

On the Professional Side



A Northwestern University advertising professor, who has written a book on merchandising and advertising for the small retailer, declares there hasn't been much improvement in the last 15 years or so in the way in which merchandise is displayed in smaller stores. By implication, this can be construed to take in pro shops.

Flat table top displays, says the professor, take up too much space and should be done away with. Because they occupy so much space, they foul up traffic. Considering their inherent visibility properties which, at best, are only fair and the fact that so many of them often are cluttered up, they probably don't produce enough sales to justify their being used in a store or shop.

Professor Frowns on Use of Display Tables

The professor doesn't suggest it, but if flat display tables have to be used, perhaps it would be wise to mount them on some kind of swivel arrangement so that they can be tilted at various angles. Space would be saved and visibility would be improved. Of course, there is no guarantee that careless customers wouldn't have them just as cluttered as before, and there is a chance with a tilted table that merchandise occasionally would get brushed off on the floor. The latter probably could be avoided if the table wasn't tilted at too steep an angle.

Better Lighting Needed

The professor goes on to point out that another failure of the small retailer is that he depends too much on the general lighting of his store. Overhead fixtures may give him generally good or adequate lighting, but he should supplement it with back fillers, spots and other arrangements that add interest and dramatic impact. In the case of the pro operator, this may be doubly important since it is generally accepted that he can't resort to any kind of pressure selling, such as the ordinary retailer can, and has to depend to a great extent on the impression that his displays make.

Finally, the professor doesn't feel that the average small retailer scores very high in maintaining stock control studies that are, in effect, profitability studies. "Many stores," he says, "put in orders with manufacturers without being really sure that the merchandise they are buying is going to be a good seller or merely a fair one. The retailer's general (and usually vague) impression may be that blue sport shirts sold well in the last year or so and he goes ahead and re-stocks too many of them. What he should know," the professor continues, "is not only how many shirts he has sold but the length of time it has taken to get them off his shelves. The unit-time factor or formula is a very important one. If both elements aren't known, the retailer hasn't established a firm basis for making buying decisions."