

FRESHEN UP YOUR STORE FOR SPRING!

A little elbow grease is all it takes to create the impression of a sparkling new shopping environment. Let us show you how!

BY NATALIE TAN

STOREFRONT & WINDOWS

Start with your storefront. All traces of winter should be erased. With nice, clean windows everything will seem shinier and brighter. Have your door open to welcome customers. Spill merchandise out onto the sidewalk. Display large urns prominently outdoors. Use branches with touches of floral and greenery to add vibrancy and texture. Nothing signals spring more than potted plants and fresh-cut flowers.

SHOP LAYOUT & ADJACENCIES

Give customers a clear path to meander on. If you have a racetrack layout, add a grid in the middle to make shopping easy – or add romance by creating a free-flowing section in the centre of the racetrack. With the right fixtures you could even revise your layout to create the impression of an entirely new store.

FEATURE PRESENTATIONS

Change all feature presentations. Place one feature display of nesting tables with spring merchandise up front. Refer to the plan-o-gram at right for inspiration. This display should be the first thing customers see when they walk into your store. Welcome them with a breath of fresh air and a light spring scent.

BRIDGE CATEGORY

Create the impression of a smooth flow throughout your space with a bridge category: a product used in each display which creates a bridge from one to the next. Floral is a great bridge category because it works with so many product types. Ensure that your bridge category is grouped by colour tones such as brights, pastels and neutrals. Your goal is to influence the eye to go from the low feature fixtures up front to mid-height fixtures in the middle of your store and then onto the wall. If you do this successfully, you will lead your customer throughout your entire selling space. Refer to the store layout at right for an example of how floral can be used as a bridge category.



BRIDGE CATEGORY

The Heavenly Outhouse in Cochrane, Alta., uses floral as a “bridge category” to connect unrelated product displays throughout their store.



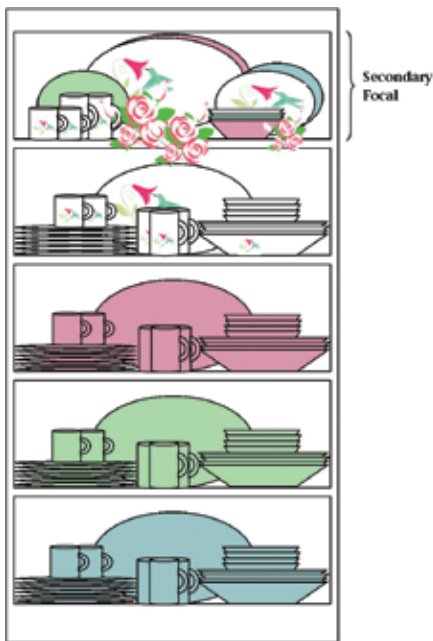
FEATURE PRESENTATION

A feature display of spring merchandise should greet customers when they walk into your store.

FOCAL POINTS

Focal points sprinkled throughout your store are crucial to influencing traffic from the front of the shop to the back. They can be displays of a single dominant product or a colour story. Focal points inform customers of the stories they can expect to find immediately behind. For example, a single story of boxed cookies signals gourmet products are not far behind. Primary focal points may take the form of feature displays.

Secondary focal points are displays found on the top of shelving units, usually against the wall. Secondary focal points inform customers of the stories and products they can expect to find on the lower shelves. Use a unifying category such as floral to transition from one shelf to the next and from floor to wall displays. Refer to the plan-o-gram below for an example of a secondary focal display.



SECONDARY FOCAL POINT

Secondary focal displays, found on the top of shelving units, inform customers of the stories and products they can expect to find on the shelves below.

PRODUCT MIX & PLACEMENT

By now you should have sold all your winter merchandise. Basics should be replenished and new arrivals for spring on site or coming soon. If you still have winter merchandise, store it as inventory for next year if it's a basic item or get rid of it with an aggressive markdown – turn your inventory.

Most category placements call for basics towards the back of the shop, lining the wall. Sale merchandise towards the back of the shop but contained on a floor unit such as nesting tables or mid-height shelving units. New merchandise should line the front side walls and front floor units.

CASH DESK

The last impression of your shop happens by the cash desk the majority of the time. This is the last place for active interaction and prolonged wait

times lead customers to view this space more than others. Aside from being neat and tidy, ensure that the area behind your cash desk is organized. Keep trash and excess inventory hidden from the customer's view. Last, ensure your shop name is prominently displayed on the wall and consider painting the wall a bright spring colour. ■

Natalie Tan is a visual merchandiser with over 20 years experience in specialty retail and shopping centre management. She teaches merchandising and display strategies at the British Columbia Institute of Technology's School of Business and has served on the board of directors for Retail BC and the British Columbia Shopping Centre Association.

SPRING CLEANING CHECK LIST

- Clean your windows
- Place urns of fresh greenery outside your door
- Recreate feature presentations and focal points
- Place spring merchandise up front
- Clear out all winter inventory
- Organize your cash desk
- Open your doors and welcome your customers!