

quick fix

By Sharon Leicham

THE TOP 10 MERCHANDISING MISTAKES RETAILERS MAKE AND HOW TO FIX THEM.



WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES. It's easy to do. And many of the merchandising mistakes we make are simply the result of inattention to details. We get caught up in the day-to-day business of running the store and forget to look at our business through our customers' eyes. To help get you out of this rut, we've identified 10 of the most obvious merchandising mistakes with suggestions to fix them and get your store back into tip-top shape.

1 BAD LIGHTING



Too often, retailers overuse fluorescent lighting. It has its place as an overall illumination source but is by no means the only lighting that should be employed in a retail store.

THE FIX: Use fluorescent lights for ambient (overall) lighting and halogen par lamps or low voltage lamps to highlight displays and wash wall presentations with light. A mix of light levels makes a store environment more interesting and highlights products more effectively.



Good example of varied light levels and wall highlighting.

2 CLUTTERED WINDOW DISPLAYS

Customers give window displays three to five seconds of their attention as they pass by. In that short time, it's impossible to effectively see your "visual message" with a window crowded with a plethora of products.

THE FIX: Keep the number of products in a window display simple. One idea is to feature one category of product and show three to five items only (odd numbers are always most visually interesting). For example, hang an odd number of backpacks from the ceiling, then back the window with a large-sized graphic depicting either the packs shown or an outdoor scene. Or combine a small assortment of related products all in the same color or create a simple scene, i.e. camping or climbing.

3 INEFFECTIVE PRODUCT SIGNAGE

Stores tend to either overuse or underutilize signage or use the wrong kind.

THE FIX: Different categories of products need different types of signage. The more technical the product, the more features and end-use information should be highlighted. The most successful signage contains product name, style, features, benefits and price. To create added interest, create short "stories" about how some of your more exotic products have been used by staff or customers and post them next to the items.



4 WRONG FIXTURE PLACEMENT

Often retailers don't consider product rotation, eye-level viewing, product adjacencies and fixture positioning when arranging

their stores. The result is a disorganized store that's hard for customers to shop.

THE FIX: Retailers need to use a variety of fixtures to show and rotate apparel and hardgoods effectively. Small capacity fixtures holding newly arrived merchandise should be placed on walkways. Taller and larger capacity fixtures are placed behind them toward the wall. Wall fixtures must be visible from the aisles and positioned slightly above the height of the fixtures in front. Place related items adjacent to one another. For example, footwear, socks and liners together or tents, bags, pads and camping accessories side by side.



Correct placement of fixtures and 4-ways

5 DIRTY BATHROOMS AND FLOORS

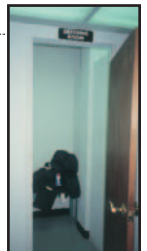
A dirty restroom reflects a sloppy attitude on the part of the storeowner and staff and implies a disregard for customers.

THE FIX: It's simple. Keep restrooms clean and free of suggestive posters and outdated magazines. Maintain a good supply of paper products and, to keep it clean, assign staff members to monitor the bathroom on a daily basis.

6 MESSY DRESSING ROOMS

Dressing rooms can collect pins, hangtags, discarded clothing and any number of other objects.

THE FIX: Keep them cleaned out and you'll be one step closer to shrinkage control as well as reflect a professional attitude. After helping a customer use a dressing room, staff members should check the dressing room, pick up debris and re-hang clothing.



Unattractive and messy

7 INTERRUPTED SIGHT LINES

As customers enter a store, they sweep the space with their eyes to assess whether the product content is what they're expecting. Often, their view is obstructed by large objects and fixtures.

THE FIX: Tall apparel fixtures, gondolas, boats, tents and other oversized items belong close to the walls or in the rear of the store. This placement guarantees clear sight lines from the front entrance.



No interruption of sight lines from front to back.

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8 INTRUSIVE MUSIC

There's nothing worse than the sound of radio commercials filling the retail environment.

THE FIX: If you have to use a radio, use digital radio—it's free of advertisements. Better yet, subscribe to a music service that provides all genres of music. Volume should be loud enough to be heard but not intrusive. Test it by having your staff monitor the volume levels in each area of the store.

9 PRODUCT PLACED TOO HIGH OR TOO LOW

In an attempt to take advantage of every available space in a store, retailers are prone to place products too high on a wall making them impossible for the average person to reach or placing them too low requiring customers to do deep knee bends to procure items.



Products placed too high and low on wall.

THE FIX: The best place to hang product on a wall is in the "impact zone," the area of the wall 3.5 feet to 6.5 feet from the floor. The products in this zone will be noticed first. Above 6.5 feet is the "top zone," a good place to present related products or additional stock. The "bottom

zone," under 3.5 feet, is the least effective space but can be used to stock secondary merchandise that supports the impact zone.

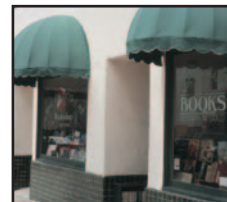
» Correct product placement at eye level and in the "impact zone."



10 LACK OF EXTERIOR SIGNAGE

The lack of the right kind of exterior signage often makes it difficult for customers to find a store. If they can't spot their destination easily, chances are they'll give up trying.

THE FIX: A sign high on the building facade above the entrance is great but you need additional signage. Place the store name on the front windows or by the front entrance at eye-level and consider placing additional signs at right levels to the building so that people approaching your store from the side can see the sign.



Above right: Signage on store windows at eye level for customers passing by. Below left: Signs hanging at right angles to the store exterior attract customers on sidewalks. Below right: Traditional signage high on the exterior.



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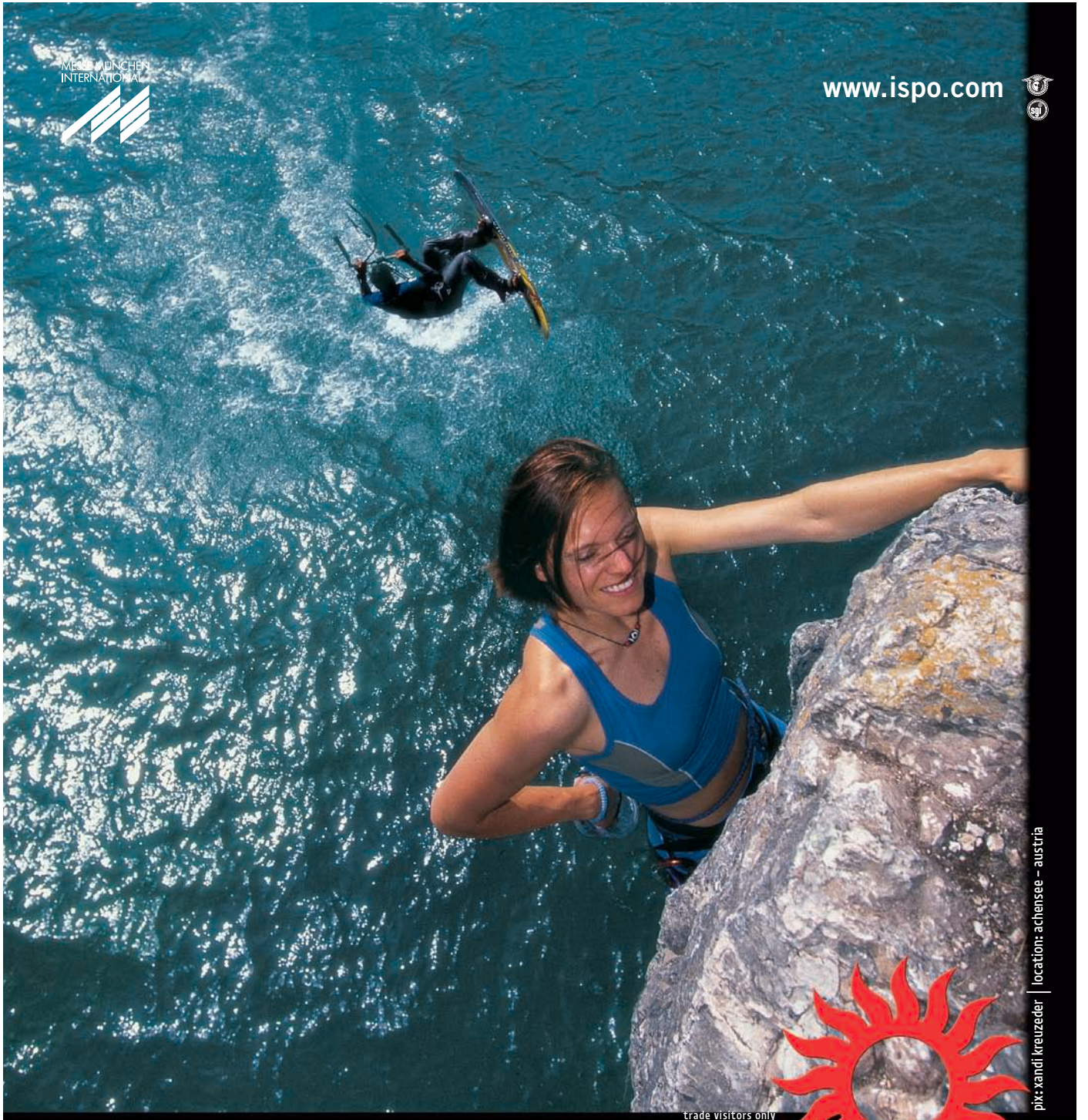
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