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# Merchandising Matters

Educational retail blog focused on maximizing silent selling



## About Me

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Monday, January 4, 2010

## Move that merchandise!

The holiday season is over, and spring inventory is arriving. How can you simultaneously achieve the following goals:

- Move holiday specific product (holiday-themed hard and soft goods)
- Push clearance product
- Introduce new product
- Clean house before inventory

Planning is, once again, one of the most important elements of a successful shoulder season. About two weeks before Christmas I visited a small clothing store that sold trendy and fashionable clothing, but had tired and messy storefront windows. While talking about merchandising, I was told "We don't have time for merchandising now." Not making time for merchandising is not making time to maximize sales dollars. I don't know a single retailer that would say they don't want to drive sales.

The key to remember is that planning need NOT involve endless hours and if effectively done is not wasted time. Planning and its implementation, regardless of how your store achieves it, is all about communication. Tools and strategies you might consider utilizing:

- Simple maps that plot where you intend to place product. These maps should be the tools that help you determine how to differentiate between clearance product and new product introduction. Handwritten maps on graph paper are perfectly adequate.
- Aggressively stage your holiday ornaments, calendars and cards and be sure signage is strong. The holidays will come again next year and shoppers love bargains!
- Categorize your clearance merchandise (this is especially important for hard goods) into groups that make sense (i.e. home goods vs. toys vs. jewelry, etc.) Check out my article on "Clearance clean up."
- Analyze where you will place clearance product vs. full-priced product. Will you have a clearance section or will clearance be incorporated into new product?
- Know what is in your warehouse and if you have the room, get as much of it on the floor as possible. One retailer I worked with was keeping spring bags off the floor because it was winter until I reminded them that some customers might be planning to head to warmer climates.

Shoulder seasons also provide a unique opportunity to refresh your sales

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floor, and the balance between presenting seasonally relevant product and introducing new product for the coming season can be a delicate dance especially if your store is located in climates like the northeast. Clothing, especially requires thought. Don't leave your spring/summer merchandise in the warehouse until the temperatures rise! I can't tell you how often customers asked me for shorts, swimsuits and tank tops in the depths of winter. The key is *how* you go about introducing it.

- Think layers! Layer lighter, spring clothing underneath current season merchandise.
- Make a travel-themed display portraying lighter elements.
- Consider grouping your clearance product together and provide prominent locations (walls, front of department displays, etc.) for introducing new merchandise.
- Review your merchandise placement periodically. What moves best in what location? It is important to stay on top of all product placement decisions during shoulder seasons.

A fresh store will get sales. I was endlessly fascinated with the renewed interest from shoppers when all I had done was clean up and reorganize product. Keep your plan simple and communicated, and you will be well on your way.

Posted by Robin Enright at 8:10 AM

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