



lighten UP!

PROPER LIGHTING CAN GET YOUR CUSTOMERS IN THE MOOD »»» TO BUY. ✱



How many weightlifters does it take to change a lightbulb? Think on that for a bit while we talk about the lightbulbs they're puzzling over and why you should care about lighting. If you choose and design your store's lighting well, you could help customers get in the mood to buy.

This doesn't just mean more lighting or stark rows of bright lights that one finds in the local Wal-Mart where bands of fluorescent and halide lights provide unflattering and boring lighting. This type of lighting is so prevalent in mass and big box stores that it has come to be identified with value-priced or discount goods. Not exactly the mood you want to create.

We mean the *right* lighting. To avoid looking like the local Laundromat or 7-11, limit the use of fluorescents and, when you do use them, combine them with halogen spots and floods to vary light levels and highlight key products. Keep it simple and remember the three A's of lighting:

BY SHARON LEICHAM

- » **Atmosphere:** Create a comfortable atmosphere.
- » **Attraction:** Attract customers to the product.
- » **Appraisal:** Make the product stand out, so customers can appraise it and easily make their buying decisions.

Merchandise needs to be seen to sell. Create contrast between merchandise and the areas around it. If treadmills are on your feature list, direct your spots in their direction so they stand out. People always gravitate toward areas of bright light, provided by lightbulbs of different sorts, which by the way are called "lamps" in the trade.

WHAT KIND TO USE

The best retail lighting plan is one that combines incandescent lamps, a smattering of fluorescents and, of course, natural light. But how do you take advantage of the benefits and downplay the weaknesses of each?

- » **Fluorescent lighting isn't really on the no-no list;** it just needs to be used well. It is a good overall light source, especially if you utilize the fluorescent lighting that replicates daylight and you use it with other light sources.
- » **Incandescent light is the type you use in your home.** It provides a warm light and comes in many different types of lamps. The best incandescent lamps for retail are low-voltage halogen. Low voltage is basically incandescent, with certain advantages: It provides sharp, white light. It is also highly directional lighting, allowing you more control over where it goes and how much of it goes there.
- » **MR 16 halogen lamps are often used with low-voltage fixtures and tracks.** Low-voltage lighting requires a transformer (which is often built into the fixture). It needs insulation and ventilation because of the heat it generates. Use low-voltage to highlight displays, front windows, the cash/wrap counter and display areas on walls.

» **Natural light is the best lighting.** Not only is it free, it gives great interest to store interiors. However, it's not as available—or as predictable—as other forms of lighting and may need better controls. There can be too much natural light in stores with large windows. If too much natural light is your predicament, consider installing outside awnings or inside blinds to reduce the amount of light entering the store, or check out semi-transparent screening that can be installed on the inside of windows to decrease the amount of light. Stay away from white or light-colored walls





since they can reflect too much light.

PICKING FIXTURES

Low-voltage halogen lamps on tracks are very effective in highlighting product because they are flexible to use, easy to install, and a breeze to position and re-position. If your store is crammed to the hilt with equipment and you want to make it seem more spacious, use a track light fixture to spotlight an area or a particular piece of equipment. It will steer the eye away from areas of cluttered equipment and onto what you want your customers to see first.

Up lighting is another effective way to direct the eye. As it implies, up lighting is lighting pointed up instead of down. Wall sconces are up-light fixtures; so are lamp cans that can be placed on the floor by a display or a wall to add illumination and drama.

If you have a soffit (a decorative molding along the ceiling line), install light strips along it to provide soft up lighting and add interest.

PRICING IT OUT

The different types of lighting and the number of fixtures required to light a fitness store or department depends on the store size and shape, the ceiling height,

and wall and floor colors. When planning, take into consideration the costs.

Fluorescent lighting is moderate in cost and inexpensive to operate. The newer color-balanced lamps cost a bit more, but have a long life. Incandescent light is moderate in cost because of the simplicity of its fixtures, but has a short life. It burns hotter, so you'll likely have additional air conditioning costs. Low voltage incandescent and halogen lights cost more but last longer and burn cooler so energy costs are reduced. Natural light is, of course, free—although the awnings, blinds and screens you may need are not.

There isn't one solution for every store—only you can decide on the mood you want to create as well as the money you want to spend—but there are some simple lighting guidelines that will improve the quality of lighting in your store:

- » If you're using fluorescents, switch from cool and warm white, to rare earth (RE). RE lamps give better color quality and produce more light.
- » Put more light on your ceilings and walls. Ceiling brightness makes spaces seem taller, and brighter walls make



spaces seem larger.

- » Lighter paint colors improve the efficiency of your lighting, but avoid walls that are too stark and could create glare or a chilly mood.
- » Know your customers. The older your customer, the amount of light needed for seeing goes up and the amount of glare that can be tolerated goes down.
- » Know when to hire a lighting professional. Lighting designers offer a range of solutions to lighting problems, and they will often design a lighting plan for you for free if you buy your lighting from them.

So, back to our weightlifters at the start: How many weightlifters does it take to change a lightbulb? Four, of course. One to change the bulb, one to spot, and two to yell, "Com'on," "It's all you," and "You got it!"

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