

Knowing how to use these tools—display properties, materials, decorations and mechanical units—will boost your profits

Let visual aids help

by Tony Comorat

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In previous articles we discussed the "woods" of the game of selling—fixtures, equipment and lighting. These are used to get off the tee, as it were, to make the dramatic, strong drive for "show", attract customers to our shops, and give them the impression that we are alert, fashion right, competitive and worthy of their trust and patronage—just as the good tee shot will invite favorable comment about our ability to hit the ball and play the game.

And, as after the tee shot, we zero in on the green, so we must continue our accurate aim at our merchandising target, sales and profits.

The development of the ability to effectively use the tools of visual merchandising—display properties, materials, decorations and mechanical or moving units—can have the same effect upon the total selling effort as the irons and putter have in the game of golf.

Just as proper and effective use of these tools of the game separate the pros from the duffers, so does the proper use and application of the tools of visual merchandising separate the loser from the profit maker in the operation of the pro shop. It is the shop keeper or retailer who enhances his knowledge of the tools of visual merchandising and display, and applies it intelligently and practically, that separates the looker from the buyer or makes the passerby a customer.

Just as each club in the bag has its purpose, so does each element available for use for attractive presentation and display of merchandise have its specific use or purpose for showing, selling and ringing up the sale.

We must carefully select our tools before we set

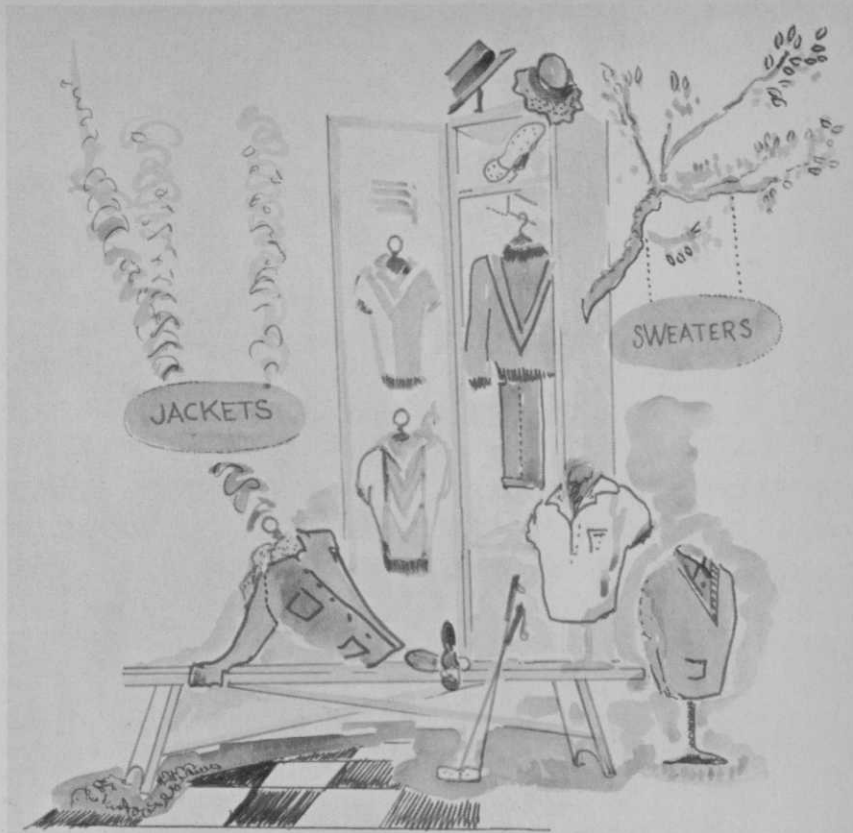
up the display. We must have an understanding and appreciation of the existing or desirable selling atmosphere, the attitudes and desires of the customers, the price, quality, styling and timeliness of the merchandise. All of these factors must be carefully weighed before we determine what type, style or amount of decoration, dramatizing or special display emphasis will be necessary for added visual appeal to the shop or to give the merchandise we have that extra something that will make customers want to buy it in our shop rather than somewhere else.

The merchandise, however, must be the impressive part of every display. The cost or quality of the display materials are to be considered in relation to the job to be done. Inexpensive "fakes" or substitutes are available and they visually appear authentic. They present many opportunities to reduce the cost of attractive displays. Inexpensive papers, plastics, vinyls make it easy to create settings for merchandise that will have the same visual impression on the viewer as the real thing.

There are occasions, however, when natural elements such as bricks, flag stones, fence rails, tree branches can be used very effectively to attain the desired effect. Frequently, these materials are available at no cost or can be borrowed.

Ideas are also important factors and aren't difficult to come by. An excellent source of promotional themes or ideas is your own merchandise presentation calendar. List special events, tournaments, ladies' days, seasonal events, special days for gift giving, etc., with the date the event is to occur. Then make plans to arrange a display that will be

you sell



in harmony with the event. Customers are more easily attracted if you are on their wave length.

Sell anything in the shop as a gift for Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day, etc., by setting up displays in which the gift box, gift ribbons, etc., in the accepted colors for the event will convey the gift giving idea to your customers.

After you've selected an idea or special treatment for the shop, display windows, or interior displays, (and it should be the same for all of them if maximum impact is desired), set about selecting the properties, display materials, decorative materials, decorations and motion or mechanical devices that will give your displays distinction.

To assist you in making your selection and determining how to go about it, a brief description of the different elements that make up the display follows.

PROPERTIES

These are adjuncts to a display; elements or pieces that can be used to symbolize, emphasize or highlight the idea or theme. They can be used decoratively or as a part of the display on which merchandise is arranged. For example, using an electric golf cart as the main property in a display; it could be used to seat one or two male or female mannequins, correctly attired in newest fashions from stock; and golf clubs and other accessories could be added to complete the arrangement.

Tables and chairs from the club dining room make excellent props as well as the benches or reproductions of the benches used in the lockerrooms, on the tees, etc. Reproductions of familiar items from

other popular clubs make excellent properties. Properties in many cases are available from stock or are made by someone with a little imagination and talent. However, avoid an amateurish appearance which will discourage sales, detract from the appearance of the merchandise and prevent the achievement of a smart looking shop or display.

DISPLAY MATERIALS

Under this heading are included papers, fabrics, plastics, woods, vinyls and metals that are available in every imaginable form, finish, design and quality. Such items as grass mats, artificial vacuum formed brick, stone shingles are inexpensive and easy to handle. Any desired authentic setting can be arranged with the available materials. Wood, metal, wire and plastic screens, panels, etc., can be obtained in handsome wood finishes, brass finishes or painted to serve as backgrounds to or dividers of separate display settings.

Fabrics and papers comprise the bulk of the most commonly used materials. They are available in an unbelievable variety of finishes, patterns and coatings. Imitation leathers, shiny patents, etc., can be used to achieve dramatic settings for displays at very little cost. No-seam papers 107" wide and 36' long in dozens of attractive colors can be used to cover large surfaces instead of painting, so that the background color of the display area can be changed in minutes. It provides an excellent surface for lettering, water color painting or chalk sketching.

Floor covering materials that have the appearance of carpet, flagstone or brick are inexpensive and easy to use also.

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DECORATIONS

The selection of items available in this area is wide. Artificial flowers that look real, forsythia, lilacs, dogwood, palms and bamboos, are only a few of the natural preserved or artificial decorations that are available. Flowers, shrubs, potted plants, tree branches, stylized sprays, garlands and other designs make it easy to decorate screens, panels, wall surfaces, columns or selected spots in the store when a new or seasonal look is desired overnight.

Changing the appearance of the entire store through the use of seasonal or special occasion decorations has tremendous value in shocking customers out of their complacency when they've grown accustomed to the same atmosphere in the shop day after day. You can create a lot of new interest in the shop very quickly and inexpensively with the intelligent and dramatic use of decorations.

MOTION OR MECHANICAL DISPLAYS

Battery powered revolving turntables, oscillating armatures, and other mechanical devices have made the application of motion to display relatively convenient and inexpensive.

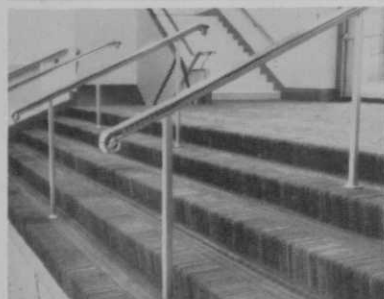
Motion, selectively used, can add impact to a display. Golfer figures, for one, cut out of 3 ply wood swinging a golf club can be used to highlight any

item being sold to help improve the golf swing. Continuous flow water fountains or machines can help achieve a running brook or waterfall that can establish an excellent background for a golf setting. Continuous fabric background with painted scenery can be arranged on vertical rollers, fitted with a reduced gear motor that will cause the scenery to change and make an electric golf cart set up in front of it appear to be moving. A rain machine which would add realism to a display of rainwear in the spring would certainly add to the sales of that type of merchandise. Motion displays and mechanical equipment are available from several manufacturers.

The best thing to keep in mind about motion is to use it to enhance or emphasize the idea. Motion for motion's sake alone is monotonous, non-productive and wasteful.

Always remember, *display is temporary, current and shortlived* and expected to enhance the appearance and desirability of the merchandise being offered for sale.

Finally, make sure color, appearance, texture and design features in all of the elements used are in harmony. Also, emphasize the one basic idea for the current display. The next week or two weeks hence, when you change a display, use another idea, and give it a similar treatment. Then watch interest in your displays grow and best of all, watch sales and profits go up. □



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