



Visual Merchandising



A handy little guide to help you improve the presentation of your 'bricks and mortar' business



This booklet has been produced by Whitehorse City Council. The booklet is designed to encourage and facilitate the use of visual merchandising to improve product display, shop windows, and shop presentation by using best practice in retail design and visual merchandising techniques.

Business and Economic Development Unit
Whitehorse City Council

For more information or further business support initiatives, visit www.wbiz.com.au

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OHS responsibilities extend a 'duty of care' to all employers, employees and customers of an establishment. The employer must:

- Provide safe access to the establishment;
- Provide information, training and supervision when and where required;
- Ensure a hygienic and safe environment.

Items of equipment and practices used in the creation of displays must conform to Occupational Health and Safety requirements.

Once upon a time in the land of retail...

Visual Merchandising was merely referred to as 'window dressing'. Yet today, the experience needs to be more than just a visual one in order to entice, delight, attract and keep the customer coming in and coming back!

From the humble everyday deli to the high end shoe shop and everything in between, businesses are looking for innovative ways to stand out from the crowd. This mini guide is designed to help you with some easy ideas to draw customers back into your 'bricks and mortar' store. Discover how to articulate a stronger brand story, inject a bit of retail theatre in your displays, create a holistic shopping experience in your shop, and provide authentic service to leave your customer with a lasting impression.

The time is NOW to create some small changes in your business that will produce positive results for you, your staff, your shop and your customers.





“The buzz word here is Presentation: it is all about the theatre in retail design where each day the curtain goes up on a new, different and enticing show of product. Presentation makes the difference between whether the store is serving up 'comedy' or 'tragedy' and how the show will be judged by the shoppers.”

- Martin M. Pegler (Store Presentation and Design)



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Big Picture for Small Business

Whether you are on a main street or tucked away in an arcade, small business owners in a retail precinct face a specific set of issues when it comes to marketing and growth. The challenge is to pull potential customers off the pavement and into your business and keep them engaged long enough to get them to buy. Then, you need to convince them to love you enough so that they keep coming back for more!

Successful business owners know this takes a multi-disciplinary approach from advertising, signage and window displays through to product range and customer service. Get the formula right, and there is enormous potential to grow your business through local market segments. Here are ten top tips for businesses that want to thrive rather than just survive.

Take your business pulse

At least once a year take time out to give your business a health check. Review all aspects of your business, talk to your accountant and dig into your financials to find out who is spending what and how spending trends have changed.

Don't try to be all things to all people

It's easy to get trapped inside your business and assume that your traditional customers are the only ones to target. At least once a month, go for a walk around and really look at what's going on; who's shopping at what times of day? Who's having coffee in the main street? Are there new residents moving in? Look for opportunities to target new or high value market segments.

Be true to your original product concept

Never, ever, copy your competitors' stock and when times are tough, don't be tempted to panic-buy stock that just doesn't fit the mix. You will weaken your product offering, confuse customers and lose money in the long term. At the same time, do look for new products that fit your concept and also fill gaps in the local product mix.

Develop an online profile

In this day and age, customer service starts before a customer has even seen your shopfront. If you don't have an online presence you are invisible to all those people searching online. Whether it's listings on locality sites, a simple website, a blog, or social media sites like Facebook, Instagram or Twitter - successful businesses need to be visible online. Remember, your local precinct website or Council web page is the perfect starting point for boosting your local



findability factor. Better yet, it is often a free service to small business!

Understand the true value of your existing customers

Existing customers are the ones most likely to buy from you at any given time so don't ignore them. Think email, SMS, Facebook or Instagram campaigns. Develop promotions and unique reward programs and find reasons to communicate on a regular basis. It could be as simple as sending your favourite customers a card with a special promotion on their birthday.

Talk price

But don't discount! It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that everyone is a price shopper. Remember that price shoppers are never loyal and discounts come straight off your bottom line. If you want to reward your clients why not consider adding value rather than just offering them a markdown on price.

Get sales savvy

Look for ways of maximising the revenue from each and every customer. Cross promote like crazy. Develop a list of "this goes with that" options and make sure they are logical and easy to sell from a customer service perspective so you are seen to be helping the customer, not making them buy something they don't need. Make sure your staff are well informed and up-to-date with your stock so they can cross promote with ease.

Rotate your stock again and again and again

Yes, it is a chore but locals become blind to seeing the same old stock and assume there's nothing new to see. So every week get rotating... Your reward will be dollars in the till when that customer discovers that old piece of stock you've been trying to sell for ages.

Start a referral chain

Share the love with other businesses that target the same market as you. Recommend other great retailers and they will return the favour. The whole business community benefits because people stay longer, spend more and come back again and again.

Smile

Smile with your eyes, not just your mouth. These days, customers expect genuine customer service. This

is even more so in local retail precincts, so ditch the rehearsed scripts and stop focusing on just the people you know. You never know when your next long-term customer will walk through your door for the first time, so smile!



Your Image, Your Brand, Your Identity

In the eyes of your customer, perception is everything. This includes everything from the name of your business to the condition of your sign and the many ways your image is projected. Customers' perceptions are formed within the first 10 seconds of interacting with your brand image and business, so let's make sure it is a positive one!

First of all, let's start with your **Image**. Your image is more than just a logo. It is the intangible 'perception' your customer may associate with your business. How they relate, feel, judge or perceive you is directly influenced by the image you project. For example, if you are a trend business dealing with a largely youthful customer base, then you would not want your image to appear dated, too conservative or old-fashioned. The image you present should be consistent with how you want your customers to view you and is

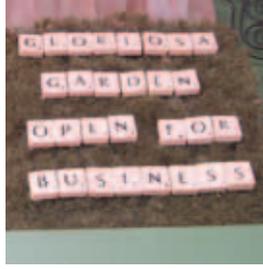
determined by every decision you make for the business. The style of your brand, the ambience of your shop, the merchandise you stock, the tone and manner of your staff - these all contribute to your image!

Brand is not a light topic (there are mountains of text and research on this!), but in simple terms, it is your 'corporate image'. Your brand is made up of the *personality* of your business - the fundamental values that your customers trust. What your brand promises should be delivered in the actual experience of your brand. For example, if your brand has a particularly strong environmental focus, then this value should remain unchanged no matter how many times your business' image may evolve. Therefore when people buy your product or service, they are buying into your brand values because they feel an emotional connection, not just because they like the look of your business card.

Every single entity, every organism, every part, every thing in nature, owes its characteristics and identity to its relationship with other things, and so we are embedded in this network of relationships.

- Fritjof Capra (*Worldwide Identity*)

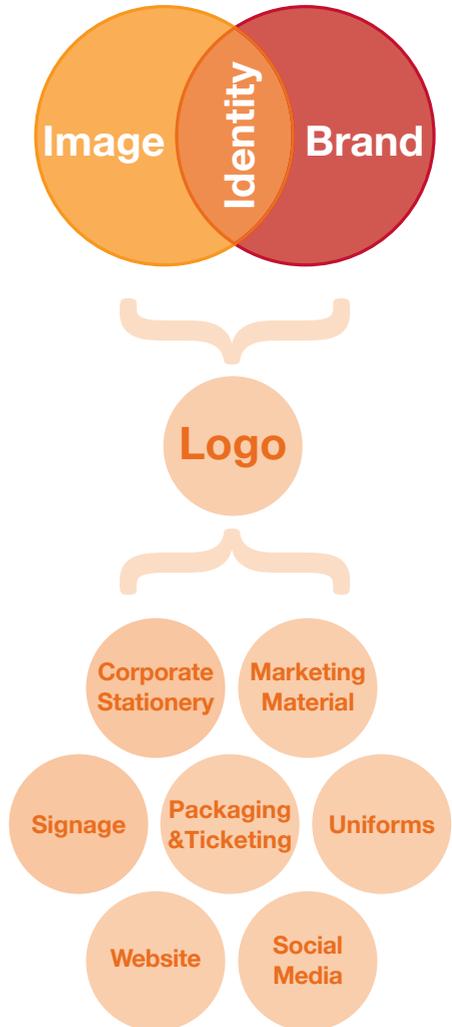
Your **Identity** (or **Brand Identity**) is often confused with Brand or sometimes believed to be merely a 'logo'. A common mistake is to think that by changing the design of your logo or sign, then you are altering your brand. This is not



always the case as the values (brand) of the business may still remain the same, yet the perception (image) is altered. Your identity is the suite of visual, auditory and other tangible stimuli that expresses your brand and shapes the business' image. These devices may include: your logo, stationery (business cards, letterheads), marketing material (flyers, brochures, website), signage (interior and exterior), packaging (bags, swing tags, ticketing), uniforms (staff apparel, aprons, badges) and anything else visual that represents the business.

A logo is the visual 'icon' or 'symbol' that identifies your business and is your corporate identity and brand all rolled into one distinctive mark. Again, consistency is important. Use design as a foundation to bridge your brand and image to ensure that your identity communicates your business effectively and sets you apart from your competitors. Important factors to consider when designing the logo is to always go back to the business' image and brand values. This will help you determine the colours, tone, style, typography, slogan, design and usage of the logo.

Remember - your logo may not be a literal translation of what you do. What it *means* is often more important than what it *looks* like. How consistently you *use* it is what will give your business a strong representation of your brand identity.



A Welcoming Shopfront

Your shopfront is often your customer's first interaction with your 'bricks and mortar' business and therefore should be given some love and attention. This physical 'face' of your business serves many purposes and when addressed strategically, should yield positive, effective and practical outcomes.

Firstly, look at some of the many different scenarios in which the physical presence of a typical business could be presented on the street. In a mainstreet context, your shop may occupy a street-level premises with other businesses or residential on the second level. This means that you are part of a building with a vertical front that could have architectural detailing that limits your signage options. Or you could be part of a development with multiple side-by-side tenancies sharing a generic horizontal sign or the same format for all your signs to appear in. If you are in an arcade, a side street, facing the rear of the street (e.g. into a carpark) or tucked into a tiny laneway, you may find it challenging to draw attention to your shopfront.

When considering your shopfront, you must first go back to your image, brand and

identity as your signage is a very prominent, tangible expression of all three. The obvious tactic is to clearly represent the brand identity across the key areas for signage: shop awning, suspended signage (under the awning), walls/facade, shop window, door/entrance, and if permitted, the street. Now that's a lot of signs! The danger is to over-brand or cram too much information into your shopfront that could then have a negative effect on your business.

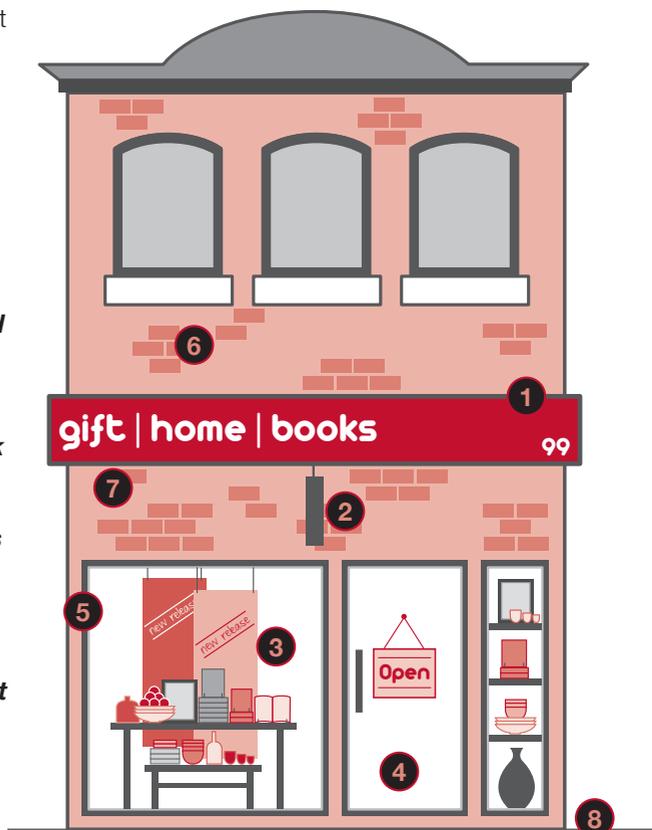
To begin with, think about the message you are trying to communicate. For example, on the awning sign (which is only viewed from the opposite side of the street or by passing motorists) the key information is the name of the business and perhaps the shop number. On the pedestrian level, the hanging sign (often in the form of a lightbox), could be used to display a bit more information as there is more time to take in extra details like a phone number or slogan. Further information like web addresses, opening hours, specialisations, credentials etc. could be featured on the shop window or entry as the customer is likely to engage with this area the longest before entering your shop. If you are a business that requires permanent promotional messages, consider dedicating a section of your shopfront for changing posters, signs, or brochure holders rather than cluttering the window with too many A4 sized printouts stuck to the window.



The illustration on the right demonstrates a typical shopfront and the key areas to focus on when designing or upgrading your business' shopfront:

- {1} awning sign**
- {2} hanging sign (optional)**
- {3} shop window**
(merchandise display, hanging internal signs and external signs applied to the glass)
- {4} entrance (accessibility, welcoming details etc.)**
- {5} wall-mounted signs (black boards, brochure holders etc.)**
- {6} building colours/materials**
- {7} lighting (in the window, under the awning, over the entry)**
- {8} street trading/al fresco dining/plantings/public art**

Note that this is a typical mainstreet example and some signage may be subject to permit requirements. Merchandise sales racks or outdoor dining furniture that is positioned on the pavement are subject to your local council's street trading policies.

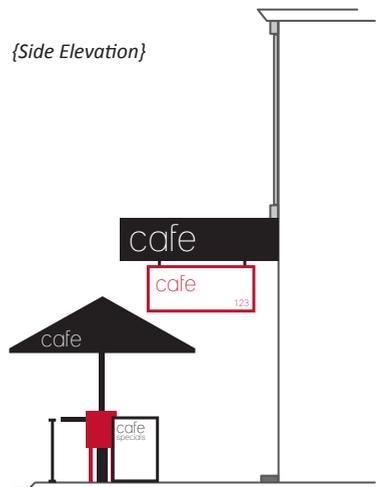


If you have a business that uses the pavement as an extension of your business (e.g. restaurant or cafe), then your image and brand should also be considered here. The selection of furniture, decor and choices in colour should continue the same image and brand story. For example, if your image is 'slick' and 'minimal', then the branding should be subtle. The same style inside should be reflected in the outside experience of your business.

Other opportunities for conveying your brand messages include applications onto outdoor display fixtures or cafe umbrellas, barriers, table tops, menus and 'specials' boards. Try to avoid using supplier-branded decor as this could overshadow your own brand identity. The same applies to posters and other promotional material provided to you by suppliers. Too often, we see beautiful shop fronts heavily covered in posters advertising phone cards or soft drinks - making it difficult to determine the actual name of the business!

When it comes to signage, always consider the order of importance (concerning the information you want to communicate) and maximising the visibility factor. For example, the logical hierarchy for a typical awning sign facing the street may be the name of the business and the shop number. This is just enough information for a person driving past or viewing from across the street to be able to read and process. Any additional information will become overload (unless it is critical to the nature of your business, e.g. a web address or phone number if your business heavily depends on that). As the customer comes closer to your shop, you can provide more information in your signage as they may have more time to take in the extra information. Contact details, opening hours and promotional messages are best reserved for the windows or door.

Think of your shop signage as a billboard that only has a few seconds to capture a person's attention. Less is often so much more!





(1) Shop signage and the treatment of the shopfront can instantly convey a tone, style and tell a unique story about what the business is about (*Food Republik; Box Hill, VIC*);

(2) This upper-level business has used their facade effectively to promote their business - using colour to visually connect the doorway entry to the second level space (*Geelong City Yoga; Geelong, VIC*);

(3) An uninteresting blank wall has been artistically presented to promote the business - adding colour,

life and interest to the facade facing the side road (*Scarvelli Cafe; Balwyn, VIC*);

(4) This example highlights the use of colour as part of the window display to draw the eye towards each colour blocked display in the individual windows (*Click on Furniture; Fitzroy, VIC*);

(5) A simple, yet effective use of the shop's branding to add interest to the blank upper facade (*Readings; Hawthorn, VIC*).



(Before) The shopfront was inconsistent in colour, signage and the window treatment was unprofessionally implemented.
(Gangnam Station; Box Hill, VIC)



(After) Freshly painted window and door frames has brightened the shopfront against the contrast of the dark tiles. The new, consistently designed signs have dramatically improved the presentation of the shopfront.



(Before) This shopfront has 'added' a number of different signs over the years, resulting in a mismatched look that does not reflect the brand.
(Lane Cove Optical; Lane Cove, NSW)



(After) A new brand logo that has been incorporated into consistent new signage and new colour scheme has greatly improved the image and perception of this business.



(Before) The vacant shopfront prior to renovation.
(ARC Asian Grocers; Preston, VIC)



(After) A clean, fresh, bilingual logo was developed to inform the overall shopfront colour palette and signage design. The use of repeating pattern and colour on printed vinyl decals was a low-cost and visually effective method to unify the wide shopfront.

Here are some tips to consider when designing or upgrading your shopfront:

- **Maintenance should be a regular habit.** Don't let your old, tired sign fall on somebody's head before you do something about it. Do regular checks on your business from top to bottom. For example, check your signs for fading, damage and relevance; repaint the shop every 5-8 years; clean the windows regularly; clear the pavement in front of your entry from rubbish, fallen leaves, cardboard boxes; make sure the entry is accessible for customers with prams or in a wheelchair. Seek support from your local Council for any further small business support?
- **A fresh coat of paint can instantly and dramatically alter the appearance and perception of your business!** If you are unsure about colours, always go back to your image and brand for inspiration. When painting the facades of heritage buildings, check with your local council for any guidelines that may apply. Choose a professional painter to do the work - it will be well worth the time and effort you save!
- **Never trust a signwriter to do your graphic design without checking out their portfolio first.** Often, signwriters are just that - they will write or produce your signs, but they are not graphic designers, nor will they often employ the services of one. A common error that some signwriters make is to take your logo and either distort it to fit a space, or simply use it as is without considering its legibility. Always ask for a proof before committing to having your sign installed. Make sure your brand logo is not compromised in any way - check for inconsistencies in colour and typography.
- **Think about using textures.** If your business has a 'rustic' image and theme, then why not bring some of those elements to the outside? Consider cladding walls and entry ways, or creating a bespoke hanging sign instead of a light box for a unique point of difference.
- **Create an authentic sense of welcome.** The 'moment of truth' before a customer makes the decision to enter your shop is a delicate one. Make sure the entry is easy to access and enter and consider adding small welcoming elements to 'frame' your shop entrance. Some suggestions include: potted plants, a wind chime, and perhaps even a courtesy garden bench to say to your customer "please stop, come in...you're welcome in here!"
- **Declutter, declutter, declutter!** This is a very important tip as there is nothing worse than to have all your wonderful new merchandise and expensive signage covered or tainted by unprofessional posters, cheap advertising, or outdated promotions. Keep your windows clean and clear so that your products or services are visible from the outside. Keep all messages and temporary signs relevant and current. This also applies to your permanent signs - avoid cramming too many contact details into the one sign - think about its position and who will actually see it.

Always check with your local Council regarding any external improvements as you may require a planning or building permit.

{ 4 }

Window Displays that Sell

Shop windows are the illuminated spaces that line our pavements offering businesses prime real estate for advertising. When used effectively, they also create art on the street - and a special kind of 'theatre' to passers-by... with an aim to sell.

Your window is often the first point of contact your customer will have with your shop and their impression can have a paramount effect as to whether they choose to enter the shop or not. Ultimately, the purpose of the window display is to sell; but achieving more than just sales, your window can be utilised to create fantasy, wonder and theatre. Hence, the 'five-second rule' applies. Windows are the perfect opportunity for you to create a sense of 'wow-factor' that is so often lacking in retail today.

Imagine this: the time-poor customer will walk past quickly - perhaps en route to pick up takeaway or go to the bank - then something catches their eye, something bright, well-lit, with a witty sign splashed across the window. The customer stops, and pauses. Maybe even convinces

themselves to go into the shop, even if it is for five minutes. How you present your products could alter the perception of what it is worth - even if it is similar stock to your competitor. Try not to mirror what your competitors are doing. Like every woman's nightmare of going into a room full of women wearing the same outfit, your aim is to avoid the 'cookie-cutter' look. So dare to be different - revel in the unexpected and have a bit of fun. With a little imagination,

use your windows to make your own statement, reflect your store's image and stand out from the crowd.

Your windows reflect the soul of your store...empty windows will eventually create empty stores.

- Linda Cahan (*Feng Shui for Retailers*)

When planning your window display, think about the relationship between the product, props, signage

and space. This will help you develop a theme and the key message you want to communicate. The most common mistake in window displays is to cram a bit of everything into the space - creating visual chaos and little impact.



Using computer-cut vinyl decals on the shop window (Ilona Anthony Boutique; Templestowe, VIC)



Here are some key steps in planning your window before you jump in there and pile up the stock!

1. Tell a Story:

Your window should be arranged to tell a clear, strong and cohesive story. In general, your window story will be based on (a) fashion trends or new arrivals/releases; (b) a specific promotion like Christmas, Mother's Day or a Sale; (c) the largest stock investment for the selling period; (d) the seasons - summer, autumn, winter, spring; or (e) a landmark event like a community festival, sports event, cultural celebration etc. Once you have determined your story, you can then make decisions around your choice in colours, props, messages and related stock to feature in the display. Try to stick to no more than two stories at a time. The message needs to be clear (e.g. a trend window showcasing the latest styles and colours tells a customer you are current and well-stocked), and not misleading or contradictory (e.g. a 'summer' window with winter clearances).

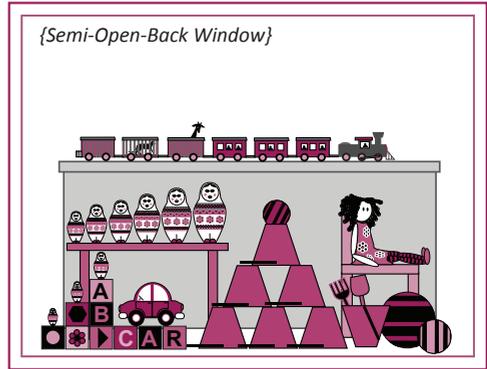
2. Decide on a Colour Scheme:

By choosing the right colour or palette of coordinating colours, you will be able to easily create a window display that could literally stop customers in their tracks. Colours often trigger an emotional response and when used wisely, may create a bold statement. Often, the colour featured in your window could be dictated by trends as well as seasons. For example, if you are a homewares/gift shop and the latest colour

trend is Moroccan patterns and shades of blue, then your window display may feature all things Moorish from platters to footstools, coloured glass lamps to teacups - all featuring various shades of blues and cool tones with striking pattern. Accents of silverware and soft throws/cushions offset with a large-scale print will help to create a setting that could inspire the discerning customer to redecorate their home! This is also known as *colour blocking*. If you had a large window, you could feature more than one colour story and use each display group to break up a large area into smaller windows. Hence, the same style of products can be grouped in their colours - offering your customer the full breadth of your range.

3. Choose a Display Technique:

Now that a story is determined and a colour scheme set, it is time to pull it all together! There are a number of display techniques that have been used by visual merchandisers and savvy shopkeepers and often, you end up sticking with the one that suits you most. Common display techniques include: pyramid, dominance, mirror, repetition, horizontal/vertical arrangements. These techniques will be detailed further in the next section of this mini guide, however the general rule is to keep merchandise and props tightly grouped. Consider the depth of your display and how you group and layer each item to create a focal point. The size of your window should influence the amount of stock versus the percentage of props.



Before we proceed further into different types of display techniques, we should acknowledge the three most common types of shop windows: *open-back window*, *semi-open-back window*, and *closed-back windows*.

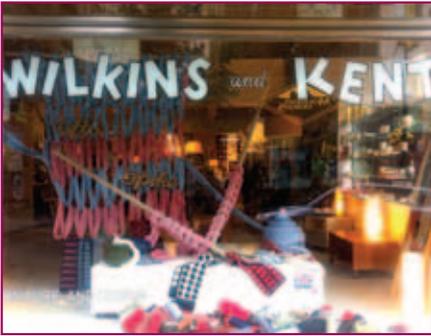
Open-back windows: This type of window has no back wall, allowing the customer to have a clear visual into the shop. Customers can also see the shop's activities and other products - further engaging their interest. Open-back windows also allow natural light to flow into the shop, creating a sense of openness and space. The challenge is to achieve effective lighting in the window display as the space is not enclosed. It is also difficult to differentiate the line between window and selling floor so you may have customers grabbing stock from the window display. This is not necessarily a negative - just be prepared to be constantly re-adjusting or replenishing stock. *Suited to clothing/fashion, homewares, gifts, cafes.*

Semi-open-back windows: These windows are constructed with a partition that extends to a certain height, separating the window area from the store. This panel allows customers to see beyond the window display into the shop, whilst also creating a permanent backdrop for products to be positioned against.

One option is to install shelves or hooks onto this wall to expand the display opportunities. *Suited to toys, delicatessens, grocery, hardware, cycling, camping gear.*

Closed-back windows: This style of window features a permanent back wall that completely closes the window area from the store's selling space. Closed-back windows are the perfect back drop for creating dynamic and theatrical displays as the lighting in the window is not competing with lighting from the selling floor. The three walls in the enclosed space offer great creative support (e.g. hanging posters, propping objects, using the walls for shelves to display). Customers also can't get into this space to 'disturb' the display, however, it is tricky even for staff to access the space (often through a trap door built into the wall). *Suited to fashion, home, furniture/furnishings, department stores.*





Open-back window (*Wilkins and Kent; Melbourne, VIC*)



Semi-open-back window (*The Catdog Deli; North Balwyn, VIC*)



Closed-back window (*Miss Sixty; Rome, Italy*)

Further ‘tips’ for creating impact with your window:

- **Keep it simple.** Too many graphics or too many messages translate as clutter. Apply the 5-second billboard rule. Make sure the window message can be quickly understood and that it is noticeable, enticing and memorable.
- **Be relevant to your customer and the season.** Don’t try to appeal to every one - stay focused on what you are trying to communicate, for example, ‘summer sarongs, thongs and totes’ which may be displayed with a couple of deck chairs and beach balls. This suggests, summer, womens beach wear, travel/holiday/lifestyle, and fun. All merchandise and props are targeting a specific customer style and season.
- **Have a window display strategy on visibility.** How much stock versus the size of the window? Do you need to shrink your window size by using shadow boxes if your product is predominantly small?
- **Think in “stories”.** Let the window be the title, then the store unfold the chapters by carrying the window message to key customer touch points in the store.
- **Have a “third window”.** If you don’t have a dedicated window area or your current space is too limiting, try to create a ‘third window’. This is the focal point for customers as they enter the shop. The display point is where customers can interact directly with what is being promoted to encourage browsing and buying.
- **Avoid cheap sales racks in front of your shop.** Try not to cover your premium window display with a discount rack as you could end up only attracting customers who will only spend on the discounted items.

Steps for creating a window display

These steps should be considered when planning your next window display:

1. Choose a *theme*.
2. Select the merchandise to be displayed:
 - Choose the core product to be promoted and any complementary stock to support this display;
 - If applicable, choose stock of varying sizes.
3. Source *props* that relate to the product(s) on display.
4. How long will the display be in the window? If a particular display is only intended to last a few days, less time should be spent on it. More effort and planning should go into displays that have longer exposure.
5. Promotional displays should be replaced as soon as the promotion is over - not a month later! How often have we seen Christmas decorations in windows well into February?
6. What is the display budget? Is it a short-term promotion? A sale? These should help determine whether it is worthwhile spending \$100 in props or just \$10.
7. How much space is needed for this display? Consider the dimensions of the window versus the size and quantity of props and merchandise when planning the display.
8. Will you be using any of your supplier's props/posters in this display?
9. Check the display lighting in the window – replace any globes that have blown.
10. Select the necessary stock at least the day before (put it aside if possible) and make sure there are enough to be used in the window and also on the selling floor.
11. Draw up a quick, rough sketch of the proposed display to help determine the proportion, layout, props vs product ratio etc. This simple diagram will help you (or your staff) in visualising the display prior to installation.

To maintain customer interest, displays should be changed weekly or at least fortnightly. This could be as simple as changing the stock in the display.

Tips for large windows (displaying small products):

- If your shop window is large and expansive and your products may be small or 'bitsy', think of creative ways to make the window appear smaller so the focus is always on the product. Block out part of the window to create a smaller 'window' using vinyl decals or paint.
- Think 'Tiffany & Co' style windows by creating small window 'boxes' in the large window space.
- Use props like display boxes, shelves, crates etc. to elevate stock and also 'frame' the areas of focus.
- Use graphics to direct the focus towards the product/s by applying custom window decals.
- Always ensure merchandise is tightly grouped to avoid clutter and to create an obvious visual focal point.



Use of props and product grouping in each window
(Catherine Manuell Design; Melbourne, VIC)



Low-cost paper tube props
(J Crew; New York, USA)



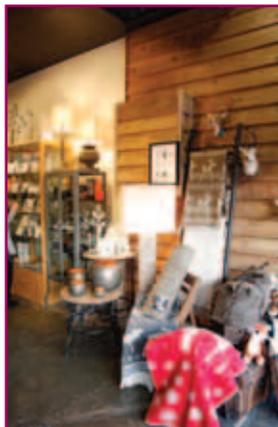
Props suggest theme and season
(Hermès; Paris, France)



Props create a whimsical backdrop in this 'mirrored' display
(Cheeky Baby; Ascot Vale, VIC)



Creative paper props are low-cost and create a sense of movement and direction in this display
(Anthropologie; New York, USA)



Tightly grouped products take up minimal window space
(Homing Instincts; Hawthorn, VIC)



Window graphics add colour, depth and focus to a display
(Harvey Nichols; New York, USA)

Easy Display Techniques

When it comes to display, there are some tried and true techniques that even the most skilled visual merchandisers still apply. To begin with, visual merchandising is a combination of many **components, principles, elements** and **arrangements**. The success of your shop's presentation involves the creative and strategic interconnection between all of these aspects - always ensuring that the merchandise and the experience is best represented to the customer.

{WARNING!} *This section of the mini guide may appear to apply directly to retailers, however, if you are in hospitality or a service with space allocated to sell or display products, then these skills will prove to be quite useful!*

Display Components: These are often seen as the 'tangibles' within a retail store and are mainly part of the store fitout. They are: the merchandise (the 'hero'); *forms* (e.g. mannequins); *fixtures and fittings*; *props, furniture and furnishings*; *graphics* (signs, ticketing, posters); and the *lighting*. These all play a huge part in the function and practicality of your shop.

Display Principles: These relate to the 'characteristics' of a display. Consideration of these display principles is the difference between what makes an ordinary display extraordinary. These terms will be discussed further in 'display arrangements'. Principles of display include a number of the following: *unity, variety, contrast, rhythm, balance* and *proportion*.

Display Elements: Often confused with display principles, display elements are also intangible - but when used effectively, can add interest and that 'wow' factor aspect to your display. The combination of these will help to achieve impact, flow and proportion to your display. Elements of display include: *colour, texture, line, shape* and *space*.

Display Arrangements: These are the actual *techniques* applied to constructing a display. Understanding these methods of display with variations in the elements and principles will give you limitless ways of displaying any merchandise while saving you time.

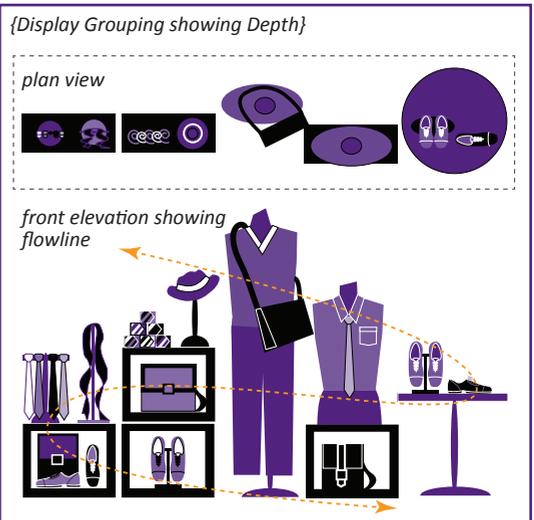


Grouping

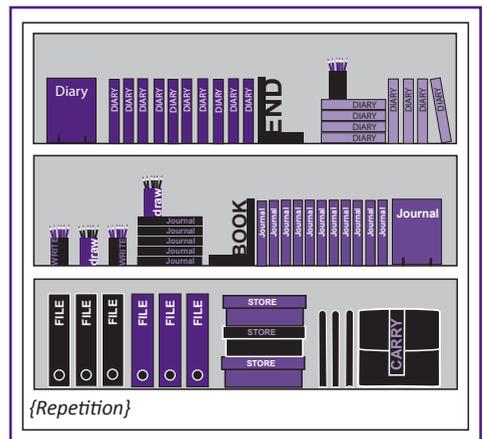
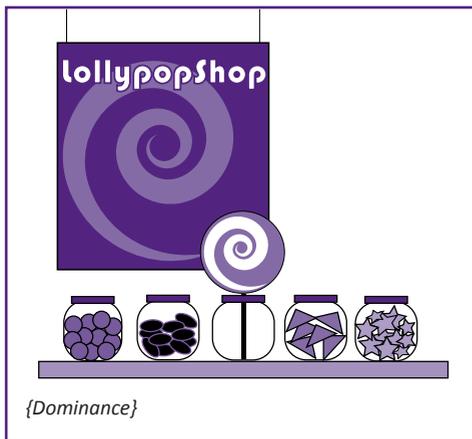
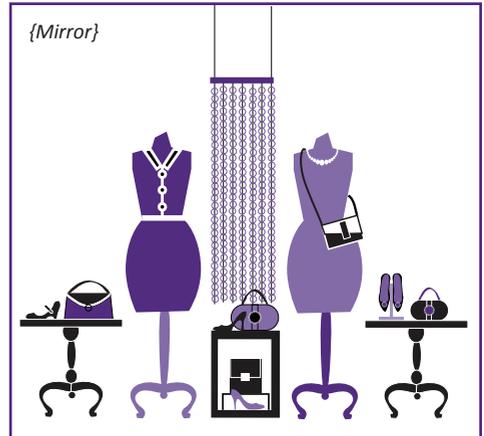
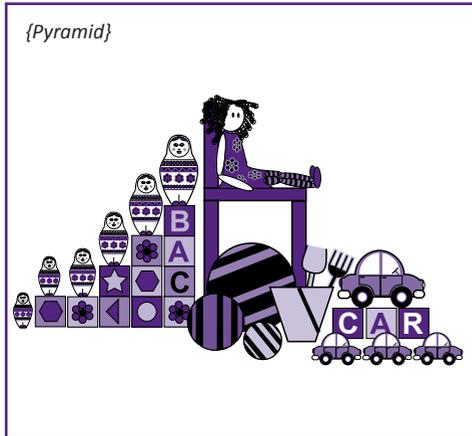
A balanced display consists of small groupings within one large grouping of merchandise. Each small group creates the depth within the display. A small area of space between each group acts as 'breathing space' - allowing the customer time to absorb the message. Each smaller group must overlap to form the main body of the overall display group. Too much product within each group can cause a heavy or bulky appearance. By grouping merchandise tightly into themes or stories, we are creating a visually organised display that reduces 'clutter'. This works particularly well in a large window or a central table display. Merchandise can be grouped in colours, styles, themes, brands etc. with add-on merchandise or props that compliment the display.

Depth

Depth is the distance from the front to back of the display. It is important to give the display the right amount of depth. Consider the way we watch movies or look at a painting; we step or sit back from whatever it is we wish to see. The same applies to displays - to grasp the whole picture it must be set back from the window, not positioned right up to the glass. The general rule of thumb is to start three quarters away from the glass then work forward. At the same time, the display should be staggering down from the highest point. Remember not to push merchandise onto the glass.



These diagrams illustrate four common types of display arrangements used across a variety of merchandise. Next time you go shopping, have a look at each window display you pass. The ones that appear well ordered and tidy, yet achieve a high volume of stock only do so through clever methods of grouping.



The **Pyramid** display is the most commonly used method of grouping merchandise together as it is the most effective. It works by building your products from the base up towards a point. This can be achieved by stacking a variety of products to create the triangular shape. Or you can use one large item (like a mannequin) as your main focal point/height, then gradually build out (for depth) and down to create the broad base. An effective pyramid display shows groups of products that create a

sense of movement. This can be created by overlapping products in a 'stepped' or 'zig-zagged' form to draw your eye to the focal point.

A **Dominant** display aims to promote a hero product, brand or style - often resulting with a single display offset by supporting graphics. Dominance can be expressed through size, weight, height, colour with the display often balanced by a small group of related stock to even out the weight

distribution. The idea of showing 'less is more', means that this style of display is often very eye-catching as the message is clear and instantly communicated.

The **Mirror** display is as the word suggests: what is done on one side is mirrored on the other. This arrangement is ideal for large windows where the same product story can be told in different colours or styles. For example, there could be a pyramid formation of red plates, bowls and cups on one side of a central banner, and on the other side, the same display but in a different colour or style.

A **Repetition** style of display commonly shows the same product or grouping of products repeated in a horizontal or vertical format. This technique works well across rows of shelves, or a long narrow window. It is ideal for showing bulk merchandise in an orderly fashion. Products could still be grouped by colour, pattern, style or size (e.g. a row of notebooks with coordinating pencil cases repeated in different colours or prints).



(Scarvell Cafe; Balwyn, VIC)

Props bring a display to life and should be integrated to surprise, delight and sell. These include objects like posters, risers, stands, shelving, promotional material, back-drops and any other items involved in creating settings for the merchandise. Remember - the main purpose of display is to present and sell your stock. Therefore it is important that props do not overshadow the merchandise.

Colour Blocking is a simple, yet visually effective way to display items within a range of identical (or similar) colours in a group to create an overall appearance of uniformity. For example, in a gift/homewares shop that has small quantities of a wide variety of merchandise, a sense of 'order' can be created by displaying all the 'red/warm' merchandise together, all the 'greens', 'browns', 'monochrome' etc. The shop will appear visually neat and tidy, and customers who are after a particular colour will be attracted to the grouping of that shade and browse the items within it. All other aspects to do with display arrangements still apply (e.g. pyramid, repetition etc.)



(Zjoosh; Lane Cove, NSW)

Here are some strategies to make your displays more visual and engaging:

- **Be visually inventive.** Let the way you hang, fold, stack, drape your products become your 'signature' look. For example, hang jeans by their belt loops instead of folding them on a shelf to show the best features of the jeans.
- **Integrate props with graphics to create 'art'.** Create a wow-factor wall using your product to speak a graphic language. For example, a cluster of photo frames of various sizes on one wall could show styled photos mixed with quotes/ messages and shadow boxes displaying the related merchandise.
- **Think 'eclectic', not ordinary.** Mix decorative, nostalgic or artful props with everyday objects to create something a bit unexpected. Feel-good storytelling often focuses on generations past, so why not use recycled and vintage objects to connect emotionally with customers?
- **Experiment with multi-functional components.** In this current economic climate, props should not be for 'one-use' only. Find ways to re-use and re-purpose for different themes and promotions. For example, turn a bucket upside-down to elevate merchandise instead of simply for containing it.

In essence, props are the key players in the (display) because you can use them to create a language, a drama that is unique to your business. Think of your props as the product's DNA - they fashion its character and identity and render it unique.

- Mary Portas (*Windows The Art of Retail Display*)



This window display features a showcase of teapots, tea cups and other tea-related products on an ornate shelf unit to create a visually eye-catching display (Chat; Box Hill, VIC)



(Before) The shop window was uninteresting with all objects disconnected from one another in the display
(The Australian Red Cross Shop; Mandurah, WA)



(After) The space was divided into 'two' window displays - therefore creating two areas of focus. The first window shows the mannequin grouped with a chair (prop) and coordinating accessories. The display cabinet (originally displayed against the wall behind the display) has been brought forward to showcase delicate goods.

The second window shows the second mannequin grouped with a display that utilises the end of the display rack. Rather than simply



showing the hanging garments, a small table has been used to elevate a group of stock that 'hides' the end of the rack and effectively creates a tighter and more interesting display grouping. The window display now has depth (created by the layering of the merchandise as well as the hanging texture panel) and clear focal points. Adding window signs further add to the display and highlights the nature of the business.

A Multi-Sensory Environment

Shopping means many different things to different people, but for the discerning customer, the most essential part of the experience is the holistic nature.

The elements of this experience are a combination of the people the customer connects with, the presentation and quality of the product or service, and the ambience or 'vibe' of the retail environment. It is often not enough to appeal to your customer on just a visual level. Playing the right music can shift a mood, certain smells can trigger a fond memory, tactile surfaces can offer levels of comfort... and let's not forget about offering samples of your product to tantalise the taste buds! So dare to create an environment that aims to stimulate as many senses as possible.

Sell the experience

With so much choice for the customer, it is always important to go back to the question: "*What is my point of difference?*". As customers become more comfortable with shopping online - choosing between brands, styles, features and price at the touch of a few keywords, you are going to require a real reason for the customer to visit your physical shop.

It now comes down to the *experience*. The physical shop environment can never truly be replicated in a digital form - particularly if you are a cafe or restaurant. Where your online experience is still of paramount importance (e.g. showcasing tantalising photos of new dishes, smart social media interactions with customers, blog reviews etc.) - it still does not replace the experience of sitting in the space and tasting the product. With this knowledge, your shop space should be designed and set up in a way that will not only set you apart from your competitors but to also offer your customer the 'holy grail' of retail: an experience that keeps them coming back for more.

How can this be done in the ever-changing face of retail and the increasing expectations of customers? Refer back to the last few chapters and always:

- **Be true to your image** and brand values as this will be unique to you and underpins all the creative decisions you make in setting up or maintaining your shop presentation.
- **Dare to be bold**, different and outstanding. It could be your choice in decor, your flair in gift wrapping, or your unexpected aspects of customer service.
- **Mentor your staff** to develop genuine pride in your business. They will be a very important factor in *delivering* the experience in your shop - from maintaining the shop presentation to their interactions with your customers.



This list highlights some actions you could take to ensure your retail space is refreshed, positive and memorable:

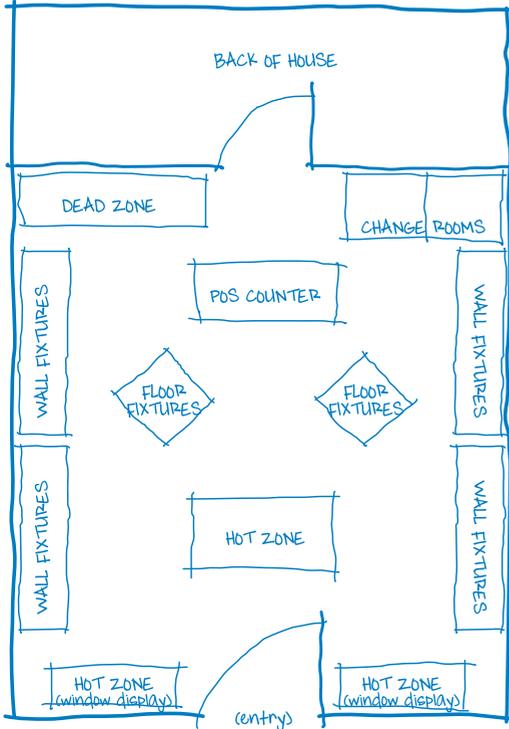
- **Fresh paint goes a long way.** Update your walls and fixtures on a budget and dramatically change the feel of the shop by simply painting them in a new colour.
- **Get creative with signage instore.** Position a blackboard sign near the entry with a 'welcome' message or quirky quote that changes daily/weekly.
- **Build signature displays.** From your windows to your promotional display areas, cross-promote where possible and ensure stock is replenished as soon as it is sold. Use props to add character to the displays.
- **Have clear sight lines.** Visibility is still one of the most important senses to stimulate. Alter the heights of displays or fixtures to create focal points. Remember: "eye level is buy level" - so position your best or newest stock where it can be seen and touched.
- **Rearrange your floor fixtures every season.** Have a strategy around the placement, position and rotation of your stock - including consideration for new releases, best sellers, basic stock, high profit lines, impulse buys and clearance/mark downs. If you have a cafe or restaurant, then create different modes of seating (e.g. chairs, stools, lounges) so that each time a customer returns, their experience would change due to their seat, view, or comfort.
- **Turn on some music!** Choose music that is appropriate to the business' image and the audience that frequents the shop. Consider volume and tempo to ensure that the music forms a comfortable part of the ambience and is not so loud or inappropriate that it turns customers away.
- **Add fresh flowers.** These will instantly add life and create an uplifting mood - whether you are in retail, run a cafe or work in a professional service.
- **Light the stock.** If you have adjustable spot lights in your shop, make sure they are angled to highlight stock or 'wash' a wall - not shining directly into customers' eyes. Choose lighting that is appropriate to the mood you wish to create.
- **Add a 'man-chair'.** There are many shops that are largely aimed at a female audience, even though these female customers often shop with their partners. By placing a comfortable chair in a corner with some books or magazines and some mints means that the non-shopping male doesn't have to stand around looking bored, thereby enhancing everybody's shopping experience.
- **Offer something for free.** This is not about 'giveaways'. It is more of a gesture of hospitality - coffee, water, lollies or even a sticker for little ones - your customers will feel a bit chuffed and will love you for it.
- **Source inspiration.** Go online and research what other shops are doing globally! There are great ideas everywhere! (*Pinterest* is a great starting point).

Traffic flow/floor layout

A well-planned store layout will create a space that is designed with your customers in mind. Some key criteria in the layout should include: aisles that are easy to navigate, wide access and uncluttered entrances, and clear sight lines.

Careful planning will maximise the use of any retail space - large or small - generating good traffic flow that effectively will increase your bottom line. The specific arrangement of fixtures and display racks form and influence the traffic flow. The traffic flow is the 'intended' path of navigation for customers to access all areas of the store - paying closer attention to promotional, new release or slow-moving stock.

{A typical retail shop layout}



Other points to consider in your shop:

- Upon entering your shop, most customers will walk in the opposite direction of the register counter. Position something interesting here for them to browse.
- Narrow aisles are not inviting so make sure aisles are at least wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair or pram. Try to keep aisles clear of boxes or excess stock.
- Avoid having negative signs like "smile you're on our security camera" or "if you break, you pay" as these will discourage customers from returning.
- A *hot zone* is the selling space directly in the customer's line of sight leading to the back of the shop. The shop window, floor fixtures facing traffic flow (e.g. ends of aisles) and the space directly in front of your entrances are examples of hot spots. Place your new releases and high-profit margins here.
- A *dead zone* is usually a dead end, poorly lit areas, spaces behind a nook or under a stairwell, or areas that are too high or too low to really see the stock. It is often best to position 'destination stock' - merchandise that you know customers will seek out, in these areas.
- The golden rule for positioning stock: "Eye-level is buy-level"! If a customer can't see it, chances are, they won't buy it!

The traffic flow is driven by the type of stock in the store. In most retail businesses, stock can be divided into these five categories: *New Release*, *Best Sellers*, *Basic Stock*, *High Profit Lines* and *Impulse Merchandise*. Understanding your own stock range helps in the placement of merchandise to maximising sales.

New Release:

- New release products have a planned, limited floor life in the prime position from one week to three months
- They should be positioned towards the front of the shop (e.g. book shops and video libraries do this best)

Best Sellers:

- What you are 'famous' for and your customers will go anywhere for it
- They create traffic flow
- They should be merchandised in the most prominent position to attract and encourage entry

Basic Stock:

- "Bread and Butter" lines; your *classics*
- They represent a large part of your business
- They must always be in stock
- Generates repeat business
- They should be placed towards the back

High Profit Lines:

- Specialist selections, niche products
- Usually carry a higher % markup and generate few markdowns
- Not always your 'best seller'
- They form part of your 'product/profit mix' – a blend of high and low profit merchandise
- They should be placed in a prominent position

Impulse Merchandise:

- Used to generate 'add-on' sales
- Located in eye-catching positions: at the register point/s near the related stock or end of aisles/gondolas



New releases displayed on the ends of aisles
(Coventry Books; South Melbourne, VIC)



A table display upon entry offers a moment to pause and browse (Kate Spade; New York, USA)

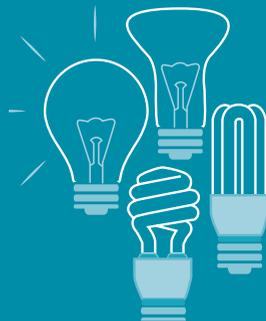


A simple central cube display (Gorman; Adelaide, SA)



Furniture used as fixtures, large-scale props and changing angles encourage longer browsing (Anthropologie; Philadelphia, USA)

Turn the Lights On!



Lighting plays an important role in creating an inviting and successful retail environment. Too often do we find mid to high end shops stocking high quality products looking 'cheap' or 'tired' because the lighting was not right. The right lighting can create a sense of welcome and warmth, attract attention, create comfort or even a sense of theatre.

Shop design is about creating retail theatre. The shop is a stage, the product is the 'star', hence the 'set' lighting should always highlight the star in its best light. Always consider this when looking at the lighting in your own shop.

Fluorescent lighting is commonly used as an overall, flat light source for general lighting. However, they do not create the mood or ambience that encourages customers to 'see' a special display or linger longer in your shop. Display lighting (or spot lights), will highlight what we want the customers to see as our eyes

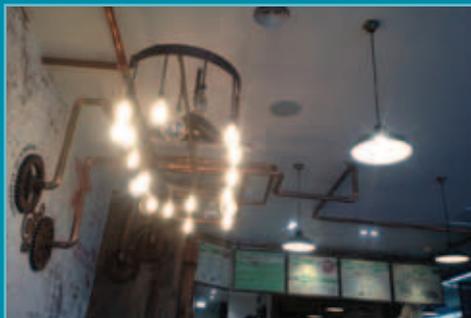
are naturally attracted to the brightest spots within an area. These should be used to highlight your premium display areas: your windows, your hot spots, your register point. Remember - well lit products are more likely to sell.

Choosing the right lighting often requires the services of a lighting specialist. However, before you do that, you should always go back to what image you are trying to project, where your key display points will be and the mood you want to create. These will

influence your lighting plans and your choice in lighting types. Keep in mind there are also many energy-efficient options available to reduce your running costs without compromising light quality and are often worth the initial set up costs.

Lighting can establish a store's image, lead customers inside, focus their attention, make the products attractive and visible, and in general encourage purchasing.

- Design Lights Consortium (*Know How: Retail Lighting*)



Different styles/types of lighting serve a variety of purposes from adding interest, creating a mood, to highlighting information (*Salsa's; Camberwell, VIC*)



Most Important Design Factors for Retail Lighting:

	Feature Display	General Display	Cashier	Circulation
Colour rendition/accuracy	●	●	◐	◐
Contrast/accent/highlight	●	●	◐	◐
Daylight integration/control	●	●		
Direct glare/reflected glare	●	◐	●	○
Image or style	●	◐	◐	◐
Modelling of objects/shadows	●	◐	◐	○
Visual priority/organisation	◐	◐	◐	◐
Quantity of light on vertical displays	◐	◐		
Quantity of light on horizontal surfaces	◐	◐	◐	◐
Aiming flexibility of accent lighting	●	○		

● Very Important ◐ Important ○ Somewhat Important

Adapted from the Lighting Design Guide (IESNA Lighting Handbook, 9th Edition).

Lighting DOs:

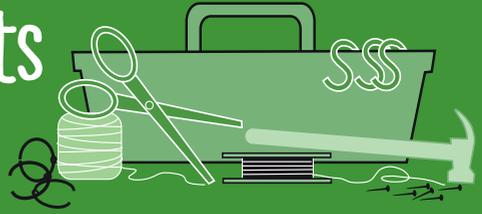
- Position your light source close/above the merchandise.
- Use energy-efficient light sources or diffusers like LED downlights or spots, compact fluorescents or fluorescent tubes in 'warm' or 'daylight'.
- For accent or display lighting, use narrow beam spotlights such as halogens or low-voltage dichroics.

- Illuminate aisles with lighting spilled over from accent lighting.
- Design your lighting plan using organised patterns, as chaotic patterns may confuse or agitate your customers.
- Integrate adjustable options for flexibility in directing accent lighting where needed (e.g. track lighting).

Lighting DON'Ts:

- Use fluorescent lights for everything.
- Use floodlights rather than spotlights.
- Have too many spotlights everywhere - highlighting everything, yet nothing in particular.
- Have too many shiny surfaces - creating too many reflections of light that can be blinding.
- Don't be afraid to make your ceiling 'disappear' by painting it in a dark colour and implementing a subtle lighting plan so that all you notice is the merchandise on display. Good lighting should not actually be noticed by the customer unless it is a feature lamp over a special display area like a chandelier.

Think Green, The Tools & Final Insights



This final chapter aims to provide some further insights for you and your staff to take on board as you embrace your role as ‘visual merchandisers’.

Visual merchandising as a practice can be considered to be quite ‘wasteful’ with promotional banners, props or decoratives being discarded with each new seasonal display. Therefore, to reduce your visual merchandising costs and more importantly, cost to the environment, below are some options to consider when planning your next display or shop renovation:

- Always think about the ‘re-usability’ or ‘recyclability’ of any props you buy, source, or make for your displays. For example, a vintage suitcase could be used open and filled with stock in one display, or closed and as a base to elevate stock in another. Or use printed paper instead of foam so that it can be recycled. See display opportunities in everyday objects - reclaimed timber logs, old books, antique dressers, wooden ladders... look through second-hand stores or op-shops for ideas.
- Choose 100% recycled paper for all printing needs and for large volume

print runs, use a printer who prints with vegetable-based inks.

- If renovating your shop, stop and think about your image and explore further ‘quirky’ options rather than a direct trip to your local shop-fitter/supplier. If you are a boutique, then you can mix second-hand/antique furniture pieces with the wall fixtures/fittings, i.e. a repainted ornate table for the central display, old chairs for elevating stock or to place in the fitting rooms, second-hand hooks for hanging garments on the wall etc. Even a cafe could benefit from a re-upholstered old couch or chair to add character and uniqueness to the experience. Try not to always opt for ‘new’ straight away and dare to ‘mix and match’.
- When painting your shop - consider using non-toxic, eco-paints that are made from recycled oil and are fume-free.
- Change your lights to low-cost, low-energy options like LED, low-wattage, or compact-fluorescents.

The Visual Merchandising ‘toolbox’

Every business should have a kit or toolbox handy with all the essential tools of display in one easy to find place. Create a Visual Merchandising Kit consisting of these basic items:



- Nylon, twine, wool, chains, wire (for hanging posters etc.)
- Sharp scissors/box-cutter
- Pins/eyelet hooks/3M removable hooks
- Blu-tack/double-sided tape/masking tape/invisible tape/mounting tape
- Paperclips/bulldog clips (to keep book/magazine pages open)
- Long-nosed plier/tweezers
- Small hammer or tack hammer (to hammer in pins)
- Staple gun/stapler and staple remover
- Cardboard strips (for the backs of posters to keep posters straight when suspending)

Other basic display tools and materials include:

- Small step ladder/stool
- Clean (and ironed) fabric or paper to cover table tops, risers, window floors or to use as back-drops
- Book stands to hold books upright (if applicable)
- Boxes/risers/platforms of varying sizes to elevate products in the display. These can be made from cardboard, plywood, MDF, clear or coloured acrylic and can be in the form of cubes or rectangles. They can be painted or covered with fabric or paper to add colour to the display. You can also purchase these from shop suppliers or your local furniture store (e.g. Ikea or Freedom Furniture).
- Cleaning equipment: dusters, brush and pan, broom, vacuum cleaner, window cleaning agents.

8 Visual Merchandising Reminders for Success:

1. Change your window display. Often. At least every 4-6 weeks - even if it just stock rotation or rearranging props/merchandise.
2. Open the doors! If a customer has to open the door themselves, it is too much of an inconvenience and 'commitment'. Open entry points are more inviting.
3. Position a 'promotional area' close to the front of the shop to entice people to enter. This should ideally be a centre display to bridge the gap between entrance to store body.
4. Always ensure there is enough possibilities for customers to crossover from one side of your shop to the other - you want them to 'shop' your selling floor.
5. Create a striking feature or detail with excellent lighting at the back of the shop to encourage customers to 'go the whole mile'.
6. A 'silent' shop is intimidating. Turn the music up!
7. Always try to be innovative in everything that you do. That way you will stand out from the crowd.
8. Avoid store blindness at all costs. Regularly step back from what you are doing and try to see it through the customers' eyes. You will probably be surprised by what you see!

Your Annual VM Check Up

Every so often, when you've been in business for some time, it is beneficial to step outside and have a look at your business with fresh eyes. Like a car that regularly needs a service, your business could do with a little 'health check' too.

This section of the mini guide aims to provide a basic checklist to help guide you through your own self-assessment of your shop's presentation. These checklist points will prompt you with some 'call-to-actions' that may result in further improvements and changes to your shop that you may not have noticed before.

It is highly recommended that you perform this 'health check' at 6 and 12 monthly intervals to make sure your business doesn't become stagnant. You may be surprised to find that sometimes the changes that you may need to do are often very simple and easy, provided you are consistent! For example, it is not economically viable to re-fit out your entire shop every couple of years, however, it is very cost-effective to repaint a wall every 5 years and change the window display every 4-6 weeks.

The checklists provided over the next few pages are specifically designed for a variety of business types:

- *Fashion or Accessories*
- *Hair and Beauty*
- *Home Wares or Gifts*
- *Food, Grocery or Deli*
- *Cafe or Restaurants*
- *Professional Services*

These are a guide for the majority of retail/service/hospitality businesses. Please use the checklist (or a combination of checklists) that is most suited to your business.

A blank section is provided for you at the end of this mini guide for your own notes regarding the improvements and maintenance actions necessary for your business.

Please keep this mini guide somewhere handy for you and your staff to refer to when you need some quick, easy visual merchandising ideas for your next creative display adventure!



Fashion & Accessories

Circle all the numbers to the questions you need to follow up and use the 'Notes' page at the end of this booklet for actions to follow up.

The Shopfront:

1. What is the condition of the paint or other material on the shopfront?
2. Is the signage clear, easy to read and located where both pedestrians and motorists can see it? Is the information up-to-date?
3. Do you have any lighting illuminating signage, your entrance or under your shop awning (if applicable)?
4. What condition are your awnings in? (if applicable)
5. Is your entrance visible and accessible by someone pushing a pram or in a wheelchair/motorised scooter? (i.e. do you have a step/ramp/excess stock blocking the entry?)
6. Do you have racks displaying stock on the footpath? Are they well organised/branded? Do they comply with any footpath trading policy in your municipality?
7. If you are upgrading your shopfront, have you obtained a planning or building permit from Council (if applicable)?

The Shop Window:

8. Is the glass on the windows clean?
9. Are the floors of the window clean?
10. Are there any display lighting in the window? Do they work or need globes replaced?
11. Do you have a display mesh, rods or hooks in place to hang posters/backdrops/props from the ceiling?
12. What condition are your display mannequins in? Do they need replacing/updating?
13. Have you got props/fixtures to elevate stock from the floor?
14. Do you use props in your displays? Are they appropriate to the display in the window?
15. Do you create your own promotional material for your window (i.e. posters, tickets etc), or do you use marketing material from your suppliers?
16. Have you got a VM toolbox handy in the shop?
17. Who is responsible for installing and changing window displays? How often do you change your displays?

The Shop Layout:

18. Is the shop cleaned regularly?
19. What condition are the walls (paint) and floors?

20. Are the shop proportions 'right'? That is, are the stock levels in proportion to the number of and size of your shop fixtures/fittings?
21. What is the condition of your shop fixtures/fittings? Do they need maintenance/updating? Are they appropriate to the stock in your shop?
22. Are there clear sight-lines leading to the back of the shop? Any visual 'blocks' (e.g. columns, tall racks etc.)
23. Are the aisles clear? Is there enough space to pass a pram/stroller/wheelchair?
24. Is the shop layout logical? Are merchandise grouped/arranged so that they are easy to locate?
25. Is the cash/wrap counter visible? What condition is the counter? (is it cluttered, damaged, impractical?)
26. What type of lighting is used in the shop and are they effective in lighting the stock? Are all the lights working?
27. Are the change rooms easy to locate? What type of lighting do you have in the change rooms? Are they flattering?
28. Do you have a customer 'lounge' area or a chair/s near the fitting room for waiting customers?

Instore Displays:

29. Is there a theme to your displays? (e.g. merchandised by colour, story, style, or size?)
30. Do you have display points in your 'hot zones' to showcase your featured/new stock? (e.g. near the entrance, ends of aisles)
31. Do your product displays, signage, props and other material convince customers to keep moving from one fixture to the next - working their way further into your shop?

Ambience/Mood/Extras:

32. Do you play music in your shop? Is it appropriate and at the right volume?
33. Do you have any smells in the space?
34. Are the floor coverings comfortable to walk on? (e.g. floorboards with rugs in specific areas etc.)
35. Do you have additional 'mood' lighting to add character to the space?
36. Do you have art on your walls?
37. Do you display fresh flowers/plants in the shop?



Hair, Beauty & Wellbeing

Circle all the numbers to the questions you need to follow up and use the 'Notes' page at the end of this booklet for actions to follow up.

The Shopfront:

1. What is the condition of the paint or other material on the shopfront?
2. Is the signage clear, easy to read and located where both pedestrians and motorists can see it? Is the information up-to-date?
3. Do you have any lighting illuminating signage, your entrance or under your shop awning (if applicable)?
4. What condition are your awnings in? (if applicable)
5. Is your entrance visible and accessible by someone pushing a pram or in a wheelchair/motorised scooter? (i.e. do you have a step/ramp/excess stock blocking the entry?)
6. Do you have an A-frame (or other) signage on the footpath and does it comply with any Council policies?
7. Do you have a brochure holder or similar for after-hours access to salon info/services?
8. If you are upgrading your shopfront, have you obtained a planning or building permit from Council (if applicable)?

The Shop Window:

9. Is the glass on the windows clean?
10. Are the floors of the window clean?
11. Are there any display lighting in the window? Do they work or need globes replaced?
12. Do you have a display mesh, rods or hooks in place to hang posters/backdrops/props from the ceiling?
13. Do you display stock in or near your window? If so, have you got appropriate fixtures/props to elevate stock?
14. Do you use props in your displays? Are they appropriate to the display in the window?
15. Do you create your own promotional material for your window (i.e. posters, tickets etc), or do you use marketing material from your suppliers?
16. Have you got a VM toolbox handy in the shop?
17. Who is responsible for installing and changing window displays? How often do you change your displays?
18. If you don't have products in your window, is there something that provides a preview of the shop's ambience? (e.g. lounge/ottoman/

coffee table with magazines?)

The Shop Layout:

19. What is the 'welcome' experience upon entry?
20. Is the shop cleaned regularly?
21. What condition are the walls (paint) and floors?
22. Is the decor, colour scheme appropriate to your image and clientele?
23. What is the condition of the shop furniture/fixtures? Do they need maintenance/updating?
24. Are there clear sight-lines leading to the back of the shop? Any visual 'blocks' (e.g. columns, tall racks etc.)
25. Is the furniture comfortable?
26. Is the cash/wrap counter visible? What condition is the counter? (is it cluttered, damaged, impractical?)
27. What type of lighting is used in the shop and are they appropriate to the business? Are all the lights working?
28. Do you display merchandise in the shop? Are they logically displayed? Can customers access the products easily? Is it well-lit and ticketed?

Treatment Rooms (where applicable):

29. Are the colour scheme and decor appropriate to the service/s provided and to the clientele?
30. Is the lighting appropriate for both function and atmosphere?
31. Do you provide further customer comforts, e.g. clothes rack/hooks, chair, water, etc.?
32. Is there any art on the walls or other decorative touches to add your business' character/image?

Ambience/Mood/Extras:

33. Do you play music in your shop? Is it appropriate and at the right volume?
34. Do you have any smells in the space?
35. Are the floor coverings comfortable to walk on? (e.g. floorboards with rugs in specific areas etc.)
36. Do you have additional 'mood' lighting to add character to the space?
37. What do you have on your walls? Are there any art/prints/photography? Or posters from suppliers? If they are posters, are they current and appropriate?
38. Do you provide extra services for your customers, e.g. coffee/tea, water, sweets during their visit?
39. Do you display fresh flowers/plants in the shop?



Gift & Home

Circle all the numbers to the questions you need to follow up and use the 'Notes' page at the end of this booklet for actions to follow up.

The Shopfront:

1. What is the condition of the paint or other material on the shopfront?
2. Is the signage clear, easy to read and located where both pedestrians and motorists can see it? Is the information up-to-date?
3. Do you have any lighting illuminating signage, your entrance or under your shop awning (if applicable)?
4. What condition are your awnings in? (if applicable)
5. Is your entrance visible and accessible by someone pushing a pram or in a wheelchair/motorised scooter? (i.e. do you have a step/ramp/excess stock blocking the entry?)
6. Do you have racks displaying stock or freestanding signage (e.g. A-frame) on the footpath? Are they well organised/branded? Do they comply with any footpath trading policy in your municipality?
7. If you are upgrading your shopfront, have you obtained a planning or building permit from Council (if applicable)?

The Shop Window:

8. Is the glass on the windows clean?
9. Are the floors of the window clean?
10. Are there any display lighting in the window? Do they work or need globes replaced?
11. Do you have a display mesh, rods or hooks in place to hang posters/backdrops/props from the ceiling?
12. Have you got props/fixtures to elevate stock from the floor? What condition are they in and are they appropriate to the type of stock you display in the window?
13. Do you use props in your displays? Are they appropriate to the display in the window?
14. Do you create your own promotional material for your window (i.e. posters, tickets etc), or do you use marketing material from your suppliers?
15. Have you got a VM toolbox handy in the shop?
16. Who is responsible for installing and changing window displays? How often do you change your displays?

The Shop Layout:

17. Is the shop cleaned regularly?
18. What condition are the walls (paint) and floors?

19. Are the shop proportions 'right'? That is, are the stock levels in proportion to the number of and size of your shop fixtures/fittings?
20. What is the condition of your shop fixtures/fittings? Do they need maintenance/updates? Are they appropriate to the stock in your shop?
21. Are there clear sight-lines leading to the back of the shop? Any visual 'blocks' (e.g. columns, tall racks etc.)
22. Are the aisles clear? Is there enough space to pass a pram/stroller/wheelchair?
23. Is the shop layout logical? Are merchandise grouped/arranged so that they are easy to locate?
24. Is the cash/wrap counter visible? What condition is the counter? (is it cluttered, damaged, impractical?)
25. What type of lighting is used in the shop and are they effective in lighting the stock? Are all the lights working?

Instore Displays

26. Is there a theme to your displays? (e.g. merchandised by colour, story, brand, or type?)
27. Do you have display points in your 'hot zones' to showcase your featured/new stock? (e.g. near the entrance, ends of aisles)
28. Do you display some of your products with related stock to create more of a 'lifestyle' display within the shop (not just in the windows)?
29. Do your product displays, signage, props and other material convince customers to keep moving from one fixture to the next - working their way further into your shop?
30. Are your stock within reach height or do you require a small ladder to access some stock?
31. Are most of your featured items at 'eye-level'?

Ambience/Mood/Extras:

32. Do you play music in your shop? Is it appropriate and at the right volume?
33. Do you have any smells in the space?
34. Are the floor coverings comfortable to walk on? (e.g. floorboards with rugs in specific areas etc.)
35. Do you have additional 'mood' lighting to add character to the space?
36. What do you have on your walls? Merchandise, art, mirrors, texture, decorative lighting?



Cafe or Restaurant

Circle all the numbers to the questions you need to follow up and use the 'Notes' page at the end of this booklet for actions to follow up.

The Shopfront:

1. What is the condition of the paint or other material on the shopfront?
2. Is the signage clear, easy to read and located where both pedestrians and motorists can see it? Is the information up-to-date?
3. Do you have any lighting illuminating signage, your entrance or under your shop awning (if applicable)?
4. What condition are your awnings in? (if applicable)
5. Is your entrance visible and accessible by someone pushing a pram or in a wheelchair/motorised scooter? (i.e. do you have a step/ramp/excess stock?)
6. Does your shopfront open up completely (e.g. via a sliding door or folding doors)?
7. Do you have an A-frame (or other) signage on the footpath and does it comply with any Council policies? What information do you have on it and is it relevant/current/enticing to customers?
8. Do you have al-fresco dining? If so, what is the condition of the furniture and does it suit the image of your business?
9. Do you have umbrellas or cafe barriers? If so, do they have your own branding or do they feature a supplier's corporate branding?
10. If you are upgrading your shopfront, have you obtained a planning or building permit from Council (if applicable)?

The Shop Window *(where applicable)*:

11. Is the glass on the windows clean?
12. Do you have merchandise or seating in your shop window?
13. Would a customer be comfortable sitting in the window space or would they feel 'exposed'?
14. What style of seating/furniture do you have for customers in this space? Is it different to the rest of the decor in the shop?
15. Do you have special signage on the window to provide a sense of 'privacy' (e.g. frosted window decals) or some sort of window covering?

The Dining Space:

16. What is the 'welcome' experience upon entry?
17. Is the shop cleaned regularly?
18. What condition are the walls (paint) and floors?
19. Is the decor, colour scheme appropriate to your

image and clientele?

20. What is the condition of the shop furniture? Do they need updating/replacing?
21. Do you have more than one mode of seating option for your customers? (e.g. bar stools at the counter/window, lounge areas, banquette seating, different styles of chairs etc.)
22. Do you have different sizes of tables (e.g. square tables for four, communal table/s, table for two, or lots of small tables that can be arranged to suit larger groups)?
23. Is there a 'waiter's station' for customers to get their own water?

Food Presentation *(where applicable)*:

24. Have you got food on display? Are they well ticketed (product description and price)?
25. Is the food presented neatly and in an enticing way (e.g. decorative platters/bowls, garnish)?
26. Is the food well-lit?
27. Do you have packaged goods for sale? Are they displayed to 'add character' to your shop presentation and can they be accessed by the customer? Are these goods re-packaged in your own shop branding?

Ambience/Mood/Extras:

28. Do you play music in your cafe/restaurant? Is it appropriate and at the right volume?
29. Is the space appropriately lit? Do you have additional 'mood' lighting to add character to the space?
30. How are the tables set up? With cutlery/condiments/menus on the table already?
31. Is the menu up-to-date? Do they need to be reprinted (e.g. showing signs of age, or displaying too many 'edits')?
32. How is the food displayed? Do you have special signature crockery/cutlery?
33. Is the kitchen visible? If so, do you use this as an opportunity to add 'theatre' to the customer's experience?
34. Do you display fresh flowers/edible plants?
35. Do you have a courtyard? Is this space up to the same standards as the rest of the shop?
36. Do you provide toilets? If so, what condition are they in? Do you provide extras like quality hand-soap/creams, hand-dryer or hand-towels?



Food, Grocery or Deli

Circle all the numbers to the questions you need to follow up and use the 'Notes' page at the end of this booklet for actions to follow up.

The Shopfront:

1. What is the condition of the paint or other material on the shopfront?
2. Is the signage clear, easy to read and located where both pedestrians and motorists can see it? Is the information up-to-date?
3. Do you have any lighting illuminating signage, your entrance or under your shop awning (if applicable)?
4. What condition are your awnings in? (if applicable)
5. Is your entrance visible and accessible by someone pushing a pram or in a wheelchair/motorised scooter? (i.e. do you have a step/ramp/excess stock?)
6. Do you have racks displaying stock or freestanding signage (e.g. A-frame) on the footpath? Are they well organised/branded? Do they comply with any footpath trading policy in your municipality?
7. If you are upgrading your shopfront, have you obtained a planning or building permit from Council (if applicable)?

The Shop Window:

8. Have you got a shop window space or is your shop entirely open?
9. If you have a window, is the glass on the windows clean?
10. Are the floors of the window area clean?
11. Are there any display lighting in the window? Do they work or need globes replaced?
12. Do you have a display mesh, rods or hooks in place to hang posters/backdrops/props from the ceiling (if applicable)?
13. Have you got props/fixtures to elevate stock from the floor? What condition are they in and are they appropriate to the type of stock you display in the window?
14. Do you use props in your displays? Are they appropriate to the display in the window?
15. Do you create your own promotional material for your window (i.e. posters, tickets etc), or do you use marketing material from your suppliers?

The Shop Layout:

16. Is the shop cleaned regularly?
17. What condition are the walls (paint) and floors?
18. Are the shop proportions 'right'? That is, are

- the stock levels in proportion to the number of and size of your shop fixtures/fittings?
19. What is the condition of your shop fixtures/fittings? Do they need maintenance/updating? Are they appropriate to the stock in your shop?
20. Are there clear sight-lines leading to the back of the shop? Any visual 'blocks' (e.g. columns, tall racks etc.)
21. Are the aisles clear? Is there enough space to pass a pram/stroller/wheelchair?
22. Is the shop layout logical? Are merchandise grouped/arranged so that they are easy to locate?
23. Is the cash/wrap counter visible? What condition is the counter? (is it cluttered, damaged, impractical?)
24. What type of lighting is used in the shop and are they effective in lighting the stock? Are all the lights working?

Instore Displays

25. How are your merchandise arranged? By food category, size, relationship?
26. Do you have display points in your 'hot zones' to showcase your featured/new stock? (e.g. near the entrance, ends of aisles - if applicable)
27. Do your product displays, signage, props and other material convince customers to keep navigating through your shop?
28. Are your stock within reach height or do you require a small ladder to access some stock?
29. Are most of your featured items at 'eye-level'?
30. If you use a refrigerated counter to display your goods (e.g. butcher, deli), are the stock well ticketed?
31. Do you hang stock from the ceiling? Are they for customers to reach or do they require service?

Ambience/Mood/Extras:

32. Do you play music in your shop? Is it appropriate and at the right volume?
33. Do you have any smells in the space?
34. Do you have additional 'mood' lighting to add character to the space?
35. Do you use a ticketing system to serve your customers? Is this easy to locate?
36. Do you offer taste-testings/product sampling?
37. Do you do food demonstrations?



Professional Services

Circle all the numbers to the questions you need to follow up and use the 'Notes' page at the end of this booklet for actions to follow up.

The Shopfront:

1. What is the condition of the paint or other material on the shopfront?
2. Is the signage clear, easy to read and located where both pedestrians and motorists can see it? Is the information up-to-date?
3. Do you have any lighting illuminating signage, your entrance or under your shop awning (if applicable)?
4. What condition are your awnings in? (if applicable)
5. Is your entrance visible and accessible by someone pushing a pram or in a wheelchair/motorised scooter? (i.e. do you have a step/ramp/excess stock?)
6. Do you have an A-frame (or other) signage on the footpath and does it comply with any Council policies?
7. If you are upgrading your shopfront, have you obtained a planning or building permit from Council (if applicable)?

The Window Space:

8. Is the glass on the windows clean?
9. Are the floors of the window clean?
10. What do you have in your shop window? Window coverings? Furniture? Promotional posters/banners?
11. Do you have any lighting in your shop window space?
12. Have you got any signage on your shop window? Is the information current and relevant? Is the signage cluttered and blocking visuals into the shop?

The Interior:

13. What is the 'welcome' experience upon entry?
14. Is the shop cleaned regularly?
15. What condition are the walls (paint) and floors?
16. Is the decor, colour scheme appropriate to your image and clientele?
17. What is the condition of the shop furniture/fixtures? Do they need maintenance/updating?
18. Do you have a customer lounge area? Is the furniture comfortable?
19. Is the customer lounge area clearly demarcated? (e.g. plush floor rug, arrangement of chairs/lounge/ottomans)

20. Is the customer service/receptionist counter easy to locate?
21. What type of lighting is used in the shop and are they appropriate to the business? Are all the lights working?
22. Do you display company/product information in the space? Are they easy to locate, neatly arranged and current?
23. Is the space well-lit?
24. Is the 'work space' visible from the customer or screened off?
25. Do customers need to 'take a number' for service or ring a bell? Is this effectively communicated?

Meeting Rooms (where applicable):

26. Is the furniture and decor inviting and comfortable?
27. Does the furniture fit the space and is there sufficient room to move around?
28. Is the space appropriately lit?
29. Is there any art/photography/frames on the walls?
30. Does the space offer sufficient privacy (e.g. screens, curtains, sound-proof walls etc.)?

Ambience/Mood/Extras:

31. Do you play music in your space? Is it appropriate and at the right volume?
32. Do you have any smells in the space?
33. Are the floor coverings comfortable to walk on? (e.g. carpet vs floorboards etc.)
34. Do you have additional 'mood' lighting to add character to the space? (e.g. floor lamps, feature pendant lamps etc.)
35. What do you have on your walls? Are there any art/prints/photography? Or do you feature your company graphics, values, mission statement, policies?
36. Do you provide extra services for your customers, e.g. coffee/tea, water, sweets during their visit?
37. Are your magazines/periodicals current and relevant to your clientele?
38. Do you display fresh flowers/plants in the shop?



All information was correct at the time of going to press and may be amended due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the organiser. Whitehorse City Council does not accept any liability for loss, and limits the extent possible at law, any loss, damage or inconvenience due to inaccuracy or changes in the publication.

Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, Whitehorse City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land now known as Whitehorse and pays respect to its elders past and present.

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