

Rick Segel – Timeless Tips for Retailers

Last week retail specialist Rick Segel presented an exciting, motivational and informative seminar for retail businesses in the redevelopment area. We asked Rick to discuss what makes potential customers walk through the front door of your business and for specific guidelines to make your business more appealing—to make someone want to stop and enter your store. Here are some of the major points he offered to help you:

- Store Windows: A store window offers a glimpse into another world; your window is your ultimate billboard to invite customers to visit, browse, stop in, and enjoy. Don't clutter it up with "junk."
- Storefronts are a "silent salesperson" and do more for your business than anything else. Your storefront "teases" customers about what is inside and creates interest in your merchandise. It also defines your business and builds an emotional connection to your store. "Create a niche and you'll get rich," and "You can't be all things to all people."
- What Prevents Customers from Entering your Store? If your window and/or store is dark and dirty, you will drive customers away. If your window is plastered with posters and signs (yes, even signs promoting community events), you will drive customers away. Discounting the appearance of your storefront also discounts your merchandise. "Respect yourself; respect your customers, and customers will respect your product." Community events should be displayed no more than one week prior to the event and removed immediately thereafter.
- What Makes a Storefront Exciting? The displays must be clean and well-tended. "Chipped lettering is the same as chipped nail polish." Interesting displays, effective lighting of merchandise and a sense of humor are essential elements.
- When To Use Exterior Banners—only for a going-out-of-business sale.
- Lighting—The Most Misunderstood and Underutilized Element. Rick never recommends track lighting. Pole lighting is fine, and the small tensor lights are widely used. Lighting should highlight the item and not the wall, ceiling or floor.
- Color—Beige is the most utilized wall color to enable merchandise to be the dominating feature; however, some displays will "pop" against colored walls in unique situations. "Color is King."
- The Ultimate Customer Greeting: "Thank you for coming in." When the customer enters, ensure they will see "planned confusion." Place your cash register near the front and group exciting displays together to give everyone the feel of activity and excitement.
- Signage provides instant enhancement of your product, brand, professionalism and experience. Signs should never be hand-written (unless you can print in perfect calligraphy or other professional style). Studies prove an increase of sales by 43 percent when interior displays have professional-looking signage with them. Aggressive signage can reduce additional advertising expense. Directional internal signs increase sales between 4 and 12 percent.

- Why Do Customers Need Signs? Signs encourage customers to buy products they did not know they needed, to provide explanations, and to highlight new products.
- Why Do Retailers Need Signs? Retailers with effective signage increase soft, suggestive selling, increase multiple and impulse buying, and decrease the need for personnel and advertising.
- The ISEEE Formula for Signage:
 - Inform
 - Sell
 - Educate
 - Entertain
 - Emotionalize

“It is the story that sells,” and a combination of the above elements in signage “are home runs.” “Features tell but stories sell.”

Final notes on visual merchandising essentials:

- Customers don’t bend, stretch or reach.
- Where the eyes go, the feet follow.
- The store should always look full (better to have empty space than empty racks).
- Make your business more likable by adding an emotional component.