

AS SEEN IN
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It's Not *Just* What You Say

In the world of Sales, many things speak louder than words. The non-verbal aspects of your customer interactions accentuate what you say, how you are perceived, and set the foundation for an on-going customer relationship. BY MARK OKUN

Our appearance speaks louder than words. You don't want consumers thinking that if you can't dress yourself well, how can you dress their home? Before we utter a word to potential clients, they see our appearance — not only the clothes we wear and how we wear them, but also our stance, posture, and expressions.

The rules regarding how we dress in a sales role have evolved over time, from conservative to casual. The clothes that you wear to work in a lighting showroom will vary with your daily functions. Do you only work on the sales floor, or do you also get involved with display? There are

some foundational rules to follow whether you are wearing a suit and tie or a shirt with slacks.

Work clothes should never be shabby or worn. Always check for tattered, frayed, or otherwise damaged clothes and retire them to a more suitable use immediately. Clothes should be clean and wrinkle-free. There should be no permanent impressions or wear marks from items that have been kept in your pockets over time.

I have a vivid memory of walking into a well-known local store with the intent of making a purchase. As I was slowly approached by a salesperson, I noticed that he was wearing a pair of scuffed shoes, his pants were stained, plus the shirt he was wearing was ill-fitting and had a

threadbare collar. I wondered why the company did not instruct its employees on appearance. I didn't buy anything there.

Was it fair to judge my buying decision based on appearance? Not really, but I could not get past the visual deterrent in front of me. The point is, people make decisions in seconds and I was not buying from him or the company he worked for based on appearance alone.

According to studies that have been performed, when customers engage with a well-dressed salesperson they are more confident in the conversation and are open to recommendations. Simply put, pay attention to design and style trends, then dress yourself a bit better than your customer base expects. There is no need to get your clothes at some fancy designer store unless you want to; the standards of appropriate dress apply to any type of apparel.

When you look like a professional you will be treated like a professional.

DRESSING IN-STORE

A store's appearance counts, too. The clutter of hanging electrical jungles and over-populated board space can cause confusion, which is amplified if there is competition between multiple brands or similar-looking items.

Consumers are faced with a tremendous amount of stimulus. This makes it difficult for the client to distinguish between the choices they have or engaging all together. Merchandising sends a powerful, yet silent, message. Customers want to see displays they can mimic at home, and no one wants to mimic overcrowding or clutter.

Like it or not, I have to mention basic house-keeping. It bears repeating: burned-out lamps are silent sales killers, and broken or missing glass sends a message of poor quality. Of course, there is the problem of dust. How a showroom is cared for indicates to customers how they will be cared for during and after the sale.

It is the SHOW part of showroom that people are coming to experience. When customers make the effort to leave the comfort of their homes to visit a store, the store must be impeccable in appearance and display.

IN-STORE SIGNAGE COUNTS

Interior store signage has several roles: first and foremost, it grabs customers' attention and directs



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them toward a purchase. Most often signs are used to convey pricing, direct clients to locations, or express policies and rules. While this is all well and good, a sign can do so much more to enhance the customers' visit and their desire to purchase from you. Signs can silently provide reinforcement of the message you want your customers to receive. A sign may be a reminder of the benefits of LED lamps or an introduction to an associated product line that is being featured.

Signs can also entertain. Well-placed humorous signs can cause customers to slow down for a moment to stop and think, giving them a mental pause. When the client sees a sign and gets a smile or laugh from it, you've got a better chance of connecting with them and making a sale. The element of humor is very appealing to Millennials who are entering the market daily, and we certainly want to bond with them.

SIGNAGE DRIVES UPSELL

Customers have come into your store for the purpose of seeing and buying lighting, and with the transparency of IMAP pricing, showrooms will need to increase their margins and the dollars that are transacted. This happens when there is an increase in the amount of side-sell and up-sell items on the sales being made. Signs make it easier to introduce additional items that go together naturally.

For example, once the customer has selected a lighting fixture, the next step is the lamps. It seems only natural to present the lamps after you know the fixture that the client has picked out. Now place signs around the showroom that speak of LED — some of the signs can be educational or introduce products, and others may be a bit humorous. Both plant a seed in the mind of the customer that can be triggered in a presentation. With a well-thought out sales process, these type of signs can also be used as sales props.

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RETRO



VINTAGE SIGN

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NOT ALL SIGNS ARE CREATED EQUALLY

There are some important rules to follow when producing a good sign:

- **Make sure it is concise.** You don't have the space to write a novel. Provide clear information at a glance.
- **Fonts tell a story.** Some are formal, others are comical, and many fall in between. Select the correct font in order to tailor the feeling you want to convey. There are numerous articles relative to fonts and their appeal, but simply put, be concerned with the clarity and the size of the font you select to make sure that it is not in contrast to the message you are sending. For example: "Our return policy must be taken seriously"
- **Colors used in signage can turn up the volume of what is being read.** In most cases, you will want the in-store signs to match your company colors. However, when you want to make a pop or emphasize a call to action, bring in high-contrast colors. Using red and yellow - or combining the two - are the best colors for visibility, plus older clients can see these colors better. Don't use these colors too often or the client will develop a tolerance to them and not see the signs at all.



Mark Okun is Business Contributor to enLIGHTenment Magazine and President of Mark Okun Consulting & Performance Group. He has more than 30 years of hands-on retail experience training and coaching sales associates in the lighting and furniture industries. Mark@bravo-businessmedia.com

INTERACTIVE KIOSKS

The use, or at least the concept, of the digital kiosk in the retail store has been around for a long time. With all the advancements in technology, the kiosk can morph into something special. They can be interactive information centers that enhance the story you want to tell about your company, products, service, or staff. Taking a cue from a museum trip I took with one of my granddaughters, producing one- to three-minute educational videos will grab customers' attention and provide them with some curated information. A kiosk also provides a place where a customer can independently scroll through a digital catalog while waiting. The goal is to increase the customers' time spent in the store and to inform those customers who refrain from initial human-to-human interaction.

QUIET PREPARATION

One of the most impactful aspects of non-verbal selling is taking the time to prepare. There is no fanfare or glory for being the best prepared salesperson, but the rewards you will get in the form of superior long-term customer relationships and bigger, better sales are great. Preparation is an essential part of the sales profession, helping you in building skills and acquiring necessary knowledge.

Preparation encompasses every part of what it takes to be a professional lighting salesperson. The baseline includes an understanding of hard and soft skills including basic electricity, interior design, familiarity with architectural elements, and the soft skills of sales presentations, communication, and understanding people. The list is vast and preparation continues throughout a professional's career. When you enter the lighting sales and design business, you must stay on the cutting edge of the latest innovations - both the technical and the interpersonal.

When these non-verbal skills are embraced and implemented, the meaning of the phrase, "Silence Is Golden," will become apparent. ❖

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Jute rope frame with bronze accents that create a stunning and contemporary feel



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