

WOMAN

The woman- Friendly Store

Making your store woman-friendly does not mean painting the walls pink and adding plush carpeting.

It means having thorough knowledge of what appeals to women in a store environment.

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The Woman-Friendly Store

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mirrors

A study conducted by *Conde Nast Sports for Women* queried women about what was most important to them when they shopped in a local sports specialty store for equipment. Number one on the list was the helpfulness of the sales staff. Number two was the knowledge of the sales staff and number three was service. Cleanliness ranked fourth on the list.

The same study asked women what store attributes were important when they shopped for apparel and footwear. Here, the rankings changed. Store cleanliness ranked number one, service number two, and helpfulness of the sales staff came in third.

Cleanliness, dressing rooms, gender-specific departments, and ease of shopping are just some of the important store attributes that require attention to physical space.

Let's take a walk through the outdoor store to point out what can be done to make it more woman-friendly.

Making an Entrance

Your store entrance is the first thing a customer sees when approaching the store. The way it looks and the message it conveys must visually link to the expectations of the customer. Keep it clean, sweep the walk, check your signs to make sure they are lighted at night and in good repair. Awnings should be washed regularly, exterior paint must be kept looking fresh.

Once inside the store, women will stop for an imperceptible fraction of time to scan the store to see if it's worth their time to stay. In that period of time, they should be able to see the breadth of what you have to offer. Otherwise, they'll walk.

Mirrors

When women are shopping for outerwear, they will most likely take the jacket or parka off the rack, look for a nearby mirror, and try it on in front of the mirror to gauge how it looks on them. That's where they will make their buying decision. Position a full-length mirror in your women's section of the store and make it easy to find. If you have a large women's area, install two or more mirrors in strategic locations.

Women shopping for pants or shirts will do their trying-on in the dressing room. That's where they will make their decision to buy.

Reasons why women won't enter a store:

- Loud music • Store looks dirty • Messy displays • Store looks crowded
- Style/type of clothing • Types of people in the store • Flashing lights
- Inconsiderate/unpleasant employees • Poor taste • High prices

Display Windows

Your store windows help establish the character and image of your store and also provide a visual explanation of the type of product you carry. How often have you been asked, “Where can I find that jacket in the window?” Remember, windows:

- Attract attention.
- Show the type of product inside the store.
- Cross-merchandise equipment and apparel.
- Highlight individual or new products.
- Sell product.

To make the most of your window displays:

- Wash windows regularly.
- Keep signage looking neat.
- Get rid of soiled, torn, faded, hand-lettered signs.
- Install track lighting; inspect and replace burned-out lamps regularly.
- Avoid clutter in the display.

**Windows
attract
customers -
make them
exciting...**

Window Intelligence

Display windows come in all sizes and configurations. It's helpful to recognize that the optimum viewing height for a display window is from 4 to 8 feet off the ground. This places product within eye-level range.

Why is this important? Women are motivated to enter a store when it has interesting window displays. If product is placed too low- 1-3 feet from the ground - it is hard to see and less appealing. If your store has ground level display windows, build a platform to get the product up and within optimal view.

Dressing Rooms

Dressing rooms can make or break a sale. Why? Because women make the majority of their buying decisions in the dressing room.

Dressing rooms should be adjacent to the apparel area. If a woman has to search for a dressing room, she might become discouraged and leave the store.

Dressing rooms must be comfortable and roomy. In fact, if you want to please your women customers you'll make it large enough to fit a stroller. Include a built-in bench, or at least a chair, where purses, diaper bags, and other things can be placed. Put multiple hooks on the walls for hanging items. A full-length mirror is a must. Many women will not leave the dressing room to view themselves in a mirror. Here's a tip from a veteran sportswear retailer: Place a half-inch wide shim behind the bottom of the mirror to slightly tilt it. This reflects a taller, thinner image.

Dressing Rooms need to be comfortable and roomy

Forget using the fluorescent lighting you use in the rest of the store. Install incandescent lighting and position it just above eye-level on either side of the mirror or around it. Dressing room doors should go to the floor and the door should close securely. Dress up the dressing room walls with your store logo and exciting adventure photos or posters.

And here's another tip: the outside of the dressing room doors make a great display space for coordinated outfits.

Traffic Control

Most people will move to the right upon entering a store. The explanation for this behavior eludes the experts but it seems to be true more often than not. Knowing how customers move through a store will give you clues about where to place departments and how to merchandise within them.

The products you want customers to see first should be placed to the right of the entrance. The movement of customers to the right ensures this area receives maximum exposure. If you're serious about letting your customers know you carry women's apparel, place your women's department in this right front section. At the least, highlight a woman's outfit cross-merchandised with footwear and a backpack in this area.

Create merchandised, coordinated outfits on the ends of your 4-ways and T-stands and angle them so the displays are facing the customers as they start their move through the store. Any displays you can create on the free-standing floor or mannequin displays also attract attention to the product.

Departments

Regardless of the size of your store, the woman's shopping experience will be more efficient if different product sections are clearly marked. Use signage to differentiate between men's and women's sleeping bags, packs, footwear, and apparel.

Men's and women's apparel sections should also be clearly separated. Place them on opposite sides of the front of the store, or b create an aisle between the two sections if they must be placed adjacent to each other in the front of the store.

The goal is force your customers to walk by your apparel offering on their way to the products they've actually come to buy. Apparel is largely an impulse purchase, so take advantage of that fact by exposing customers to as much of it as possible.

If your customers have come to your store looking for apparel, all the better. With the apparel sections placed up front, they can find what they're looking for easily.

Reasons women will enter a store

- Need clothes
- Interesting visual displays
- Heard about the store from friends
- Saw the store's ads
- Like the music

-Women's Wear Daily

signage

A large number of customers will walk out of stores because the check-out line is too long and the store is too crowded.

-Women's Wear Daily

Cash It, Wrap It

It may not seem so, but your cash/wrap area is one of the most important in the store. This is where the final transaction is made and money changes hands. Because women most often carry purses or daypacks, it is a convenience to have a two-tiered counter with one waist-high section and one raised section.

The waist high section will allow women customers to unload their burdens while paying for their purchases. By raising an adjacent section of the counter, you provide a convenient place to write checks. (Ever notice how many grocery and department stores employ this design?)

Always have your store name and logo mounted on the wall behind the counter or, if the counter is centered in the store, place a small sign with your store name on the counter by the register. This tells the customer how to make out her check.

Don't overlook the power of the impulse buy. Place last minute emergency items such as sun screen, sunglasses, lip balm, hats, socks, gadgets, and magazines on or adjacent to the counter. You'll be surprised how fast these items will turnover.

Product Positioning

Placing your women's apparel section at the front of the store tells your customers that you carry women's products. Hiding women's apparel in the back behind the tents where the lighting is not as bright tells customers that it's an afterthought. Some retailers have found that bringing in a few skirts and dresses is a quick way of letting customers know that women's is part of the store. You don't have to go to the fashion industry to find skirts and dresses. Many leading outdoor apparel manufacturers provide them.

In *Conde Nast Sports for Women* survey, women shopping for apparel cited the physical space/size of store as their second most desirable store attribute. They don't like crowded spaces, so a store that seems spacious is more to their liking. It doesn't mean you have to increase store size and space to accommodate women. It does mean you have to organize the store so it appears spacious.

Don't crowd fixtures. Women's clothing and equipment areas should make women feel comfortable and allow them to move around easily. Create either free-standing apparel displays on mannequins or platforms or show coordinated outfits on the end of 4-way fixtures. Women customers respond to displays that show outfits. It makes the buying decision easier and gives women an idea of what the garments will look like when worn.

place women's apparel up front

Merchandise Around

Move

Women love to accessorize. They will buy a belt, hat, or pair of gloves to wear with other items they're buying. Don't be afraid to suggest add-ons, women will see it as helpful and you'll make multiple sales.

Move your merchandise around within an area to create fresh looks and the appearance of new merchandise. Actual new merchandise should be presented at the front of the department or on an aisle. As merchandise "ages," move it to the center of the department. When it has sold-through and there is only a small quantity left, move that product into the rear of the department. This technique will ensure that your customers see something new each time they shop in your store.

Fixturing

A messy store with broken or scratched fixtures is like putting a stop sign in front of a woman. Pawing through round racks of dozens of sweaters may be acceptable in a discount store but not in a high-end outdoor store. When a woman is looking for quality products she expects the retail establishment to reflect the same attribute.

Ideally, women's department fixturing should be made up of 4-ways, T-stands, and wall presentations using shelves, rods, waterfalls and straight arms. This fixture arsenal will enable you to generate multiple sales.

4-Ways

4-ways are presentation fixtures. The most useful 4-ways have two straight arms and two waterfall arms. Straight arms allow you to hang more garments on each arm. Waterfall arms make it easy to show a cascade of color. Four-way fixtures are designed to hold four related items in assorted colors that can be worn together.

Example:

- Arm #1** Parkas in two colors
- Arm #2** Down Vest to layer with outerwear in two colors
- Arm #3** Windproof or wind resistant jacket as additional layering option in two colors
- Arm #4** Stretch Fleece Zip T for layering in two colors



Primary Sources for Fashion Ideas

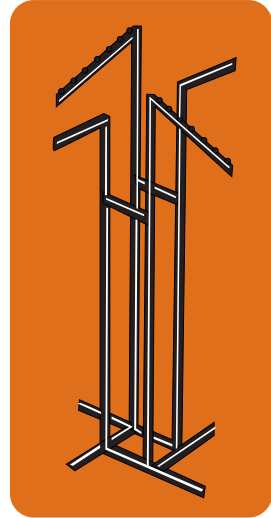
1. Store Displays
2. Friends and peers
3. Catalogs
4. Commercials and ads
5. Family members
6. Fashion magazines
7. Salespeople
8. Celebrities

- Women's Wear Daily

location location location

This presentation will catch the browsing customer's eye and show her four different styles in colors that can be worn together to build a layering system. It's important to note that, if women like a certain style, they often will buy it in more than one color. So, avoid showing and buying merchandise in one color only. Give your women customers two to three colors to choose from in each style, even in basics such as base-layer apparel.

Four-way merchandising makes it easy for women to coordinate styles and colors and gives them the confidence that they've bought the right thing. All this information from one fixture!

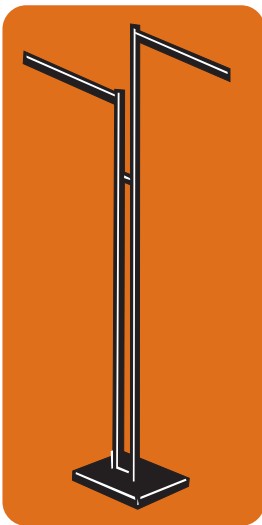


T-Stands

T-stands are 2-way fixtures that enable retailers to show two related pieces. They are also perfect for showing novelty or print tops that coordinate with garments on an adjacent rack.

For example: You have a 4-way of two styles of waterproof /

breathable jackets, coordinating side-zip pants, and fleece sweaters. You'd like to show your women customers how a novelty striped turtleneck and long sleeve performance T-shirt coordinates with the outerwear, but don't want to use up valuable space on the 4-way. Not to worry! Position a T-stand by the 4-way and hang your novelties on it. Take a couple of the novelty stripe pieces and layer them under the jackets on the ends of the 4-way. Presto! You've made a connection between the garments and the fixtures and you've helped your women customers visualize them as an outfit. Chances are you'll sell something off both racks.



Position T-stands at the front of the women's department, where they are the first rack the customer sees. T-stands are easy to move and change, and they make great impulse-buy motivators.

USE YOUR “silent” salespeople.

Up Against the Wall

In a space as small as 100 square feet, you can create the ideal women’s department. For example, take a 10-foot length of wall with 4-ways and T-stands positioned in front of it. The wall creates exceptional visibility for the product from the entrance and provides the opportunity to use a versatile mix of 4-foot rods, shelves, and identifying graphics and signage. Believe it or not, you can stock over 250 garments and accessories on the racks and shelves in this small space. If you have any doubts about the efficacy of fixturing, track your sales per square foot for three months. The figures may surprise you.

Many outdoor retailers have storefronts of 3,000 square feet or less. Devoting 100 square feet of valuable space to women’s products may seem excessive. But, if you want to take advantage of the remarkable growth of the women’s segment of the market, you will have to give it space. You have to show your women customers that you’re committed to them.

Hangtags and P.O.P.’s

You already know that women want an easy shopping experience. They want to be able to locate product quickly, find their size, and the price. The color and women’s department signage will draw them to the fixtures.

There, they first will look at specific colors, next at the styling, then at size, and, last but not least, price. The “try on” will occur if all these elements are in alignment.

Most manufacturers provide a factory-attached hangtag for each garment. However, these do not always indicate size. Make certain that the sizing and price are clearly readable on the hangtag.

The top of the 4-way or T-stand is a great place to create visual excitement with signage. For example, a rack of technical jackets or vests can be enhanced by a 4-color sign with a picture of the garments in use and a description of how the fabric works. If you can’t create the visual yourself, use a color page from the manufacturer’s catalog or an ad or product review from an outdoor magazine. This type of information will lend more value to the garments, thereby increasing sell-through.

Because salespeople can’t be with every customer all the time, graphics and point-of-purchase signs serve another purpose, as “silent” salespeople.

P.O.P.'s

Merchandising different products together

Cross Merchandising

Cross merchandising means merchandising products from different categories together. A good example is setting a pack on top of a 4-way of mountaineering parkas. Showing a fleece hat or pile jackets tucked under the pack straps.

Creating cross-merchandised displays makes “silent suggestions” to customers about items that can be bought and used together. It gives you another opportunity to show products in a different area of the store. It is also a friendly reminder to your customers about items they overlook.

Our research shows that women want a lot of product information. What better way to show women customers what they'll need to be comfortable in cold weather than a display of all necessary components of cold weather dressing - underlayers, mid-layers, outerwear, hat, gloves, socks, footwear?

In retailing, there's the reality that product can be invisible in one part of the store and highly visible in another. For this reason, savvy retailers move product around frequently and show product in more than one place in the store.

Adding Interest

Even though women want an efficient and speedy shopping experience, there's no doubt they also want it to be enjoyable. Exciting visual displays add interest and drama to the store. They help customers see themselves wearing or using the merchandise and they inspire multiple purchases.

Displays can be as large as a window display that stays put for a month, or as small as an ensemble of women's hiking boots, gloves, fleece hat, and waterbottle placed together on a shelf. Displays can be used to cross-merchandise equipment and footwear with apparel and often prompt add-on sales.

Light Looks

Lighting is not gender-specific, but one thing's for certain, and that's the adverse effect of bad lighting. Using flattering lighting is going to make all your customers feel better about themselves while in your store and trying on the merchandise. Flat, uniform fluorescent lighting gives any store and the product in it a “discount” look. Skin tones appear blue under fluorescent lighting. It is the least-flattering light you can choose for dressing rooms.

The look of your store should reflect the price points you're selling. The best way to enhance your store's ambiance is to use a combination of incandescent and color-correct fluorescent lighting.

Perfect places to use displays:

- inside the front entrance about 15-20 feet from the door
- at the beginning of each department or section
- on the end of the T-stand or 4-way arms
- on shelving
- above wall racks and rods
- on top of gondolas
- in front windows
- on the outside of dressing room doors

flattering lighting

CLEAN AND SIMPLE

The color-correct fluorescent lighting will provide overall ambient light and incandescents will give a warm, flattering light that also allows you to vary light levels and light qualities.

Light your product more brightly than the aisles surrounding them. As customers browse your store, they will be drawn to areas of brighter light. Highlight racks and walls to focus attention on them.

Varying light levels create mood. Focus a halogen spotlight on a display, wash a wall with a flood light. Use up-lighting (light fixtures in cans that sit on the floor and project light upwards) in windows and next to displays and walls. Experiment with colored gels over your white lights for dramatic effects in display windows and on walls.

Keep it Clean

An article in a recent issue of *Women's Wear Daily* reported the findings of its survey asking women why they choose not to enter a store. One of the main reasons is that the store appears dirty. They also mentioned the existence of messy displays. Another is their impression that the store looks too crowded. These findings reinforce previous research and further validate each of these reasons for women not entering a store.

Don't be surprised when you notice that the refinements and changes you make to appeal to women customers also benefit your male customers. They might not be as vocal about what they want out of their shopping experience but they'll appreciate the changes you make ... and might even tell the women in their life about it.

**Light your product more
brightly than the aisles
surrounding them.**

**Customers will be
drawn to areas of
brighter light.**

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Brought to you courtesy of



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