

17 Ways to Boost Your Business Image

Recently at a NARTS seminar, I heard some stores bragging about the top name brands that they carry and how they wouldn't be caught dead carrying discounter's merchandise. I want to tell you, we are not all high end. It depends on your market—that is, who buys things in your store. If you are not located in a toney, expensive area, you could kill yourself trying to sell high-end goods.

In my store, we do sell some expensive brands but we sell a whole lot more department and discount store every day brands to middle and lower income customers day in and day out. Instead of worrying about the high-end merchandise, we go after what families need every day . . . the items that sell.

Business in general is changing at an alarming rate. Making a change to improve in your customer's eyes may be as simple as taking down dirty, worn signs or as detailed as revamping the entire store. When I came home from the NARTS seminar in Raleigh, I painted my store with the ideas I brought home from Consigning Design, Ltd., a furniture store that was on the bus tour. I also rearranged my sales floor with ideas I got from stopping at Patti Acquisto's store in Owensboro, KY. Seeing things in other stores reminded me how ours needed improvement. If you want to stay in business, you must never stop improving.



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Here are some ways you can get customers' attention and keep their business by improving your image, without being the priciest store in your area.

1. Be prepared to take ACTION and make CHANGES to get better.
2. See your business through your customer's eyes. Not sure? Take a survey.
3. Pay attention to details and show your best all the time.
4. Be consistent with all your marketing materials.
5. Improve your business card with a strong logo and quality card stock.
6. Add fax, e-mail, and Website to your business card and stationery. Be sure to include your city, state, and zip code in case someone wants to write you.
7. Use matching forms, envelopes, etc.
8. Build your brand. Use a catch phrase that is recognizable.
9. Improve your telephone and listening skills.
10. Use professional signage. Never use a sloppy, handwritten sign.
11. Send color postcards or direct mail pieces to customers.
12. Embrace the latest technology and get your store up to speed. It will make your life simpler.
13. Build an effective Website, keeping it up-to-date and never stop improving it.
14. Don't copy anyone. Be unique and creative.
15. Display merchandise professionally and make it visually exciting.
16. Network like a pro—join at least two professional organizations.
17. Help and support others. It comes back ten times over.