



BY SHARON LEICHAM

# the case joint



**Y**OU SEE THEM IN JEWELRY STORES, IN purse and cosmetics sections in department stores, and in museum exhibits. You even encounter them in outdoor stores. With apologies to the TV show “Jeopardy,” the question is, **“WHAT ARE SHOWCASES?”**

Merchandising under glass is here to stay because, in most cases, it's the only way to ensure that high-priced items—those small enough to be secreted into a backpack, purse or pocket—don't walk out of the store. So, as a shoplifting deterrent, they are very effective.

Showcases (sometimes called glass cases) also have the unique ability to direct attention to small and valuable articles that might get lost in a large display window. The perceived value of products presented in showcases increases when properly displayed.

But, hold on: There's a downside to showcases. Sure, they keep expensive and easily shoplifted items out of reach, but they also prevent customers from experiencing the feel, weight and workings of products. They prevent the tactile experience that's so important in evaluating an item. They also require a staff person to retrieve and show items, and if no one is around, a sale can easily be lost.

Showcases also can be cumbersome. If they aren't on casters or if they need an electrical outlet to provide lighting, chances are they will stay in their original position. That may not be helpful when time comes to re-



**GLASS DISPLAY** showcases limit theft, but may deter sales unless used properly and creatively.

organize fixtures in the store. There's the maintenance issue, too. Glass can be scratched, and the longer a glass case is used, the more abuse it takes. Acrylic cases are even less scratch-resistant. The insides of cases are often overlooked, and once merchandised, they often stay the same way for a long time, ultimately, gathering dust.

Are there any substitutes for showcases? Not really. There are anti-shoplifting devices like recoiler caddies used for displaying and securing the likes of cellular phones. But they're not really appropriate for most of the merchandise outdoor retailers need to secure (GPS units are an exception).

Showcases must fit into the store design and they must be appropriate for the type of merchandise that belongs under glass, such as knives, watches, high-end sunglasses, GPS units or multi-use tools. They also come in different sizes, different configurations, in different materials and with different optional equipment. Here's a quick look at what's available at display houses and from online suppliers:

SHARON LEICHAM PHOTOGRAPHY



# we know.



MOD.  
CHOLATSE GV

## Yes, we know the outdoor world

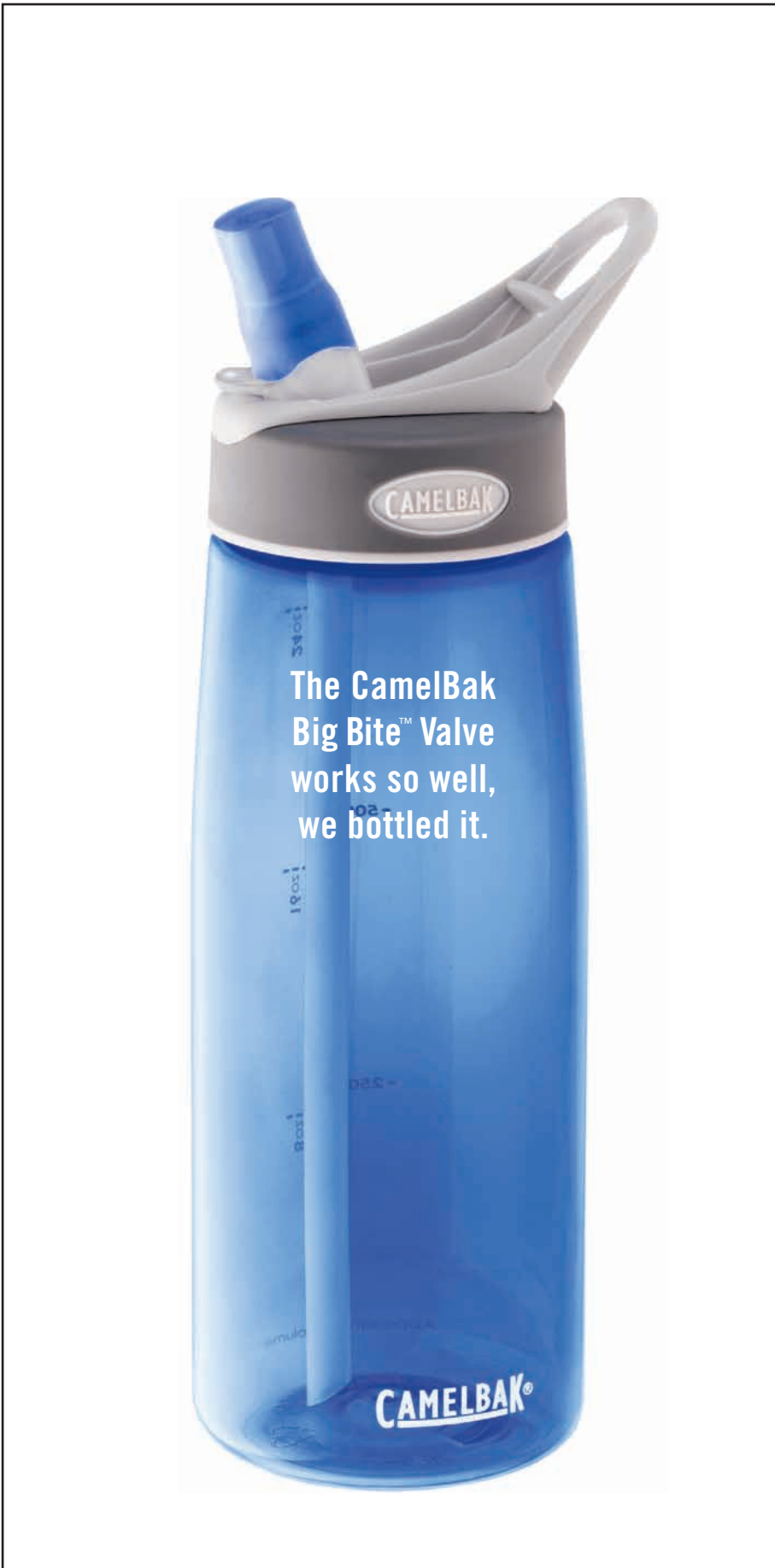
But only with you, have we been able to set new standards in alpine equipment. Yes, we do know the outdoor world, but without you, we couldn't have come so far.

We thank all, climbers, alpinists and explorers for allowing us to reach new peaks in product design that set new standards in outdoor gear. Our involvement in climbing has helped us develop well built equipment that is really one step further, as we claim.

But we never stop looking ahead. So, keep focusing on your goals and we'll keep paying attention!



[www.asolo.com](http://www.asolo.com)



The CamelBak  
Big Bite™ Valve  
works so well,  
we bottled it.



» **Display Towers:** Towers vary in height, materials and configurations. They come with or without wood bases and in round, hexagonal, square or rectangular shapes. Place them away from walls so they can be viewed easily from all sides.

Look for cases that come with optional casters, interior lighting and extra glass shelves. Because they are see-through, towers can be 6- to 7-feet high. Use them throughout the store, like in the climbing area for displaying hardware or in the camping area for stoves or bear spray. The casters make it easy to move the towers from area to area as your needs change.

» **Wall Cabinets:** These are glass cases that hang on the wall. Wall cabinets allow you to get items ordinarily stocked in a glass counter showcase out onto the sales floor. They're more for decoration than function, though, as they require a staff person to open them. Use them to duplicate the products in the more accessible glass counter unit.

» **Counters:** Glass counters or showcases adjacent to the cash register are convenient places to keep products under glass. For this location, they can be half glass and half storage cabinet or full glass. Pick one based on how much merchandise you want to show, but having a storage area is a plus.

» **Countertop Showcases:** Three-shelf countertop showcases are great if space is a consideration. They are most effective placed near the register, but can also be set on a table or shelf.

» **Countertop Boxes:** Jewelry stores often use countertop glass or acrylic boxes to show special items that look best when not surrounded by a bunch of other products. They are available in different sizes.

» **Pedestals:** Pedestals are great for highlighting products in high traffic areas like the space 10 feet inside the front entrance, the area across from the cash/wrap counter

and in specialty departments. They attract attention and add value by isolating important products. Keep the number of items at a minimum for maximum impact.

### MAKING SHOWCASES WORK

Because showcases create a barrier between the objects shown and the viewer, it's important that the cases have lighting. Think of a showcase as being a miniature theater stage. Consider how much light the objects in the case will need. If they are metallic, they will have a high reflective value and will need less light. If they are dark (as in sunglasses), the objects will absorb light and brighter light will be required.


Think, too, about the angle of the lighting. If only overhead lighting is used in a case, the objects on lower shelves will be deprived of light and become less visible and saleable. Use mirrors in the bottom of the case to diffuse light to the objects on lower shelves or place strip lighting in the bottom of the case to shine up.

Showcase lighting options include track lighting utilizing low-voltage lights or light strips sold at Home Depot. Color-changing LED lighting now comes in small strips that work in showcases and add eye-catching colored light.

Displaying items in showcases is really no different than planning a window display, only smaller. Keep in mind that items must be displayed at different heights to create interest. Setting all products on a shelf at the same level is boring and reduces the value of each. Use acrylic risers or natural materials like rocks to vary the height of displayed items.

Consider the balance of objects in the case. Don't place all small objects on one side of a shelf and large ones on the other. When working with multiple shelves, the smaller objects should be on the top shelves and the larger ones on the bottom. Keep categories merchandised together: knives with knives, watches with watches, etc. Trying to show too many different items in a case can be confusing. Keep displays simple.

Use props as backgrounds for products on display. Natural materials like river rocks, leaves, moss, glass marbles and bamboo mats are preferred.

Think of showcases as mini-show windows. They're an important part of a fixture inventory. Keep them well-merchandised and well-maintained, and they will return profits to the bottom line. 

» To read more merchandising ideas by Sharon Leicham, go to [www.SNEWSnet.com/merchandising](http://www.SNEWSnet.com/merchandising).



CAMELBAK BOTTLE *The better bottle.* [camelbak.com](http://camelbak.com)