



More Sales Through Appearances and Services

With retailers reporting weak fourth quarter results, with same store Q4 2007 sales increasing by 1% or less over 2006, and only 2%-3% same store increases for 2007 overall, forecasts for 2008 retail sales are conservative at best.

Executing store fundamentals in sales and in-store marketing becomes even more important in tough times. In all times, and especially in difficult economic times of a weak retail climate, keeping looks and appearances fresh is key to keeping sales up.

This goes for product packaging and brand displays by manufacturers, and for signs and layout in stores by owners. Using fresh appearances to energize faithful customers and stimulate new customers is critical to drive more sales.

Signs and packaging are the first things that make a customer impression, where quality and value have to be conveyed through appealing presentation. People look before they touch. Creating a positive appearance throughout a store stimulates a receptive customer, who then is attracted to individual product packaging and brand displays to buy.

Take a look at your store and ask yourself how you can create a new atmosphere buzz with signs and with product layout to keep the customer on their toes without disorienting or confusing them. Focus on in-store communications that convey quality, style, value, and alignment with issues that resonate with customers. Use new signage to tell your customers how you are going green. Use new signs to tell your customers that for the spring season a portion of all sales is going to be donated to your local humane society or other cause that your customers will appreciate.

Ask your manufacturers if they are planning any new packaging or branding, and if so, when will the new look be arriving in stores. Retailers can use the advance notice for promoting existing inventory, and not be caught by surprise with large quantities of old-looking material when the new look arrives.

Always be asking what works and what doesn't work. Sometimes the best possible appearances are not enough. If a product just isn't moving, liquidate it out of inventory to make room for something that will make you a profit.

What else can you sell to your customer? Equine owners are generally animal friendly, having dogs and cats as pets. Do you carry pet treats, pet feeds and supplies, even pet gifts? These items can be presented at your POS to great advantage.

In addition to your product inventory, are there services you could provide to your equine customers? Maybe trailer services like maintenance, lubricating, washing/detailing could be add-on services if you have the space and facility. Maybe tack refurbishing to clean,



detail, restore luster, and renew old tack. These services take mostly elbow grease without costing anything in product inventory that can stay too long on the shelf.

Ask your customers in a survey what you might be able to do for them as a service. This provides another outreach to your customers, they will appreciate being asked, and you can learn something valuable that could be turned into a revenue bearing service.