away.
Branded shop fits

- Like a vendor fixture, a branded shop fit will enforce the brand image and be designed to complement the products.
- Sometimes known as shop-within-shops, or concessions, the product is supplied by the brand and not bought by the host store.
- Carefully selected by the host store and with regard to the correct product adjacencies on the floor, these shops-within-shops can enhance the overall floor layout.
- They also help to change the pace of and improve customer circulation, maintaining the interest of customers as they work their way from shop to shop.
Branded shop fits

• Many retailers will use them as an anchor for the whole floor; a prestigious brand will certainly grab shoppers’ attention if placed in a prominent position.

• Seasonally, a branded shop fit can change dramatically, a designer may insist that the store changes its appearance to suit the collection by adding different graphics and signage and by remerchandising the area.
Concept Shop Fits

• Many retailers today that specialise in one specific product or style of merchandise have pushed the boundaries when designing their stores.

• Most of these retailer environments have become concept stores that rely heavily on the following of their loyal customers.

• A concept store should be designed with the product in mind, with bespoke features, and strong branding and graphics.
Specialist fixtures

- Certain products will only lend themselves to specialist fixtures.
- Fresh produce that needs to be refrigerated will often need a specifically designed fixture. (Like redbull fridges).
- Although an open-fronted chilled fixture (like most grocery store fridges) may not be aesthetically pleasing, it is still essential that it performs well, and products can still be arranged in a creative way.
- Chiller and freezer cabinets should also be designed so that they can hold large quantities.
- The owner of a sandwich shop will expect to sell a lot of stock over a lunchtime, so having to restock a cabinet constantly would be senseless.
Specialist fixtures

• Ribbons, beads and fresh flowers, to name a few, will more often than not need some considerable thought as to how they are best displayed.
• Beads, for example, because of their size, will need to be positioned close to eye level so that they may be viewed more comfortably.
• Ribbons may need to be measured and cut by the salesperson and should be easily accessible for this purpose.
• Fresh flowers obviously require water; buckets may be disguised inside purpose built shelving or display units.
Wall Fixtures

• Not only can a well-merchandised wall produce great sales, but it can also be used as a backdrop for a specific product area.
• Some systems are more flexible than others.
• Many retailers favour an arrangement that can offer as many options as possible.
• Smaller boutiques often incorporate the linear fixtures into the store design and so may not be so concerned about being able to change the configurations.
Slat-wall grid systems

• Large multi-chain retailers often use a slat-wall or grid system because of the flexibility each can offer.
• They are generally designed and used to show high-turnover products because they can be replenished easily.
• Best used for showing fashion garments, they can also support shelves for homeware items or to support a display above eye level.
• There are various components that can be purchased and used with these systems, such as prongs, rails, and shelves.
Slat-wall grid systems

• A slat-wall is made up of panels of wood that are painted or laminated and fixed directly to the wall.
• The components simply slot into the gaps between the strips.
  A grid wall consists of a sturdy wire grid that also fixes directly to the wall, and the bracket clips onto it.
• Neither system is particularly aesthetic when stripped of its merchandise.
• Ideally, the slat-wall system should be painted the same colour as the wall behind it, enabling it to blend in with, and not overshadow the product.
Fixed Shelves

• As with a fixed rail, a shelf securely attached to a wall offers no flexibility but may be visually pleasing.
• A shelf may be attached using brackets that are used as a design feature, or by an invisible bracket that is screwed to the wall with the shelf casing slide over it, concealing the hardware.
• Walls with natural alcoves suit shelving; planned carefully they can create interesting merchandise areas.
• Shelves can be constructed from various materials, including wood, metal, glass and acrylic.
Fixed Shelves

• Consideration of the product should be taken into account when introducing shelves to a store.
• If they are to carry weighty items, a glass shelf may not be appropriate as it may break.
• Acrylic shelves are prone to scratching and may warp if overstocked.
• Wooden shelves are best laminated or lacquered; hand painted gloss paints or emulsions will scratch easily.
• Lighting shelves can be difficult – the deeper the shelf, the more shadow it will cast on the shelf below.
• Ceiling spotlights can be aimed at the shelved wall.
• An alternative is under-shelf lighting.
Last Project

Design an in depth visual merchandising handbook for your retail outlet.

• It should include all information that we have covered in a summarised form.
• It should be tailored to your store.
• It should include photos of your store as well as pictures of VM techniques that you recommend for certain areas of the store.
• **Due Date:** Friday 1 June with a 5min presentation.