



freshen *up*

Move over, Heloise, GearTrends® provides a list of *helpful hints* to clean and organize your store.



W

hen companies are looking for new hires, they post a classified ad with a list of job responsibilities. The list includes the obvious (selling merchandise), the expected (operating a POS terminal) and the mundane (stocking shelves). And every so often, seemingly as an afterthought, you'll see "maintaining cleanliness" listed.

While it may seem low on the totem pole of responsibilities, maintaining cleanliness should actually be high on your must-do list. How your store looks can positively or negatively influence customer expectations and perceptions. Let's face it—cleaning isn't fun, but it is a necessary evil. It is the store manager's responsibility to reinforce maintenance procedures on a regular basis with all staff members—and lead by example. From the sidewalk outside the front door to the department areas to the bathrooms, everything should be in tip-top shape.

Speaking of bathrooms, here's a real life account of main-

tenance gone awry. I recently shopped at a very nice and well-merchandised outdoor store. After fingering the soft shells, fleeces and shorts, I made my way to the restroom—a bit apprehensively, I'll admit. You never know what you're going to find when you open the door to a public restroom. This one, thankfully, was fairly clean...but there were some problems. The handle on the stall door was broken, as was the toilet paper holder. To make matters worse, while tugging on the roll, it disengaged and slid into the next stall. And, the roll of paper towels for drying hands stood next to the sink, while the paper towel holder next to it sat empty. OK, OK, it could have been worse. But the attention to detail that I expected was not there. The restroom didn't match the rest of the store. Don't let one untended area of the store color customer perception about how the store as a whole is run.

BY SHARON LEICHAM



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ALL ABOARD

Maintaining cleanliness is not a glamour job, but it is all-important in creating a store environment in which customers feel comfortable. While people may not tell you when something isn't up to par, they are still forming an opinion that is less than complimentary.

Store maintenance fails when the staff becomes lackadaisical about the basic responsibilities of keeping the store looking neat and clean. Too often, salespeople feel more comfortable behind the counter than on the floor straightening, folding and re-stocking. Things can become invisible rather quickly if they are not refreshed or moved. Managers should plan periodic store reorganizations or category repositioning a couple of

times a year. It doesn't have to be a store makeover or major category moves. All it needs is a bit of a shuffle to make things look new again. An added plus is that minor moves provide the opportunity to do some deep cleaning.

One key to remember is *every* staff member should be actively involved. In outdoor stores, there is a tendency to relegate certain tasks to female staffers and other jobs to males. This needs to change. The time has come to forget the stereotypes and make sure everyone on staff is comfortable merchandising, maintaining and cleaning every area of the store—and that includes folding shirts and pants.

GET IN THE ZONE

Just as the store needs refreshing from time-to-time, staff members need new challenges and responsibilities. One way to keep your employees on their toes and motivated is to implement the zone method of assigning people to watch over and merchandise certain store areas, or zones, periodically. Avoid having any staff member stuck in one area of the store. Rotating them from area to area stimulates their creative juices and gives them a new perspective on the merchandise. You'll discover that your staff will come up with new ideas for each department and may even employ some surprising and successful creative selling techniques.

Establish maintenance procedures for the entire store and make them part of your staff routine. You may want to appoint one person to oversee the maintenance program, but all staff members must be capable of doing all jobs.

A checklist of maintenance by day, month and year can help ensure procedures are followed and monitored. Here are tips to get your maintenance calendar together:

EVERYDAY RESPONSIBILITIES

(Remember, none of these should EVER be considered gender specific...EVER!)

- » Fold apparel and straighten stacks.
- » Stock shelves and maintain display areas.
- » Pick up tags on the sales floor and in dressing rooms.
- » Remove empty hangers from fixtures and dressing rooms.
- » Remove signage that's past its prime and straighten signage on fixtures.
- » Dust fixtures, shelves, boats, bikes and other over-sized items.
- » Clean glass front doors and disinfect door handles.
- » Check the bathroom periodically;

- restock toilet paper, towels and soap.
- » Vacuum the rug.
- » Empty trash.
- » Clean the cash-wrap counter and remove clutter from it.
- » Pick up trash on the sidewalk and in the parking lot.

TWICE A MONTH:

- » Clean all glass cases and bins.
- » Wipe down fixtures and shelves.
- » Thoroughly clean the bathroom sink, toilets and mirror, and mop the floor. (You may want to hire a professional cleaning service to do this.)
- » Give the sidewalk and parking lot a good hosing.
- » Mop linoleum and tile floors throughout the store.

QUARTERLY:

- » Rotate staff to different areas.
- » Clean all display windows inside and out.

TWICE A YEAR:

- » Check heating and air conditioning filters and replace when necessary.
- » Check lighting and replace burnt-out lamps.
- » Straighten stock room.
- » Clean carpets.
- » Reorganize and refresh category areas.

EVERY TWO YEARS:

- » Paint the walls to keep them free of marks and scrapes.
- » Clean light fixtures.
- » Renew outside signage.

A clean, well-maintained store environment makes it a better place to work and shop. A well-organized store attracts customers and increases sales, and is also safer because there are no hazardous obstacles in the pathways to products. And, finally, a clean store saves money with the periodic maintenance of carpets, lighting fixtures and heating and cooling filters. It's a fact that "maintaining cleanliness" is in everyone's best interest. 🏠

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