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Grand opening

Top 10 factors to consider when designing a store

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Showrooms *as sales tools*



ONLINE Top 10 factors to consider when opening a new store

By Mark Pritikin

For a free PDF checklist of the top 10 things to consider when opening a new showroom, visit GlassMagazine.com.

This article is the second in Glass Magazine's "Showrooms as sales tools" series and part of an ongoing series of "Poker Play" articles on how retailers can improve their businesses. See Page 72 of the September 2008 Glass Magazine for an article on how display design can boost profits.



1-3

Location, location, location

The old real estate adage "location, location, location" is critical to opening a glass and mirror showroom. I've seen glass businesses fail because they bought cheap land that was inaccessible. Build your showroom in a highly visible and accessible area, preferably at an intersection or a location with access to a major expressway.

Do your homework. Research the traffic count at the location. The more cars and people who see your storefront every day, the better. At our 20,000 square-foot showroom and fabrication plant in Addison, Ill., pictured here, the traffic count was 60,000 cars a day when we purchased

the building, and they've expanded the road by one lane since then.

Pick the right community. Look at your sales history to identify where your customers are coming from. In our case, even though we've been in business for 36 years, we never had a location in downtown Chicago. We found we have a lot of customers from Chicago, so we purchased a building on Clybourn Avenue that we're in the midst of opening.

The author is president of Creative Mirror & Shower, Addison, Ill., mpritikin@creativemirror.com.

Photos by Keith Ward Photography, Addison, Ill.



4

First Impression

When the customer first walks in, he or she should see product displays. At our stores, we don't have showroom representatives right at the front door. They are not in the back—we want to see and greet people as they come in the store—but the displays are the focus. We want to create a strong first impression when the customer walks in, and we want the whole showroom experience to be interesting. We want customers to see things that are different and unique.



5

Floor Layout

Create a natural flow that allows customers to see the entire showroom. You want to bring people into the door and draw them into the showroom.



6

Display Design

Showrooms serve two purposes: to generate business and to close business. Sometimes, people come into a showroom just to get ideas. Other times, they come in to touch, feel and operate the products they've seen in a free home estimate. In our showrooms, we create vignettes—displays that are actual room settings—so people can get a feel of how the products will look in their home. We have a bathroom vignette, for example, with a whirlpool tub and a custom mirror above it. It also has a neo-angle shower door that is often used to conserve space and a double-bowl vanity with another customer mirror above it. We've created and designed a master bath so customers can recreate the look in their own home.



Product placement/rotation

Major retailers focus on sales per square foot. Rotate your products periodically within the showroom. If something is not selling, figure out why and stop burning rent on floor or wall space. If your store is the same for four years, customers are going to walk in and out. If you change the front display, it's going to catch their attention.

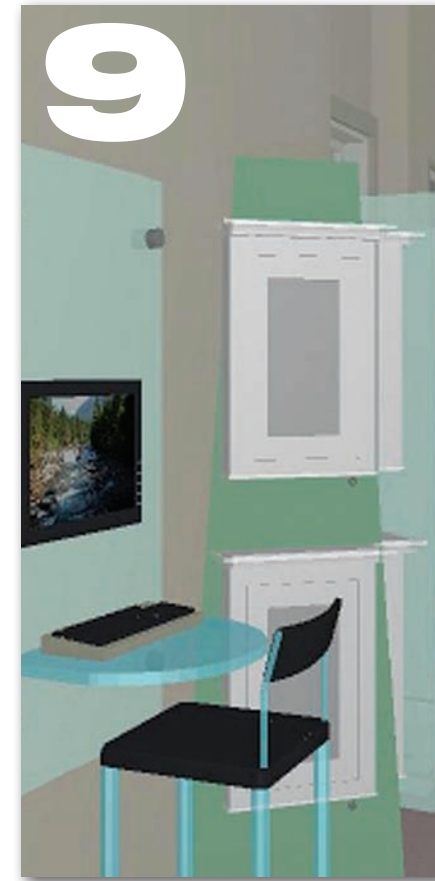


Lighting

Lighting is absolutely critical. Do not skimp on it. Product displays need to be nicely illuminated.

Technology

Large computer screens can show customers endless photos and brochures, even catalogs. We're integrating more technology in our showrooms, like the computer station seen here in the architectural drawings for our Clybourn location.



Color and décor

If your store décor is in mauve and teal because it was last updated in the 1980s, it's time for a change. A good interior designer can help.