



How display design can boost profits

By Jenni Chase

This article is the first 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 16 of the July/August 2008 Glass Magazine.) Future articles will examine other retailers' strategies regarding showroom location, layout, lighting and design; sales techniques; showroom personnel; and employee incentives, among other topics.

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Each of Mr. Shower Door's retail locations have a "wall of money," shown above along the back wall of the Stratford, Conn., store. The wall provides salespeople the opportunity to upsell customers on various glass and hardware options.

rowing up, Tom Whitaker spent many evenings around the dinner table listening to his father tell stories about upselling customers. The owner of a Volkswagen/Porsche dealership, he upsold car buyers on everything from undercoating to FM radios. "All of his salespeople were geared toward the up-sell," says Whitaker, now president of Mr. Shower Door, headquartered in Stratford, Conn. "I borrowed into that philosophy with shower doors. You try to sell the basic door at a very competitive price so you get awarded the job, but then you build the profit back into it by selling options. That's essential to my whole business model," he says.

The list of options for shower doors is lengthy: thicker glass; coated, low-maintenance glass; low-iron glass; and hardware are among the variety of products you can upsell to customers. Yet, the typical glass shop doesn't have a formal way of working people into upsells, Whitaker says.

The 'wall of money'

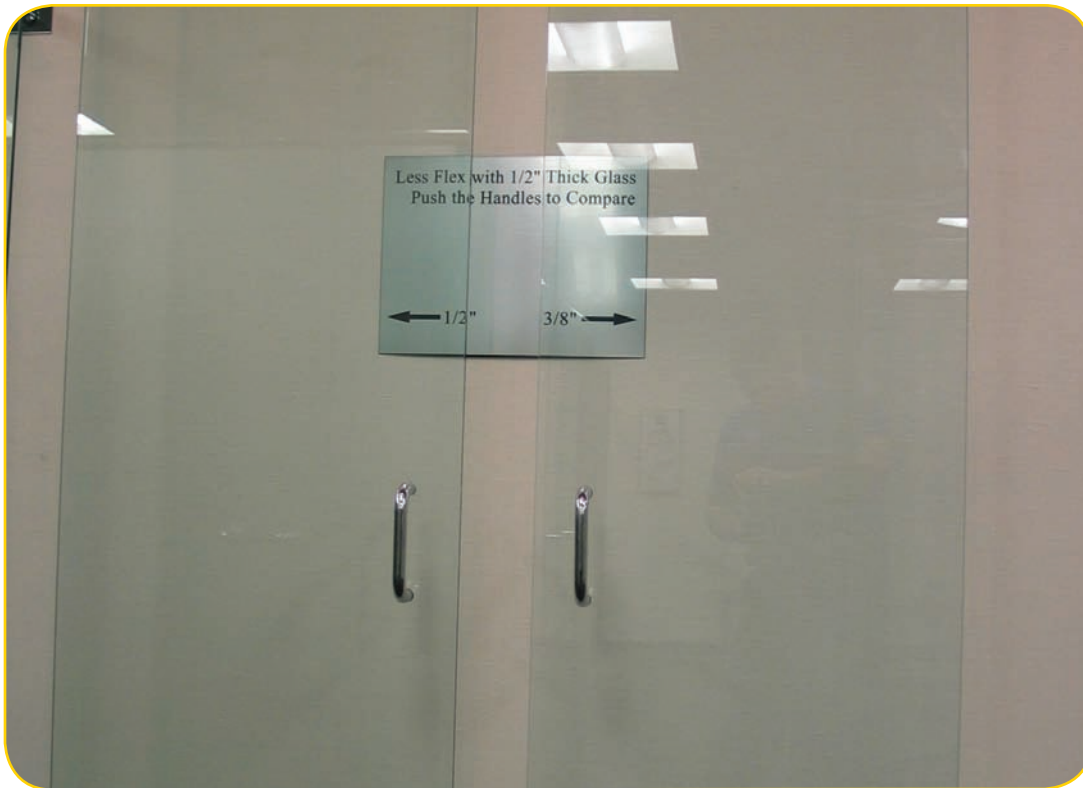
Display design is essential to the art of upselling, Whitaker explains. At Mr. Shower Door, individual displays act as props for salespeople "to work the conversation around," he says.

One example is the "wall of money." Salespeople walk customers along the wall, starting at a display comparing two tall panels of $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch glass and $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch glass with handles. Customers can push the glass to compare the stability of the two panels. "The $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch will shake more than the $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch, and the salesperson is going to tell them to buy the $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch. If I didn't have that prop, the salesperson would have to rely on just verbiage," Whitaker says.

Continuing down the wall, customers arrive at a side-by-side comparison display that shows the difference between regular glass and low-iron glass. Next comes a hardware display showcasing a variety of complementary handles and towel bars.



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In an effort to up-sell customers on 1/2-inch versus 3/8-inch glass, Mr. Shower Door locations feature a display comparing two tall panels of 3/8-inch glass and 1/2-inch glass with handles. Using the handles, customers can push the glass to compare the stability of the two panels.

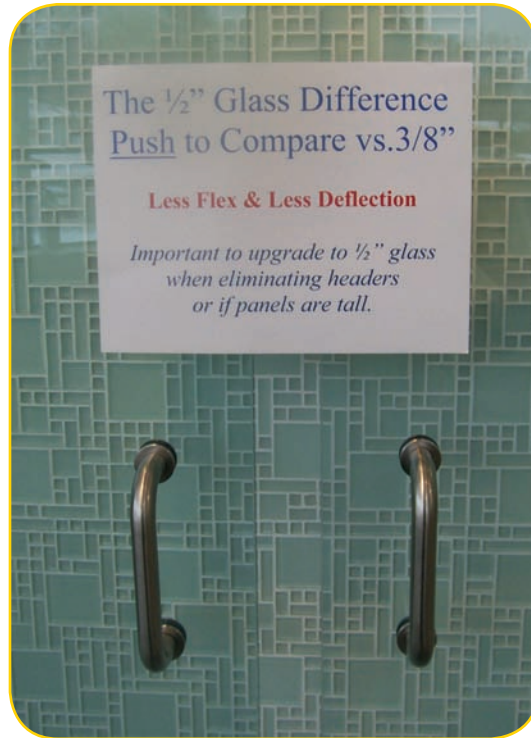


Backlit with halogen light, this display allows Mr. Shower Door customers to see the difference between Starphire low-iron glass, left, and regular glass. “If you pull out a piece of low-iron glass and put it next to regular glass, you’re guaranteed to sell that,” says President Tom Whitaker.



Poker play

Creative Mirror & Shower, Addison, Ill., also uses a side-by-side comparison display to show customers how ½-inch glass allows for less flex and deflection than a ⅜-*inch product.*



The last step is a 3-foot-by-8-foot display on Guardian's ShowerGuard low-maintenance glass product.

As the salesperson walks the customer down the wall, he or she checks off the options the customer likes on their contract. The contract includes the description and price of a basic shower unit, with the entire bottom half dedicated to options.

"What we're trying to do is encourage the client to make some decisions," Whitaker explains. "As you walk them down the wall, you ask for the sale. Now, you've made your way through some choices and you've got it down on paper. You're making it really easy for the customer to go home that evening, talk to their spouse and pull out the checkbook."

Comparison shopping

Comparison displays are crucial to the upsell, agrees Mark Pritikin, president of Creative Mirror & Shower, Addison, Ill. "If you're trying to upgrade the thickness of a shower door from ⅜-inch to ½-inch, or the hardware from standard to luxury, the best way to do that is to show one right next to





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At this Mr. Shower Door display, customers can look at all of the hardware options available. “We really present a dilemma, where the customer needs to make a choice, and it’s best to do that while they’re [in the showroom]. You try to get them to really fall in love with it,” says President Tom Whitaker.

the other and let the customer see the difference.”

Like Whitaker, Pritikin’s Addison showroom has displays that allow customers to compare different glass thicknesses and hardware choices. “People can imagine only so much,” Pritikin says. “When they can see and feel the glass and get excited about it, it tends to create a different appeal.”

There are many options on a shower door, Whitaker says. “You can go to thicker glass; you can go to a glass that has a coating on it for low maintenance; you can go to low-iron glass which is less green; you can put a nicer handle on the door. A lot of my competitors leave money on the table because they aren’t looking for [these upsell opportunities].” 