

Create A Swing Shop

By Kitty Boyce

How can you sell more merchandise? Use a swing shop to plant ideas in your customers' minds.

A swing shop is basically an interior window or area in your store that features a category of items. It can be as small as a two arm rack with a rug underneath and a basket or small table adjacent, or it can be as large as a set of six or seven racks grouped with like merchandise. Why have a swing shop? It tells a story to your customers that says, "We have what you're looking for. New things arrive here all the time. It is fun to shop here!"

A swing shop should be located right inside the front door of your store to make a good impression on your customers as they enter. It also works well to slow them down. In the book *Why We Buy*, Paco Underhill teaches us that unless you have some sort of roadblock, customers will usually go ten feet inside a store before they slow down to look. This means they will walk right past the rack immediately inside the door—unless you can make it look so spectacular that it will catch their attention right away.

What do you put in a swing shop that will tell a story? Use a category or two of merchandise to do the talking. Usually the best grouping is one that appeals to an idea that is already on their minds. The following are some suggestions for your swing shop.

Hot selling items – When there is a hot new trend beginning and you have some of those items in your store, use this area to show that you are fashion-forward.



Weather - If it is raining out, have your raincoats and umbrellas set up with boots in a display.

Seasons - Valentine's Day and St. Patrick's Day merchandise is very colorful and lends itself to catching people's eyes.

Special events - Weddings and graduations are times to get dressed up. There are limitless possibilities here.



Local or national news - If there are a lot of stories about exercise and health, feature exercise wear and athletic gear.

Whatever you have a lot of - This works in grocery stores and at the mega marts. Come up with a great idea why people need your overstocked items and make a sign promoting that benefit to your customers

Visit three to five retail stores. What is the big feature in their windows and right inside their doors? Look at their presentations. You can probably duplicate fairly closely what they've done without spending a lot on fixtures.

Look around your store with new eyes. Can that plain old broom be a display prop for a "clean sweep sale" of your winter merchandise? Other merchandise you sell can double as a prop. Use your imagination. A swing shop should be fun and interesting. Do something unusual to catch people off guard. Using a small rug under the swing shop can help to segregate it from your other racks. Hang banners or streamers from the ceiling in the area to call attention. Emphasize the space by moving your other fixtures back from your swing shop just a little farther apart than your racks normally are.

Be sure to tell the story with a sign. Not just any boring sign—use humor or rhyme to peak their interest; "pretty in pink" or my favorite of Kate Holmes' "maternity for the kid in you." Use complimentary colors in your signage. The main thing you're trying to convey to your customers is the advantage of purchasing these items.

The basic shape for any window display—either exterior or interior—is a triangle. Put your tallest item (whether it is a mannequin, piece of furniture, or prop) in the center with two other focal points lower and to each side. Place your best piece at eye level because that is what people are going to look at first.

Be sure to maintain your swing shop. If it works really well and the racks become sparse, add substitute items or change it completely right away. Keep it full and coordinated. Never let your swing shop look half empty or unloved. Change it at least every two weeks. If it stays too neat and no one is buying the merchandise, it is time to try something else.

Plant the seeds of ideas and watch the flowers of extra purchases bloom in your sales totals.



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