

What are display fixtures?

On the ensuing pages are the ABC's of display props—another tool which can be used to lead to bigger profits.

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To realize the maximum benefit from the discussion of any topic, it is most desirable that there is a mutual appreciation and understanding of the basics.

A beautiful set of golf clubs in a handsome golf bag is no indication that the owner is a scratch golfer. Before he can be expected to make best use of those tools, he must learn something about them and their correct use in specific situations. He must also have a working knowledge of the equipment, make an intelligent choice of the necessary accessories and have some training in the physical aspects of the game.

In this article on visual merchandising fixtures and equipment, it is equally essential that we have an understanding of the tools or equipment and some of the rules of the increasingly complex and competitive game of selling at a profit.

What are fixtures? What is equipment? What can we expect from them?

In the interest of simplicity and easy understanding, we will define "fixtures" as those elements which are necessary to visually merchandise and store reserve stocks of merchandise at selling level: for example, cases, tables, counters and racks.

We shall henceforth think of "equipment" as those elements or accessories which are required or helpful in achieving maximum use from the fixtures and most attractive presentation of the merchandise, which includes shelves, hangrods, binning dividers, brackets, and the extensive and comprehensive selection and variety of specially designed fittings and accessories that are available to achieve well organized arrangements of merchandise.

Additionally, in this category of equipment are the accouterments used to achieve attractive, eye-catching displays of merchandise in arrangements or settings suggesting uses for, or highlighting particular features of merchandise. Mannequins, forms of all kinds, for

jackets, shirts, hats, caps, gloves, slacks, and shoes; and stands for belts, umbrellas, clubs, bags, and point of purchase units.

Other items which should be classified as equipment are chairs, shoe fitting stools, ash stands, platforms, practice putting mats and decorative or functional pieces or units.

What should you expect from these tools and aids to improve the visual presentation and attractive display of your merchandise?

Every element in both of the categories that have been defined should either directly or indirectly be effective in accomplishing these three important results or goals of any successful business: (1) Sell the merchandise; (2) Sell the shop; (3) Reduce the cost of sales in the shop.

The decision to use or to select any fixture or piece of equipment must be predicated upon its ability to simplify your efforts to achieve sales and profit goals established.

Because they are essential as selling tools, they must be selected with care and evaluated as to appropriateness, efficiency, applicability and versatility.

Design, appearance and quality must all conform to the pattern or plan which has been prepared and formulated to achieve a "pro shop image" that will be appropriate to the particular club.

The maximum in sales productivity, selling efficiency and customer satisfaction can most reasonably be expected in a pro shop where everything has been selected for its ability to:

- Enhance the appearance of merchandise
- Stimulate a desire to own it
- Simplify the arranging, stocking and displaying of the various sizes, shapes and packages
- Minimize the housekeeping and maintenance tasks and expense.

The design of the shop should conform to the ex-



Key—A—Double-slotted metal standards; B—Hangrods; C—Fitted panels; D—Lowboy; E—Hang shelf; F—Female mannequin; G—Valance with lighting hidden; H—Hang-

ing shelves with bin separations; J—Brackets for hangrods shelves, etcetera; K—Decorative panels; L—Platform; L/F—End-Feature, e.g., focal point of interest.

isting architecture. The decor and equipment should help to achieve an atmosphere and appearance that meets and satisfies the tastes of your members.

Quality is extremely important and must be consistent with the projected "image." The finish, craftsmanship and materials should all reflect a "quality look" regardless of the size, shape or location of the individual shop.

The appearance of the finest merchandise in the shop will be adversely affected and appear undesirable and of poor value when arranged or displayed on fixtures or equipment that are old, damaged, marred or poorly painted. And less we misunderstand, quality is not measured by price. High prices do *not* necessarily assure good quality. The quality is determined by:

(A) The design; is it in good taste? good looking? In harmony with the other elements in the shop?

(B) The finish: metals plated or brushed to a rich lustre, glass ground and polished, woods painted, stained, waxed and rubbed to perfection; colors rich and durable.

(C) Fabrication and construction; sturdy, durable, legs attached securely, metal parts welded properly, ground and finished.

Depending upon the care and attention given to the above, the resulting pro shop should:

(A) Encourage customers to come in, browse, shop and buy.

(B) Be so functional as to allow easy relocation of equipment, categories of merchandise, or provide special settings for selected feature promotions.

(C) Be so practical as to withstand rough treatment by customers or the staff.

(D) Be easy and inexpensive to maintain and keep looking fresh, neat, clean and attractive.

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Here are some specifics about fixtures and equipment, that are considered most practical from several aspects, to meet the requirements of the pro shop. They should possess design and functional qualities that will permit a wide latitude of individual expression or choice in the arrangement and appearance of the shop.

Wall Fixtures

There are several acceptable, easy-to-install, relatively inexpensive types of wall fixtures available. They generally consist of single or doubled slotted metal standards installed on 30-inch centers (See Illustration, A). Cost for these metal standards runs approximately \$2.00 per eight feet. Panels approximately 29 inches wide are fitted between these upright standards and are held in place with clips (Illustration, C)

Since the panels are not nailed or screwed permanently to the wall, they can be removed, relocated or replaced with panels that would be required to meet any new visual merchandising or display situations. Conversion or relocation of a section of the shop can be accomplished with a minimum of disturbance to business and is relatively inexpensive.

The standards can be installed the full height of the walls or cut off at a height considered most functional. The panels can also be used to accomplish decorative or visual merchandising ideas.

The selection of fancy handsome one-quarter-inch natural wood panels, either solid or pegboard, makes it possible to change the appearance of the shop practically overnight. You can paint masonite panels any desired color, cover them with new designs in paper, fabrics or vinyls to achieve small shop or boutique ideas or to accent selected spots or areas. This material is relatively inexpensive, running to approximately \$.40 per square foot.

With the improvements in packaging and the increasing trend to self-service, this advantage is considerable. The accessories, fittings, and specially designed units available for use with these fixturing systems make it possible to interchange the accessories from wall to

table or counter units without difficulty. (Someone once said that a shop should "change it's look every Friday; and, if not every Friday, every other Friday.")

Lighted valances (Illustration, G), shadow boxes, display panels, department identification lettering or symbolic art can be attached to brackets and bars (Illustration, J&B) available for those purposes.

Use of lowboy table (Illustration, D) units along the wall will provide additional storage area for back-up stock and a level or base upon which to set a feature display or arrange merchandise for selection. (A lowboy is a rather low counter-type fixture which has a display-top area with storage space below and is approximately 18 to 24 inches in height.

Floor Cases

These units are more and more being used in areas where the merchandise is of a value or nature that soilage or pilferage is a problem. Their use as a working surface upon which to show merchandise and serve customers is receding with the increase in self-selection and self-service.

In small shops, normally, cases that are one-third glass at the top will serve as a working area near a register and a location in which impulse items may be displayed. Merchandise selected for its general desirability and quick turnover, properly displayed in these cases, can bring plus sales. However, the tendency to use this area as a storage area can have an adverse effect upon sales.

These cases are either equipped with shelves or drawers in the back. Drawers, though a little more expensive, will be found more useful and efficient—a good place to keep back-up stock neatly arranged for quicker service. This is also true in lowboys.

In larger shops where several cases are desired, it may be well to include one or two of which three sides are completely glass with sliding doors on the back. These will permit the display of higher priced more perishable items that are in stock. Coordinated displays of fine slacks, sport shirts and accessories can make these cases sparkling gems in the shop.

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There are instances when these cases are fitted with two or three glass shelves on which merchandise is stacked or piled. Unless this arrangement is attractive and is a selling display, it should be avoided since it can become an eyesore.

Counters, Tables, Platforms and Racks

All are available in designs and finishes to meet the most discerning tastes. Superstructures, shelving, hangrods, decorative panels, bin dividers, mirrors and feature-end arrangements (A platform with a mannequin or some sort of equipment as a focal point of interest) are available to convert basic units into almost any desired purpose (Illustration, E, L, B, F, L-F, H). The selections available can help achieve what appears as a custom finished or designed unit.

The available sizes are such that perfectly coordinated assemblies that will accommodate hanging, folded, packaged or bin-type merchandise can be attractively arranged in a 5 x 10 foot or 15 foot unit. The unit can include a coordinated platform at an end of the assembly which will accommodate a display arranged on mannequins, forms or other selected equipment.

The estimated cost for a running foot in this type of unit, completely furnished, is quoted to cost between \$10 and \$20. This includes any and all equipment, such as brackets, panelling, hardware, shelving, lights, etcetera.

Mannequins and Forms

Mannequins are full size figures complete with heads, arms, and legs. Forms are partial elements of the complete form that are self-standing or equipped with suitable bases. Head forms, coat forms, torso forms, trunk forms, glove, slack and sock forms are some of the many available. They come in a wide variety of styles, sizes and finishes.

Depending upon the size of the shop and the areas available for setting up displays, a selection should include male and female mannequins in adult and teen sizes.

Action poses are most desirable and are available from several of the

better manufacturers. Male mannequins are available with two sets of arms. One is a flexible set that can be used to achieve unusual arm and head arrangements. These arms, however, must be covered and this is usually accomplished by using a long sleeve shirt, sweater or jacket.

There are several particular points beyond action to look for in mannequins and forms.

Complexions should be tanned or outdoor looking. Hair-dos on male mannequins are usually sculptured to harmonize with the design of the mannequin. On female mannequins, wigs are removable nylon or other synthetic yarn and are available in any desired style.

Styles of mannequins that are proper with sports attire and can be worn with hats or other current head pieces used by women, should be selected.

Hands are available made of flexible rubber. They can wear gloves when desired.

As to forms, some of the same details should be considered. Suntan finish, athletic lines and action when possible, especially in torso and trunk forms. Cost for forms is estimated from \$18-\$35 each.

One area that holds a lot of new interest is the "teenager". More and more teens are getting out on the golf course. Mannequins and forms for teenagers have been improved tremendously in the past few years. The wise professional will have one of each on hand and periodically set up displays aimed at the younger set. This can be an excellent source for additional business in the pro shop.

Best buys in mannequins are lightweight plastic with well-sculptured facial details, accurately-sized bodies and unbreakable composition or rubber hands. You can obtain a good mannequin for a minimum of \$100 up to \$200.

Stands, Pedestals

These items are required to relieve the monotony of height and bulk in a display and to permit the display of items in areas where mannequins and forms are not suitable or adequate. Stands come in all heights with many different sized bases. The tallest with largest bases are usually used as floor stands for belts or scarves.

They are available in metals,

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woods, and plastics to meet every price and taste. When selecting, look for good clean finish in all details.

Point-of-Purchase Displays

This is one area where the shop operator usually encounters his most serious problems. Manufacturers and vendors who provide fixtures that display their own products very seldom are as concerned with the appearance of your shop as they are in getting the items in an advantageous selling spot.

Wire stands of cheap or inexpensive construction and finish, cardboard-easeled units which carry a dozen or so of an item, all help to sell the product they are displaying. However, it requires continuing surveillance and supervision by the shop manager or display manager to keep these units from destroying the appearance of what otherwise might be an attractive shop. When you decide to use a "pop" unit, be as careful as you were in selecting everything else in your shop. Good manufacturers will respond to your demands for units that will add to the appearance of your store rather than detract. Be sure they know how you feel about it.

What you might do is take a look around your shop and ask yourself "Is it doing the job for me that it should be doing?" If the answer is no, then you can ask yourself what can be done about it. Merchandising is a big job but it can pay off in big profits.

A final thought to keep in mind is the simple fact you can have someone come and design your shop for a nominal fee (in some cases, free from prospective equipment suppliers) so that you can make even more profit.

Remember, investment in these necessary merchandising tools is one where you can write off the initial cost against income for the next three or four years through depreciation.

Is your shop working for you? ☐

Editor's Note: Future articles in this series will cover: (1) color and lighting; (2) decoration, materials (natural and artificial), motion and moving displays; (3) Display and promo-

tion ideas (4) Floor plans for proper display.

If you wish further information on manufacturers of display materials or props, please write the Editor. In the event you wish any other areas covered, please let us know.



About the author—Tony Comorat was educated at University of Scranton, Queens College, N.Y. and New York University. Served in the Navy in World War II. He has taught display in the Virginia Public Schools and New York University. He has conducted his own business designing, building and installing displays, and has worked as display director for a large store chain for several years. Today, he is the display manager for the Navy Ship's store office which provides management and technical assistance to all retail and service facilities in the Navy ashore and afloat in the U.S. and overseas. In addition to this, he has written training manuals, handbooks and various articles on display articles for trade papers. Since his job takes him all over the world, and he is an avid golfer, he has played on courses from Bangkok to London.

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