

Retail Minded

news, education & support for boutique businesses

a retail lifestyle publication

*Spring Into
Retail!*

TRADESHOW TIPS

LEARNING

**FROM
RESTAURANTS**

**LANDLORDS
AND YOU**

**EMPLOYEE
TRAININGS**

& More



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PHOTO: RETAIL MINDED

Anna Ackerman, a resident of Orange County in California, holds purchases from one of her favorite stores, Tuvalu, which is located on Forest Avenue in the beautiful downtown district of Laguna Beach. Ackerman is a friend of RM's Editor and served as her official tour-guide while in Laguna Beach for RM research.

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ASD August 4 - 7, 2013

Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas NV

FIND EVERYTHING. BUY ANYTHING—HERE.

ASD Las Vegas brings the world's widest variety of merchandise together in one efficient consumer-goods trade show that's as easy to shop as it is to love. Loaded with quality choices at every price point, this well-established trade event continues to grow, attracting tens of thousands of loyal attendees from every retail and distribution channel who come here to discover new suppliers, new product categories—and new ways to profit.

Held in Las Vegas twice annually, ASD Las Vegas is truly a destination wholesale buying event that can't be missed. Buyers from department stores to convenience stores, from college book stores to general stores from grocery store distributors to fashion boutique stores and many more attend to find unique merchandise that will set their business apart. ASD Las Vegas is the largest trade show of its kind covering a breadth of product categories; it's like **six shows in one**—all in one easy trip to Vegas.

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Holiday & Seasonal • Garden & Outdoor • Pet Products
Home Décor • Housewares / Kitchenware

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Scarves / Wraps • Travel / Luggage • Leather Goods
Electronics Accessories • Footwear

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Cosmetics • Fragrance • Spa Products • Beauty Supplies
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Store Items • Electronics/Electronics Accessories
Automotive Accessories • Outdoor Recreation / Sporting
Goods • Self Defense / Personal Security • Military / Tactical



ASD FAST FACTS

- ASD attracts **45,000+ attendees** from across the country and around the world
- ASD features **2800+ vendors** who sell to every retail market segment and distribution channel
- See the action this August **All Under One Roof** at the Las Vegas Convention Center
- Buyers attend from **50 states and 88 countries**



PHOTO: MEGAN KELLY PHOTOGRAPHY

EDITOR'S NOTE

Growing up, I remember “shopping” was a pastime my mother fiercely held close to her heart. Whether it was heading to our local mall or strolling the stores and streets of where I grew up in downtown Libertyville, Illinois, shopping was a sport for my mother. She could tackle ten stores in one day and walk away with only one purchase, yet somehow she felt accomplished in buying what she believed to be the best product for the best value available. Years later, she still holds this competitive passion for shopping while I, on the other hand, stroll in and out of stores with a much different goal in mind. My agenda? To identify opportunities for stronger customer engagement, to best understand merchandising strategies, to determine challenges and solutions of different store layouts, to recognize operational trends and to ultimately analyze every moment and everything that takes place during a shopping experience. I’m very fortunate that I continue to get to do this type of retail research, and love traveling to new communities nationwide to do just this.

Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting Laguna Beach, CA where I caught up with an old friend, a favorite aunt and spent a morning presenting to a group of distributors and wholesalers on how to maximize point-of-sale areas. Additionally, I spent two gorgeous afternoons discovering the boutiques and small businesses that make up Laguna Beach, which I profile in this issue’s “Charming City” section. One of the store’s I visited, Cottage Furnishings, is a family owned business that was founded in 1996 by a husband and wife duo. Fast forward to today, and their daughter is part of their team, keeping the spirit of family alive in their thriving, beachside business. I always find it so fascinating how businesses come to life and even more so, how they become and stay successful. Hear the story of Cottage Furnishings and others on page 20, gaining tips and more on what you can do to help your unique business, as well.

My quick trip to Laguna Beach followed with five days spent in Las Vegas for the bi-annual ASD Show. If you are not familiar with this tradeshow already, I strongly encourage you to check it out. I’ve been to many tradeshows over the years, but what I love about ASD is that they truly stand out in offering so many types of retailers valuable vendors to shop from. This recent show they even introduced a gourmet food section to their already expansive list of show categories that include fashion, health & beauty, novelty, cash & carry jewelry, housewares and much more. Each day from the ASD show floors, I blogged and offered my insight on stand-out vendors and other ASD highlights via social media and on RM’s website. Be sure to visit RetailMinded.com for a full show recap, as well view pictures and products straight from their show floors.

Finally, I am thrilled that days are longer and warm weather will cover more of our country as Spring is officially here. Check out my ten thoughts on why Spring is great for retailers on page 50, as well as share your own with me on Twitter at @RetailMinded and Facebook.com/RetailMinded. As always, I love hearing from our readers and look forward to connecting with you in the months ahead.

Happy retailing!

Nicole Leinbach Reyhle
Founder & Editorial Director
nicole@retailminded.com

FROM OUR READERS

“I’ve really enjoyed your publication. Thanks SO much for all the effort of behalf of independent retailers.”

Kim Dziabis
Store Owner, Madisonbelle
Leesburg, VA

“I must have studied and bookmarked over 50 articles on RetailMinded.com last night. Best resource I’ve found about owning a boutique.”

Amanda Lester
Web Designer, AppleBlue.org
Denver, CO

“I LOVE your magazine! I like to read what really matters and you seem to be doing that. Thanks bunches!”

Bonnie Hamilton
Store Owner X2, Sugar Buzz and Shaq & Coco
Bardstown, KY



PHOTO: RETAIL MINDED

Reality TV star Kevin Lee (center) – who appears regularly on *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills* and has his own show called *Beverly Hills Brides* – was spotted at the recent ASD Show in Las Vegas, where he was buying for his California based boutique and event-planning business. He is joined by ASD attendees who were both excited to meet Lee as well as spend time at the ASD Las Vegas Show. For more details on RM’s trip to ASD, including details on stand-out vendors, retail insight and much more, visit RetailMinded.com.

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ADVISORY BOARD

Meet Retail Minded's trusted Advisers from across the country, helping to lead Retail Minded and retailers nationwide through their expert support. The expertise of our elite Advisory Board helps shape our unique support for independent retailers, and we encourage you to get to know their individual work more, as well.



JIM DEBETTA

Jim DeBetta's experience has amassed millions of dollars within the retail selling world, positioning him as a leader in the retail marketplace among entrepreneurs, inventors and retailers alike. DeBetta heads up the Retail Distribution arm of Kevin Harrington's TV Goods corporation, which today is fueled by the hit ABC reality show Shark Tank, as well as is a frequent speaker for leading trade and consumer organizations and international conferences. Learn more about DeBetta at www.JimDeBetta.com. RM appreciates DeBetta's valued expertise.



REBECCA MARION FLACH

During her decade-long tenure at the Retail Council of New York State, Rebecca Marion Flach has developed close relationships with independent retailers in her quest to better serve them. Flach is Vice President of Membership and Communication for the trade association that represents merchants of every size from Buffalo to the Big Apple, overseeing communication to support the Council's government relations, sales and marketing and membership functions. Retail Minded appreciates Flach's experience and support to the independent retail community.



ABBY HEUGEL

Abby Heugel is the Managing Editor of Museums & More Magazine, Party & Paper Retailer and the Interactive Editor of Stationery Trends Magazine. Based in Michigan, Heugel is an experienced writer in everything from professional matters of retail and industry trends to personal matters of humor and life. RM is grateful for Heugel's professional leadership and support.



CATHY WAGNER

Cathy Wagner proudly supports retailers nationwide as an expert retail consultant, offering them guided insight on how to achieve stronger profit in their stores. Having successfully owned three stores, Wagner knows first hand what it is like to work retail. For eleven plus years, Wagner now solely dedicates her time to help other retailers achieve more profit-building success. Learn more about Wagner at www.retailmavens.com.



CHRISTIE BURRIS

An advocate for brick and mortar retail stores of all sizes, Burriss has worked for the North Carolina Retail Merchants Association (NCRMA) for over ten years overseeing the print and visual communication materials for the association. As the primary liaison for NCRMA and its affiliated companies to the media and general public, she works to give North Carolina's retail industry a voice on issues ranging from seasonal hiring to tax reform. A University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Journalism School graduate, Christie began her career in Washington, DC, working in the communications and public affairs departments for national non-profits. RM is grateful to have her insight help support the RM community.



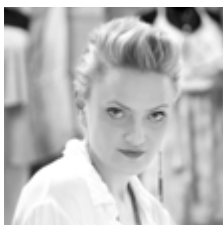
RICH KIZER & GEORGANNE BENDER

Rich Kizer and Georganne Bender are professional speakers, authors and consultants who have been trusted experts in the retail industry since 1989. Their expertise includes a vast understanding of generational diversity, consumer trends, marketing, promotion and everything retail. Kizer & Bender are frequent contributors to media outlets and have been recognized twice by The American Society of Business Publication Editors Award of Excellence (ASBPE). They maintain a popular blog, www.RetailAdventuresBlog.com, that is a must read for anyone in the industry, as well as can be seen nationwide at a variety of trade and association events. RM is thankful for their industry expertise and guidance.



INNA SHAMIS LAPIN

Inna Shamis Lapin is a communications specialist with over 15 years experience in Public Relations, Marketing Communications and Client Management. Her expertise includes work with recognized brands such as Vogue and Elizabeth Arden Red Door Salon & Spa, as well as for emerging brands like Om Aroma & Co. Her experience spans all media channels, and Lapin offers tremendous support for a vast amount of retailers. Her company, AvantGarde Communications Group, was founded in 2005, and Retail Minded values Lapin's talent, guidance and expertise to help support retailers and Retail Minded alike.



KATE NARDO

Kate Nardo is co-owner of Outfit Chicago, a multi-line women's apparel showroom based in Chicago. Passionate about fashion and creating a strong market for the brands she represents, Kate combines her knowledge of design and construction with her experience in sales and business to balance the demands of running a successful showroom. Retail Minded is thrilled to have her unique expertise as a part of our Advisory Board.



CURTIS PICARD

Curtis Picard, CAE, is the Executive Director of the Maine Merchants Association and currently serves as board chair of the Maine Society of Association Executives and serves on the Board of Directors of the Maine Tourism Association, the Council of State Retail Associations and on the Northeast Board of Regents for the US Chamber of Commerce Institute of Organization Management. His extensive experience supporting communities and retailers alike is unmatched, and we are privileged to have to have his support with Retail Minded.

Thank you for your dedication & support to retailers!

RETAILERS - DO YOU INCORPORATE TEXT MESSAGING INTO YOUR MARKETING PLATFORM? WHY OR WHY NOT? WOULD YOU?



WE GET A VERY STRONG RESPONSE FROM THIS FORM OF MARKETING ESPECIALLY ON PRICE SENSITIVE GOODS.

@MAURICEKAVANAGH

TEXTING CAN SEEM INVASIVE IMO. SEEMS HARDER TO CONTROL WHERE/WHEN MESSAGE IS RECEIVED. SHOULD DEF BE OPT IN ONLY.

@DETAILED SANDY

I PERSONALLY AS A CONSUMER WOULD BE TURNED OFF BY TEXT MARKETING.

@GOGREENBABYCA

I THINK OUR CUSTOMERS WOULD BE ANNOYED BY TEXT MARKETING. CELL PHONES ARE LIKE PERSONAL SPACE.

@MEANDESTORE

AS LONG AS PRIVACY IS RESPECTED TEXTS ARE A GREAT WAY FOR RELATIONSHIP MARKETING. TEXTS MUST BE RELEVANT AND FEW.

@LADYDIANAB61

YES FOR INDIE TEXTING. PERSONAL, SHOWS YOU CARE.

@LHKENT

DID YOU KNOW?

A COMBINATION OF STUDIES from 2012 found that 82% of Mother's Day shoppers buy cards, 65% buy flowers, 34% buy gift cards, 28% buy clothes, 26% buy jewelry, 15% buy houseware and 52% take their moms out to dinner. Electronics, books, CDs and personal care products also made the list – however were not as preferred of choices.

THE MALL OF AMERICA IN MINNESOTA attracts more visitors annually than Walt Disney World, Graceland and the Grand Canyon combined?

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN WAS THE FIRST AMERICAN to propose Daylight Saving Time in 1784? However, it was not fully implemented until after the Second World War in the US. Another interesting fact? In Europe, Daylight Saving Time is known as Summer Time.

ACCORDING TO THE KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION, the median age of first-time entrepreneurs is 43. Which makes us wonder... How old were you when you first started your business?

CHILDREN GROW FASTER IN THE SPRING? If you sell children's apparel and footwear, this could translate to stronger sales!

EARTH DAY IS CELEBRATED EVERY YEAR ON APRIL 22, with many communities taking it one step further and celebrating on the weekends before and after it to help strengthen the value and importance of caring for Mother Earth. For many indie businesses, this offers a great opportunity to engage your customers and your community alike.

INDIE NEWS

THE FOLKS AT JUNIPER RESEARCH IDENTIFIED THAT THE NUMBER OF DISCOUNT COUPONS REDEEMED THROUGH MOBILE AND TABLET DEVICES IS EXPECTED TO REACH 10 BILLION THIS YEAR, UP BY MORE THAN 50% ON LAST YEAR. THAT EQUALS A WHOLE LOT OF MONEY BEING SPENT. WHICH MAKES US WONDER... IS YOUR STORE STAYING UP TO SPEED IN THE MOBILE COUPON TREND?

AS CONSUMERS INCREASINGLY UTILIZE MOBILE DEVICES TO ENGAGE IN RETAIL EXPERIENCES, A NEW REPORT FROM JUNIPER RESEARCH HAS FOUND THAT ANNUAL SPENDING BY RETAILERS ON MOBILE MARKETING WILL REACH \$55 BILLION BY 2015 - ALMOST DOUBLE THE \$28 BILLION LEVEL EXPECTED TO BE REACHED IN 2013. WITH E-COMMERCE MIGRATING TO MOBILE AND ROAMING DEVICES, MARKETING DOLLARS SPENT ON BOTH TABLETS AND SMARTPHONES ARE CONTINUING TO GROW STRONGLY AS RETAILERS (NOTABLY IN NORTH AMERICA AND WESTERN EUROPE) INCORPORATE THEIR MARKETING DOLLARS TO DIGITAL IN GENERAL - AND MOBILE IN PARTICULAR. WITH MORE AND MORE INDIE APPS BEING INTRODUCED, MANY OF WHICH ARE SMARTPHONE FOCUSED (SUCH AS WALK.BY), INDIES MAY NOT HAVE THOUSANDS TO SPEND ON MOBILE MARKETING - BUT THEY CAN STILL BE IN THE MOBILE RETAIL GAME.

ACCORDING TO A RECENT ARTICLE FROM INDEPENDENT RETAILER, 6 OUT OF 10 SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS SAY THEY BELIEVE SOCIAL-MEDIA TOOLS ARE VALUABLE TO THEIR COMPANY'S GROWTH. HOWEVER, MANY OF THESE SAME FOLKS STATED THAT THEY ARE NOT IMPRESSED BY TWITTER. "JUST 3 PERCENT OF 835 BUSINESS OWNERS SURVEYED BY THE WALL STREET JOURNAL AND VISTAGE INTERNATIONAL SAID TWITTER HAD THE MOST POTENTIAL TO HELP THEIR COMPANIES. PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING SERVICE LINKEDIN CORP. TOPPED THE SURVEY, WITH 41 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS SINGLING IT OUT AS POTENTIALLY BENEFICIAL TO THEIR COMPANY. SIXTEEN PERCENT PICKED YOUTUBE, THE VIDEO SERVICE OWNED BY GOOGLE INC., AND 14 PERCENT CHOSE SOCIAL NETWORK FACEBOOK INC." SO WE'RE CURIOUS... WHAT SOCIAL MEDIA WORKS BEST FOR YOU? SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS AT NICOLE@RETAILMINDED.COM.

WHILE INDIE RETAILERS ALREADY KNOW THEY ARE BUSY, IT'S A RELIEF TO KNOW THERE ARE ACTUALLY COMPANIES LOOKING OUT FOR THEIR LACK OF TIME AND YET LONG TO-DO-LISTS. AMONG THESE? SNAPRETAIL.COM, A PITTSBURGH BASED COMPANY THAT OFFERS SMALL RETAILERS A PLATFORM TO ENGAGE CUSTOMERS WITH READY-TO-USE MARKETING CAMPAIGNS, SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT, EMAIL BLASTS AND MORE. THEIR RECENT LAUNCH OF THE CALENDAR, A WEB-BASED FEATURE THAT HELPS RETAILERS PLAN, CREATE, SCHEDULE AND SEND MARKETING CAMPAIGNS TO CUSTOMERS VIA E-MAIL OR SOCIAL MEDIA, OFFERS IDEAS, INSPIRATION AND TOOLS TO HELP LOCAL RETAILERS SEND CAPTIVATING MARKETING CAMPAIGNS TO DRIVE STORE TRAFFIC AND INCREASE SALES. THEIR CEO, TED TEELE, EXPLAINS THAT "LOCAL RETAILERS ARE BUSIER THAN EVER. THEY SIMPLY DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO MARKET AND OFTEN STRUGGLE TO COME UP WITH CREATIVE IDEAS TO PROMOTE THEIR STORES. THEY KNOW THEY NEED TO USE FACEBOOK, BUT ARE NOT SURE WHAT TO SAY. OUR PLANNING CALENDAR IS A UNIQUE SERVICE THAT SPARKS IDEAS AND MAKES IT FAST AND EASY TO SHARE THEM WITH THEIR CUSTOMERS." WE WERE CURIOUS JUST HOW GREAT THIS WAS AND IT TURNS OUT... IT'S PRETTY AWESOME. WE CHECKED IT OUT AND THINK YOU SHOULD, TOO!

TREND SPOTTING



Founded by Lizanne Falsetto, thinkThin® brings to life a formula that combines simplicity, nutrition and lots of great taste to create protein bars for men and women with active lifestyles. While protein bars aren't anything new to the market, what thinkThin® delivers is. After having a successful, worldwide career in fashion (with her early life spent playing competitive basketball), founder Falsetto is no fool to being busy. Over the years, she gained a deep knowledge and understanding of nutrition and it's impact on health, as well as thoroughly enjoyed great, real food that brought family and friends together. Enter motherhood on top of Falsetto's already full plate, finding easy yet nutritious yet delicious solutions for meal time became a must. thinkThin® is now her answer and luckily, ours too. Gluten free, protein rich and made with 0 grams of sugar, pack your store shelves or your own pantry shelves with thinkThin® to keep you full and happy. Best part? You can still be among the first in your neck of the woods to introduce this to your customers! No matter what kind of store you are, these make a great add on sale. Curious? Learn more at ThinkProducts.com.

WWW.THINKPRODUCTS.COM

As defined by the American Mobile Retail Association themselves, the AMRA is "a growing group of mobile retailers in the U.S. working in collaboration with the same goal - to bring recognition and growth to the innovative industry of mobile boutiques and services." In other words, they are retailers on wheels - literally. Founded to support the rapidly growing number of retailers who have turned to trailers, buses and other mobile vehicles instead of traditional store walls, AMRA strives to unit mobile businesses while offering them education about retail, business ventures, mobile retail vending and much, much more. Among their long list of goals is to help the public and city officials nationwide better understand, respect and engage with mobile businesses. Additionally, while this recently launched association caters to a nationwide audience, it also has regional chapters to help cater to more regional needs and issues. So we're curious... does this entice you to make your store more mobile? And we're not talking just Smartphones or WiFi here! For those of you truly mobile-minded, be sure to the AMRA out.

AMERICANMOBILERETAILASSOCIATION.BLOGSPOT.COM

YOU DO A LOT... THE LEAST WE CAN
DO IS SPOT A FEW TRENDS FOR YOU.



Independent retailers, Mom's and Pop's and family owned small businesses power the heartbeat of America. With the many challenges that face small businesses today, sourcing product and finding reliable suppliers should not be one of them. One of the most mission critical tasks an independent retailer faces is purchasing product at the right price," CEO and Founder of Manufacturer.com Jason Prescott states. With the launch of this new B2B platform, retailers can access trustworthy, credible suppliers - with a homebase right here in the USA (unlike many competitive B2B platforms that are often China based). Prescott further explains, "Independent retailers are the bread and butter of the US economy and Manufacturer.com aims to be the one stop trade platform offering the resources they need to connect with wholesalers, manufacturers and distributors." Working with trade shows such as the ASD Show and MAGIC, Prescott recognizes the need to support indie, mid size and even larger retailers from all angles. The only angle you need to check out? Manufacturer.com.

MANUFACTURER.COM

Mobile workforce platforms offer retailers the opportunity to quickly and cost-effectively conduct price checks, store audits, product demos and much more. Management or store owners simply enter work tasks that need to be completed, and then the information is transmitted directly to a worker's smartphones. The catch? The worker does not have to be an employee of your store. Gigwalk, founded in 2011, is a mobile work marketplace connecting businesses with hundreds of thousands of smartphone enabled field workers around the country so they can get work done anywhere. For small businesses, the advantage is to have part-time and even temporary workers that are qualified and able to perform tasks assigned without having to have them on constant payroll. Over 220,000 people have used Gigwalk successfully, performing retail audits, accounting, photography and much more. Think it may be right for you? Discover Gigwalk for yourself.

GIGWALK.COM

Expert Advice

Q *I'm planning to do some local media outreach to promote a few upcoming in-store events. Any tips on what I can do without hiring a publicist? My budget is zero. Thanks!*

Public relations and marketing expert Inna Shamis Lapin of AvantGarde Communications Group shares her insight.

First and foremost, you need to create a media list that includes assignment desk and photo desk editors from your local/regional media outlets. This can include newspapers, magazines, radio and online outlets. Don't leave anyone out – the more eyes the better when it comes to sharing your news.

On this list should also be Calendar Editors, who take your event information and in many cases post it on their website or in their outlets free of charge. This information will then show up on their publication's print or digital 'Event Listings' page that readers – aka customers - can find when scouring the outlets for things to do around their local area.

Once you've created a media list, you can either design a Media Invite or a Media Alert (or both) that you will then need to send (via email) to each contact directly. This is essentially

a mini press release that answers the questions of what is going on or why you are sharing news, when and where it is taking place and why it is of importance. Be sure to include your contact information, as well. Make sure you do not attach anything to these emails – instead you can either cut and paste the information directly into the email or create a special hyperlink that you can include in the email body.

Depending on the size of the events, outreach should be done a minimum of one week before the event – but often more lead time is necessary depending on your media source. Additionally, be persistent! Don't just send an email and expect results. Follow up on your email after a couple of days to ensure it was received and understood. Offer story ideas and be accessible if an editor does follow up with you. Don't let editors wait, as well. Return their messages right away because if you don't, you may miss a chance to gain press. Remember - the media moves fast, so be ready to react quickly.

I hear a lot of talk about the value of American made products. That said, I sell only a few. How important is this to an indie store?

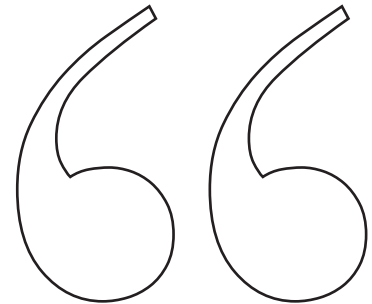
David Riley, Founder of Made in America Matters, shares his thoughts on the importance of both selling and buying USA made products.

American made products can be an important part of any inventory offering for a great number of reasons. Americans associate many foreign products with negative and neglectful practices such as sweat shops, lack of human rights, as well as unclear, unsafe environmental measures. On the contrary, American made products carry an extremely positive reputation and Americans tend to overwhelmingly choose to support the idea of job creation by purchasing American made when presented with the option. Oftentimes, Americans will spend a little extra to purchase American made products, especially when the option is a convenient one. In fact, the number one question we receive at www.americanworkings.com, from over five million visits per year, is “Where can I find an American made store in my area?”

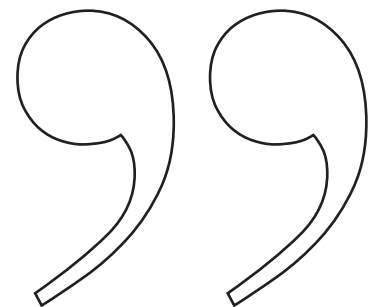
Another important point to note is that the idea of buying American made products is attractive to a wide cross section of political ideologies. It also promotes social responsibility as well as reiterates the need to protect the environment. Americans tend to overwhelmingly agree that buying American made products is important in order to sustain and protect a great country and way of life. Regardless of the broad cultural, educational, and political make-up of the United States of America, we unite absolutely when it comes to taking care of our own.

Nicole Leinbach Reyhle, Founder of Retail Minded, shares her thoughts on how to maximize sales of USA made products in your stores.

I’m a huge fan of USA made products, but I also recognize not every item in most stores will be made in the USA. Based on your inventory and customer demographics, identify if American made products are valuable to them and if so, why. Understanding why they care about this will allow you to better support them in the USA made inventory you choose. Are they buying it to help support the local economy? Or are they more concerned about the environmental and social influences that items transported from across the world make? After identifying your customer’s core interests, buy USA made products that they will feel more emotionally connected to. After all, emotions trigger purchases. Tips to help promote USA items include using store signage to help promote these items as well as having special promotions that lend themselves entirely to USA made goods. You could offer a loyalty card that is solely for USA made item purchases, as well as offer a dedicated section or even just a shelf in your store that highlights these items. Remember to verbally communicate the value of your USA made items and tell their “story” – if they have one – to your customers. Connecting brands and products from America to your local customer is a fantastic way to increase sales based on more than just product, but noteworthy company stories, as well. Finally, remember that every item you sell needs multiple reasons to sell successfully in your store. Being USA made alone doesn’t always do the trick. Be selective in all your inventory purchases to help ensure strong sell-thru. 



Buy American made products that your customers will feel emotionally connected to.



Have a question that you want a retail expert to answer? Please direct all questions to nicole@retailminded.com. While we strive to personally follow up with each inquiry, we can't always get in touch directly. Check out RetailMinded.com and future issues of Retail Minded Magazine for answers to your questions. We look forward to hearing from you!

IN THEIR SHOES

*Getting inside the minds of customers is no easy task.
Retail Minded gets straight to the point with customers, asking them to tell it
“as it is” about their thoughts on retail.*

*Retail Minded asked two guys a question every woman-oriented retailer
needs to hear the answers to.*

As a man who may visit a store with a woman - simply tagging along while they shop and with no interest in making purchasing decisions - what do you wish retailers did to better accommodate you in this experience?



NAME: Justin Trabert

AGE: 34

LOCATION: Miami, FL

PROFESSION: Store Manager, Chistofle

Shopping is a form of entertainment. With that said, retailers need to address that statement within their own stores and see if it holds true for them. When I am waiting for someone to do their shopping, I might wander around a bit and see if anything catches my eye - perhaps some gift items or home décor. If I don't find anything of interest, I then look for a place to settle in while I wait. There should be an adequate waiting area out of the way of traffic with plush comfortable seating and some reading material. Since I am not interested in women's clothing and accessories, the reading material should be appropriate for the person whom would be reading it. For instance, don't only put a VOGUE or REDBOOK magazine on the table in a store filled with women's fashion. Try something like a travel, home or even a men's magazine. Offering a free wi-fi zone would make a store more current with the times and allow people to do business while they wait. Finally, refreshments are key to making anyone happy. Offering people something to drink and having mints or candy available can not only refresh someone and give them that second wind they need to finish their shopping, but also it is just being polite.



NAME: David Nowrocki

AGE: 35

LOCATION: Chicago, IL

PROFESSION: Owner, Dimostra.com

It's always nice to have a good place to sit down. This is especially important if the shopping involves trying on clothes, in which case getting a comfortable spot near the fitting rooms is ideal. Having a variety of different magazines or the newspaper on hand makes the time pass, also. This also keeps me happier and less anxious to leave the store – ideal for the retailer, as well. Finally, having cell signal in the store is important and getting free Wi-Fi would be great. Ultimately, I will prefer returning to a store like this versus any other if “waiting” is more enjoyable.

*Have a question you want us to ask real customers?
Let us know! Email all questions to nicole@retailminded.com.*



PHOTO: MOMENTS ON MAIN

BRAGGING BOUTIQUES

MOMENTS ON MAIN

329 MAIN STREET, RED WING, MN 55066

OWNER STORE OPENED
Shannan Harris April 14, 2005

AGE FACEBOOK
44 facebook.com/momentsonmain

NO. OF EMPLOYEES WEBSITE
4 momentsonmain.com

We always love hearing about how store owners choose the store name they do. What made you choose your store name?

Well, I always wanted a store, long before I ever had one. I worked in a totally unrelated career field in Arizona for 10 years and used to think about a store from time to time. I had a great friend, Barb, who I spent a lot of time shopping with and we would discuss the idea of opening a store and even what we would name it. So one day, I was driving and it just came to me... Moments. I don't know why, but I said to myself that if I ever have a store, it would be called that. Then, many years later, when the store was becoming a reality, it was located on Main Street. It just made sense, I thought, to call it Moments on Main.

Great story! It was meant to be. And from what we hear, your store promotions and events are the place to be. Can you tell us more about your Open Houses and other promotional events?

We have three seasonal Open Houses: Spring, Autumn and Holiday. For each of these, we close the store for several days to completely re-set the floor and create a totally new and fresh look. This creates excitement and anticipation for our customers and we don't disappoint! Then we have a "Preview Party" the evening before the Open House starts. Typically it's either a Thursday or Friday and runs from 5pm to 8pm, and the entire store is 20% off. We usually have people waiting at the door which stays locked right until 5pm. It's typically a great crowd!

Sounds like it! We love the idea of building this anticipation and even closing your door for a few days in advance. You don't hear of too many indie retailers doing that.

The anticipation definitely adds a buzz. Plus, we offer great treats and door prize drawings. The rest of the Open House weekend we offer 20% or 25% off one item and again there are usually door prizes they can register for.

Door prizes are a fun idea, and often vendors will donate things if you plan in advance and ask them to support you. What other events do you have during the year?

We have an annual birthday party on a Saturday around the middle of April. Again, the entire store is 20% off. We have cake, prizes and balloons - it's a real birthday bash! It is always a fun day with a great turnout. Plus, we have

a Basement Sale which is our winter version of a sidewalk sale. We let people in our basement one day a year with a sale on lots of great stuff starting at 50% off, up to 75% off and more. It's a necessary chore to get it all ready and move the stuff out. There is also a curiosity factor from our customers about what is in the basement, so that helps lure in a crowd.

Fantastic! What a great variety to keep things interesting and different. And you're right about clearing inventory out. It is a chore, like you said, but so important to keep stock from sitting stale in your store. On that note, do you do events that take place outside of your storefront?


We participate in some downtown events with other merchants, such as our local Summer Sidewalk Sale and the Holiday Stroll, which is the kickoff to the Holiday Season on the Friday after Thanksgiving.

We're big fans of community events like this. Happy to hear you are, too. With all these events taking place, we imagine you are good at "spreading the word" about what you have on your store calendar. How do you do this?

We have a mailing list of about 2700 people, which we use a lot! We use Snap Retail for our email campaigns, which is fantastic. We also send postcards for our main events and to those signed up for our Birthday Club, offering them 20% off an entire purchase once during their birthday month. Plus, we give them a candle votive in the store should they come in during their birthday month. This has been a very strong program for us. Finally, we have an active Facebook page and do some print advertising.

We love Snap Retail, too! And we love that you have layered your marketing efforts with more than one way of communicating to customers.

Our customers are amazing. Repeat customers and referrals are a significant part of our word of mouth marketing... which is the best kind!

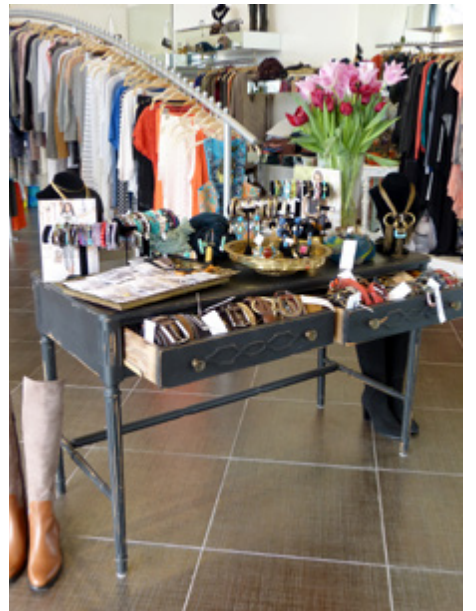
Great customers certainly make a difference to a store's success. But to become a loyal customer, we know that means they need to love where they shop. It sounds like you have done a great job at accomplishing this! Well done, Shannan. Here's wishing you many more years of "Moments on Main". 

“ THERE IS A
CURIOSITY FACTOR
FROM OUR CUSTOMERS
THAT HELPS LURE IN A
CROWD. ”



A CITY'S CHARM

*Laid Back With a Side of Luxury:
Customer Service Tips From Laguna Beach, CA*
by Nicole Leinbach Reyhle



Photos: Retail Minded. Upper row, left to right - Store manager of Lashfully, a lash extension boutique in Newport Beach, a fun sign supporting indie stores found on the streets of Laguna Beach, Piajeh Boutique store owner Mariam Zand in Newport Beach. Bottom row, left to right - Jewelry displayed at Piajeh Boutique, shopper and RM friend Anna Ackerman, an in-store display at Piajeh Boutique.

In a place where jumping dolphins greet morning strollers on the beach and life-long residents rarely leave, it comes as no surprise that Laguna Beach, California is a haven for store owners, artists, restaurants and other small businesses. Incorporated in 1927, Laguna Beach stretches across seven beautiful miles of Pacific Ocean coastline, many of which are filled with residential properties while some border commercial space. And yet some remain untouched, adding to the natural beauty of this coast-side California town.

With over 100 galleries and artist studio's locating in this affluent community, it's easy for local and out-of-town customers alike to spend their days hopping from one gallery to the next. Many world-renowned artists call Laguna Beach home, but their stand-out art isn't all that Laguna Beach is known for. Nestled among these galleries are an incredible selection of independent stores, one-of-a-kind shops and unique boutiques that help create a relaxed yet luxurious way of life in Laguna Beach.

Life-long resident Jason Martin, 34, agrees that Laguna Beach offers a way of life unlike any other.

"I have been to a lot of places, but living in Laguna Beach is the best. It's filled with mom and pop style stores and businesses that I love to support, and it's a combination of all these places that help create such a vibrant community to live in," Martin explains.

A healthy forty years Martin's senior, part-time resident Bud Kennefick could not agree more with Martin.

"You have hiking, biking, paddle boarding, wildlife and so much more all at your fingertips every day. There is so much variety here in both how you live and what you can do while you live," Kennefick states. With Chicago his home one half of the year and Laguna Beach his home the other half, it's easy to understand how such variety in how you spend your days can be appealing to residents.

Of course, frolicking ocean-side comes at a cost. And to live in Laguna Beach, that doesn't come cheap. So just how do small businesses owners survive in such an expense community? Among identifying the right product for their customers, planning a variety of special events and working with area

businesses to support each other, the indie owned businesses in Laguna Beach offer something you can't buy – top-notch customer service with a laid back vibe included.

"I enjoy shopping in Laguna Beach because everything stands-out from other communities. The food, the stores, the scenery. But mostly the people," Anna Ackerman, a thirty-something mother of two who relocated to the Laguna Beach area from the Midwest about two years ago.

So just what makes the people of Laguna Beach stand out? Retail Minded spent two days in the stores of Laguna Beach and area communities, and after working with many sales

associates, chatting with many locals and discussing retail with customers and store owners alike, here is our take on how to deliver stellar customer service without compromising a laid-back vibe.

BE APPROACHABLE

In Laguna, there are no strangers. If you sit down at a bar by yourself, you can expect the bartender as well as your nearest bar neighbor to say hello and introduce themselves. This holds true for in-store experiences, as well. "Hellos" with authentic smiles greet customers, as do a willingness to help customers with whatever it is they need. Often this means chatting about things outside of their store, such as restaurant recommendations or beach activities, but the conversations all have one thing in common – they are genuine.

A Quick Peak at Laguna Beach

Incorporation	<i>June 29, 1927</i>
Population	<i>22,723</i>
Square Miles	<i>9.1</i>
Miles of Coastline	<i>7</i>
Miles of Streets	<i>83</i>
Annual Visitors	<i>3 million</i>

**All facts identified by the City of Laguna Beach, CA*

BE HANDS-ON

Too often in retail, customer service is kept "behind-the-counter". In other words, sales associates stay behind their cash wraps or other working areas, eliminating customer engagement to take place on the floor. In Laguna Beach, RM's experience was that sales associates were only behind the cash-wrap when they were ringing something up. If they weren't processing a transaction, they were on the floor interacting with customers, offering sales support, engaging in casual conversations (without ignoring other shoppers) and helping to create a dynamic customer experience.

BE EXTRAVAGANT

Sadly, it doesn't take much these days to go above and beyond what most customers expect from a store. Yet you don't have to live in Laguna to offer customer service and other



store perks that customers will feel spoiled by. Challenge your store to be thoughtful in your customer service support – offering unique, stand-out service that screams “we’re the best” in your community. From hanging customer’s coats while they shop to offering complimentary beverages to packaging each purchase with a little extra TLC, there are simple and bold gestures you can easily incorporate into your own store strategies to help you build a reputation for grand customer service.

Combining a laid-back approach to customer service doesn’t have to translate to lazy, unproductive and non-sales generating. Instead, take a look at how an approachable, laid-back vibe in your store can translate to a luxurious customer experience that leaves your customers feeling like they just visited Laguna Beach.

PHOTO: RETAIL MINDED

A LAUGHING FAMILY: THE KEY TO THEIR RETAIL SUCCESS

There is nothing more laid-back than spending time with family. Store owners Lou and JoAnn Tarter know this well, and enjoy doing this both at their home and at their store, Cottage Furnishings, in Laguna Beach, California. Founded in 1997, former pro-surfer Lou Tarter and his wife, JoAnn, enjoy spending day and night together in their ocean view store as well as in their ocean front home. While we’re confident the ocean contributes to their laid-back approach to life, don’t be fooled. This family owned business has worked hard to gain a reputation for being among the best stores in Laguna Beach to shop at.

“We started out making our own rustic style furniture as well as Adirondack Chairs. As the demand grew, so did our inventory,” Lou Tarter states.

Regulars return to Cottage Furnishings often thanks to the ever-changing inventory of vintage finds, freshly painted furniture and other unique, one-of-a-kind accessories for the home. Another reason they return? Their natural way of making every customer feel like they have just walked into the Tarter home – not the Tarter’s store.

“It’s only a job, so we work with a good sense of humor,” JoAnn Tarter states.

With an attitude like that, it’s easy to understand how customers lovingly return to Cottage Furnishings. And even if you can’t live ocean side or have a store that looks over the Pacific, what you can do is look at life how the Tarter’s have – with a good sense of humor.

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What Can You Learn From Your Favorite Indie Restaurant?

By Amy Knebel



PHOTO: DINOTTO RISTORANTE

Like indie owned retailers and other small businesses, independently owned restaurants stand out in ways big box or chain businesses cannot. This includes the stellar customer service, unique business profiles, one-of-a-kind experiences and much more. An example of this is Dinotto Ristorante in Chicago's Old Town neighborhood, which operates as a family managed restaurant and is known for their inviting customer experience.

Here at Retail Minded we not only shop indie, we eat indie as well. Over the past few months, we've had some fantastic meals. These restaurants all boasted fantastic food, excellent customer service and an inviting atmosphere that made us want to come back and become repeat customers. Seeing these places with long wait lines and waitlists for reservations got us thinking. What were they doing so right to make business so good? More importantly, what lessons could indie retailers learn from their food business siblings?

Retail Minded talked with three indie restaurateurs to learn more. Steven Hamile of Vine on Hilton Head Island, S.C., Chef Dino Lubbat of Ristorante Dinotto in Chicago, IL, and Beth Black of FOODE in Fredericksburg, VA shared the thoughts and practices that have propelled them to great success and strong presences in their communities.

Attitude Really is Everything

Each person we spoke to emphasized that your mindset toward your business has a significant contribution to your success. Lubbat at Dinotto keeps one idea central in how he and his staff approach their business. "My attitude is that the restaurant is an extension of my own kitchen, and I treat customers like they are guests in my own home. When they come here it is just an extension of our hospitality at home. It

is the biggest, yet most simple thing to remember."

At Vine, Hamile keeps his sights set high. "Perfection is attainable if it is economically feasible. We remove items or eliminate things if we can't execute them perfectly because we have a love, a passion and a pride in what we do. You can't succeed without remembering that every dish that goes out and every customer interaction is an expression of you."

Black at FOODE is driven by a concept of approachability. "Great food should be accessible to everyone in a relaxed atmosphere. As a result of the recent economic downturn, we thought outside of the box to put most of our money where it's most important to us, which is on the plate."

Your Employees are Stand-Ins

For you, that is. They represent your brand when you aren't there. All three restaurateurs had strong statements when it came to the hiring, training, and discipline of their respective staffs. Hamile eschews some traditional industry hiring practices. "One of my core philosophies is how I hire based on honesty and integrity. Anyone can be taught a trade, but you can't teach honesty. Next I look for personality and people who are career industry people who enjoy the art of being a professional waiter." He continues to explain how he invests in

teaching his staff. “I train from the bottom, up. Everyone starts as a dishwasher because that’s the most important role, really, in a restaurant. Without a dishwasher, there is no service. Then I train staff as food runners and bussers for an extended period of time so they can really learn and understand the food before they are server in front of customers talking about the food. My staff are also taught to become constant observers so that they can anticipate the needs of a customer and not react. In that way, we are continually challenging ourselves to see if we can exceed a customer’s expectations.”

Black has found success with a similar thought process when she is hiring. “I don’t hire traditional servers. I hire nice and really smart people who can help grow this company and share its message. When you hire people like that, the power of small business lies in harnessing their creativity and their minds to make this business even better.”

Lubbat adds another dimension to hiring. “Part of our charm and success lies in the longevity of many of our employees. We stress that we are family and family tries to keep each other happy and take care of each other. When there is a bump in the road, the first priority becomes taking care of the customer first, then deal with any issues at the end of shift. I empower my staff with the responsibility and leeway to fix problems themselves.”

Know Your Customer, Product & Market

With years of customer service experience, Hamile has learned to not to compete with the broader market. “I identify a market and recognize what’s not here yet so I can fill a void or a niche. I research my competition to see what they are doing and make sure that I am meeting my customers’ needs by giving them something they don’t have the ability to replicate anywhere else or at home. I also take time to really listen to and consider my customers’ input, which then becomes the genesis for any changes if needed. For example, this area is saturated with certain foods, so we retooled the current menu and kitchen staff to accommodate that menu so customers are getting something that has no comparison anywhere else.”

Lubbat emphasizes the power of reading a customer. “People pick Dinotto because they are comfortable and know they will be taken care of. I know the little things add up in creating loyalty, that perfect martini for a stressed-out mom and crayons

for her child. Maybe it’s a special menu request; as long as the ingredients are in the kitchen, we’ll make it. Customers are spending money here, so we do what it takes, food, service, atmosphere, you name it, to keep them coming back.”

Black attributes the customer and market study that went into FOODE’s business plan as a pillar of their success. “We studied the local customer base in detail, knowing that would be the bulk of our business and that we couldn’t rely solely on tourists. We figured out what they wanted and what the area

needed. We let customers know up front, in our print materials and from our host, what we are about. It’s a break from tradition for some people, but they love it. We also reward our locals with a ten percent discount if they live in our local zip code.”

Outside the Box Thinking Pays Off

Black credits a non-traditional concept with helping to create a unique and functional atmosphere. At FOODE, a host greets you with menus, takes you to a table and gets you settled in with utensils and a drink. After you order from the counter, a runner brings your food to you, and a self-service bar is there for drink refills and whatever else you might need. “In order to put the money into the food, we had to give up something when it came to tableside service and table element costs. For us, it’s more valuable to give you great food in a relaxed atmosphere so that we might see you again.”

Hamile relies only on word of mouth advertising. “If you’re good, you are busy. An aggressive marketing campaign makes you wonder if people are coming in because of your food or because of the campaign. My customers are loyal and cutting edge, so I know they are sharing their experiences with others.”

When it comes to monitoring the restaurant, Lubbat immerses himself in a different role in the restaurant on a rotating basis. “I rotate through roles so I’m well aware of everything that’s going on. I spend a lot of time in different places, but not on a predictable schedule. This helps me maintain good relationships with everyone, front and back of house, and also allows me to put out little fires ASAP.”

Indie retailers can always look outside their own industry for ideas to make their businesses grow and thrive. Next time you go out to eat, ask yourself what you can learn from your favorite corner bistro.

HUNGRY FOR MORE?

Here are some key takeaways:

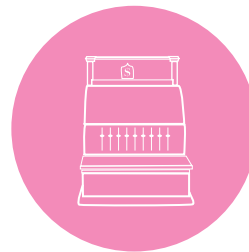
- ◆ Decide what your business beliefs are. Then live by them.
- ◆ Hire good quality people and then invest the time to train them to become the employee that you want.
- ◆ Know what makes you unique in your market and emphasize that. Don’t be tempted to copycat.
- ◆ Customers first. Period. Always.
- ◆ Your brand of hospitality can keep the door busy or keep it closed.
- ◆ Think about how customers perceive their experience in your store and retool as necessary.
- ◆ Your store’s environment speaks volumes, so strive to create surroundings that customers want to be in and come back to.

HOW TO

CONDUCT AN EFFECTIVE RETAIL TRAINING SESSION

By David Goodwin

Editor's Note: RM Tips Contributed by Retail Minded



You have planned your agenda and you have secured your meeting space – which may even be in your store. You have informed your retail associates about your goals for the training so that they are motivated to learn and you have ensured that their shifts are covered so that you will have great attendance. You have double checked your materials for accuracy and set your plan for follow-up. Most importantly, you have secured a commitment from your team members to get behind the training. Now that training day is here, let's review some specific tips and techniques that will ensure that your retail training session achieves your objectives. Here are 10 proven approaches to help you conduct a successful retail training session:

1. KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH.

No one wants to attend a meeting that has no real purpose. Make sure you know what your goal is and focus on it. Maybe you are trying to increase your sales conversion rate or you might be looking to improve how your team members handle difficult customer situations or you might need to train on a new product line. No matter what you are trying to accomplish, stay focused and don't get off-track.

RM TIP: It's a good idea to offer attendees an agenda prior to the meeting so they know what to expect.

2. USE THE 3 "T'S" OF TRAINING.

That is, TELL them what you're going to cover; TELL them the information they need to know; and TELL them what you told them as a review. Repetition is a key to retention, so this is a great rule to follow.

RM TIP: Use a variety of communication methods to deliver your message. This includes your voice, demonstrations, graphics, media and more.

3. DOUBLE-CHECK YOUR CONTENT.

When using multimedia like video or audio, make sure the player or TV is working. If you are utilizing a retail eLearning course, verify that the computer has good connectivity. Then make sure to explain what trainees are going to see before you play the media. This help the learners know what to look for and helps them to get involved with the presentation. Another tip?

RM TIP: Do all your "checking" of content and connectivity before your attendees arrive.

4. MAKE TRAINING ACTIVE & ENGAGING.

The best trainers know how to get all 5 senses involved with their learners. That means using role-plays, small group activities and demonstrations wherever possible – after all, when your team members practice their retail selling skills they will do better when they hit the floor.

RM TIP: Don't always wait for volunteers to get involved. Identify who you want to get engaged and get them talking.

5. TEST FOR COMPREHENSION.

That does not mean you need to have a formal written "test." Instead, whenever you get to a logical stopping point, ask one of your retail associates to verbally recap what they just learned. This serves as another means of repetition and keeps everyone on their toes.

RM TIP: Toss fun or silly prizes out for participation and accurate answers. This keeps your attendees interested and having fun.



6. INVOLVE YOUR TRAINEES.

In addition to what we mentioned above, during your retail sales training meetings you could have experienced sales associates make short presentations or to lend their advice and reinforcement to your message. Hearing different voices also keeps sessions varied and interesting.

RM TIP: Surprising your attendees with participation isn't always fair. If you expect a more in depth contribution, tell them in advance what you expect and what they need to do to prepare.

7. WHEN ASKED A QUESTION, REPEAT IT BEFORE ANSWERING.

This will ensure that all of the participants in your retail sales training know what the question is so they can make handle the same situation when they are in front of a customer.

RM TIP: Repeating a question asked also ensures you are understanding the question correctly. If you don't, it's okay to ask questions yourself in order to best support your audience in what they are looking to better understand.

8. MAKE ADJUSTMENTS TO YOUR PRESENTATION.

The best trainers never stop learning and it is likely that someone in your class will have a new way of handling an objection or presenting a benefit that you have not heard before. Developing soft skills like customer service, selling skills and handling difficult customers is an ongoing process and you should pick up new techniques whenever possible.

RM TIP: Challenge yourself to learn new retail tools and trends (i-Pad POS, mobile technology, etc.) in an effort to keep your entire team up to speed, as well. Incorporate relevant updates into your trainings.

9. KEEP TO THE SCHEDULE.

That means starting on time and finishing on time. Don't hold up the training session waiting for people who are late – this includes when you are taking breaks. Good scheduling also includes allocating enough time for group discussion, questions, and role-playing. And, don't forget to allot time for breaks so that your team members stay alert.

RM TIP: Don't compromise your training by rushing too much into one meeting. Spread your meetings out if you need to, offering more value per session.

10. FOLLOW-UP TO MEASURE RESULTS.

As you conclude your training meeting, make sure that you reach agreement with your team members with regard to how they are going to change their behavior and what the results of their new activities will be. The best method is to “inspect what you expect” by observing their activity (and giving feedback) while on the sales floor. Also, measure actual results when possible, such as in sales, as well.

RM TIP: Set goals that are S.M.A.R.T. Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely. Set a date towards reaching each goal and evaluate all employees equally.

These 10 guidelines are a good foundation for any retail sales training class – or any other training class. If you work on them you will be on the way to ensuring that the retail training session not only runs efficiently, but that it achieves the outcomes you and your company desire.



David Goodwin is the Principal of Retail Training Services. A 30-year veteran of the retail industry, he has launched retail chains and worked with Fortune 500 companies. He has hired, trained, and performance managed thousands of retail sales representatives and store managers. You can learn more about instructor-led, e-learning, and other training solutions for retailers at www.retailertrainingservices.com.

TRAINING TIPS FOR INDIE RETAILERS

By Nicole Leinbach Reyhle

While your goal is to deliver a valuable experience that concludes with lessons learned, experience gained and new insight on how to best support your store and customers, that doesn't mean you have to make your training B-O-R-I-N-G. Add a little spice to your training session, making it both productive and fun!

Kick Off Your Training With a Little Music. Whether the Rocky theme song or your staff's favorite store song, turn it up a notch and begin your session in this simple, yet unexpected way. Energizing them with a fun burst of music will get them ready for an action packed session.

Provide Fun Giveaways as Incentives to Participate. Whether someone answers a question correctly, volunteers to role-play, provides valued feedback or supports you in any other way, toss them a fun prize as a quick thanks. Candy, gift cards, store product... anything, really. It's the idea that counts.

Keep Them on Their Toes. Literally. Don't let the training become so stiff that your attendees sit still for too long. Move from one part of your store to another during the training, or get them off their feet to participate in role-playing or other activities during the session.

Combine Your Training With a Team Building Event. Morning meeting? Let your staff come in their favorite PJs and have a contest for “Best Dressed.” Have everyone bring something – coffee, donuts, breakfast casserole – and kick it off with a casual but fun get-together.

Invite Interesting & Knowledgeable Speakers to Attend. Whether it's a local police officer identifying tips to fight theft or a community leader offering B2B marketing ideas, having outside experts speak to your attendees helps to mix things up, offer new insight and keep your attendees interested in learning.

Finally, remember that how you deliver your trainings should vary based on what's best for your business. You can do mini-trainings once a month, offer quarterly trainings that are an hour or so each or hold day-long sessions once a year. Find a schedule that makes sense for you – but also your store, your associates and your overall success. Your reward? Stronger customer experience and sales.

RENTING, LANDLORDS & YOU:

5 TIPS TO HELP YOUR RETAIL BUSINESS

By Nicole Leinbach Reyhle



PHOTO: DOWNTOWN ST. CHARLES PARTNERSHIP

Locals and out-of-town visitors alike enjoy scenic, riverside streets and shopping in St. Charles, Illinois.

WHETHER RENTING A SPACE AMONG BIG BOX STORES OR NESTLED IN A QUIANT TOWN FILLED WITH INDIES, IT HELPS TO UNDERSTAND HOW LANDLORDS THINK. FROM THE LENGTH OF YOUR LEASE TO THE EXTRA PERKS — OR LACK OF THEM — IN THE FINE PRINT, BE SURE YOU SECURE A LEASE THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS.

NEGOTIATE THE DURATION YOU WANT

In the good old days, landlords may have been able to call the shots on how long they wanted a tenant to occupy a space. Depending on your local market, this isn't always the case today. Be persistent — yet professional — in securing a timeframe on a rented space that makes sense for you. A ten-year deal may not be in your best interest if you are a first time and first year retailer. Then again, if you are a veteran running a family business, ten years may be your ticket to a lower rental rate. Do what's right for you — not what is right for them.

SECURE EXTRA PERKS

From parking spots to janitorial expenses to maintenance and repairs to snow clearing services, these “extras” can add up fast – both in perks and dollars. Negotiate up front with your potential landlord what your rent covers and exactly what it does not cover. Don't forget to identify a cap on an increase in your rent once your existing lease in consideration will be up for renewal. 2% to 3% is a fair increase in many markets. 8%, however, is typically way too high. These extra details in your contract are perks themselves, giving you trust in a fair renegotiation when the time comes.

USE YOUR RESOURCES

Your local business community might include a Small Business Development Center, a Business Improvement District, an Economic Development Partnership or a Chamber of Commerce that will help you negotiate your lease and the “perks” you want to include. Often they will work on behalf of a number of tenants to make sure businesses are being treated similarly and fairly even when they have separate landlords in order to bring a level of coherence to the local business landscape. Often, they can also assist or even support you entirely in communicating with local government and your landlord to make sure that your store space is up to code and within regulations. This is especially important if you need a special use permit, significant construction on your store space, or help with a zoning variance.

INVESTIGATE YOUR LANDLORD

Sure, he may seem like a nice guy during your space walk-through, but that isn't the same guy you may be working with as a tenant. Find out who your day to day communication will be with, as well as ask for references of current and past tenants from your landlord. Then follow up on them! Ask questions about how timely the landlord was in responding to unexpected inquiries, dilemmas and other renter challenges, as well as how he was to work with in general. Your goal should be to identify any red flags as well as better understand what it may be like to work with your landlord. After all, he may not be the boss of your store, but he is the boss of your store space.

IDENTIFY SUBLET OPTIONS

When opening a store, few people already are thinking ahead to when it may close. But the reality is, life happens. Whether “life” truly gets in the way (spouse job change, childcare issues, personal health, change of heart, etc.) or your store needs to shut its doors for financial reasons, you should know before you sign your lease what your options may be if you need to break your contract. Among these? Subletting. Depending on your landlord or property management company, subletting may or may not be an option. Knowing this upfront can save you a very big headache in the future. Be sure to understand any costs involved from your end, as well, if you should need to sublet or break your lease. While this likely isn't your goal, it may be a scenario you have to face one day. Being prepared will only help you.

EXPERT TIP

Some landlords accept checks and call it a day. Others stay competitive and remain helpful to keep up with the local marketplace and rental demands. And yet others go above and beyond to ensure their tenants succeed in their retail spaces. We asked David Bujnicki, vice president of Investor Relations and Corporate Communications at Kimco Realty Corporation - a real estate investment trust (REIT) headquartered in New Hyde Park, N. Y. – his thoughts on what property owners can do to help retailers succeed.

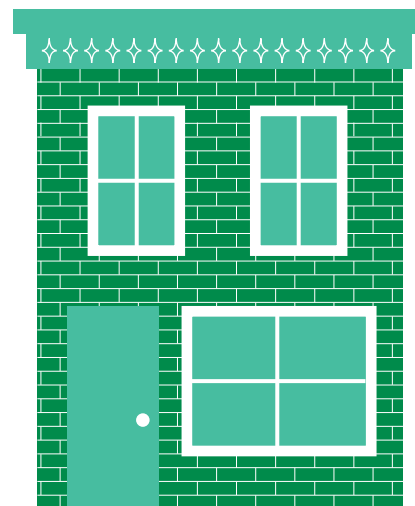
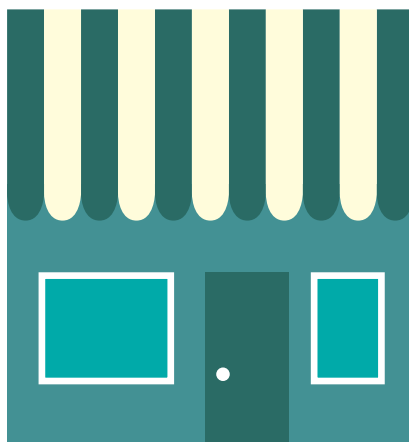
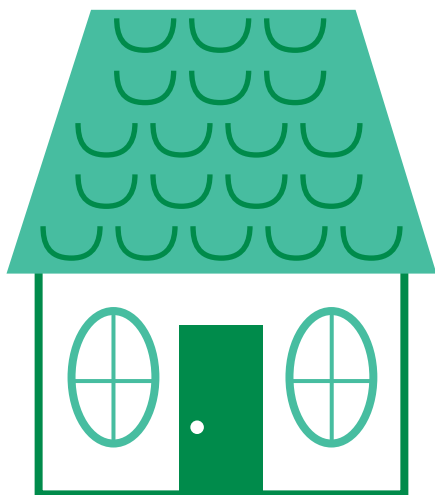
“Effective landlords have good local and regional operational teams. Good landlords control costs and common area maintenance. Seeking small-shop operators as partners benefits both landlords and tenants. A good operator will be successful in any space and a bad operator will be unsuccessful no matter the location. Additionally, landlords can organize community events. This type of marketing drives awareness and invests marketing dollars back into the retailers' business.”

If your current landlord isn't supporting you like you'd like, be sure to consider these details next time you are looking for a space. New to retail? Don't just secure a great location. While this will certainly help your business, be sure your landlord is a team player that supports you, as well.

LOOKING TO GROW YOUR BUSINESS BEYOND ONE STOREFRONT?

4 STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU GROW YOUR BUSINESS.

By Michael Vodicka



Ten years ago, no one had ever heard of Tory. At the time, she was perfectly content to play the role of doting mother to two young, twin sons while her husband handled the financial side of the family.

But Tory was ambitious, and as her children began to grow, so did her desire to explore passions that existed beyond her life as a wife, mother and head of a household.

That passion eventually took the form of design. Tory decided she would build on her love of fashion and previous experience in the industry and start her own label. Her beginnings were humble. She operated out of a kitchen to get started. But within a year, she had opened her first store. Within five years she had sold 20% of her company for \$120 million to a specialized investment group. And today, less than ten years into Tory's journey, Forbes ranks her as a billionaire, one of the

richest and most powerful women in the world.

So who is this inspirational lady that defied immeasurable odds with a meteoric rise to the top of the fashion industry? None other than Tory Burch, the iconic founder and CEO of the powerhouse fashion label Tory Burch.

The magnitude of Tory's success is an extreme anomaly in the hyper-competitive business world, but it was definitely no coincidence. There is a very good reason why some companies continue to grow while others merely tread water. And the difference is capital. Capital for a company is like food for a human being; neither can grow very much without it.

In Tory's case, her capital came from mega-millionaire husband Chris Burch, a business mogul in his own right. But even without a wealthy spouse, there are still plenty of ways for small-business owners to access capital to feed their companies. Here is a closer look at four of the best.

TOP 4 CAPITAL STRATEGIES

TAKE OUT A LOAN

Most people hear the word debt and they want to scream. But in the business world, taking on some debt is an opportunity to grow, affectionately referred to as operating leverage in the world of high finance. There are a number of reasons why taking out a loan is such a valuable resource for business owners looking to grow. The first is interest rates. With interest rate beaten into the ground by the Fed in the last four years, it has rarely been less expensive to borrow money. A business loan will also be housed under a company's corporate charter, protecting personal assets from professional liabilities if sales disappoint or the economy heads south. A loan also operates on a fixed payment schedule, which provides borrowers with a long window of flexibility to grow sales, increase cash flows and ultimately pay down principal sums.

PRIVATE INVESTOR

This would be the Tory Burch, Chris Burch model. A private investor is basically an agreement between a wealthy investor and small-business owner to provide cash to help grow the business. This relationship can be structured in a number of different ways. Like a bank, the investor could request fixed monthly payments at a fixed annual percentage. Or, if the business owner is interested in deflecting financial liabilities, an equity stake could be established, where the investor is granted a certain percentage ownership of the business for the capital injection. That means sacrificing exclusive ownership for the small-business owner, reducing potential long-term gains. But if the business would not have grown without the private investor's capital injection anyway, it's easy to see how that kind of a partnership carries tremendous financial benefit and synergy for both parties.

VENTURE CAPITAL

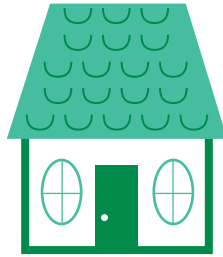
This model is big in the world of technology, with a long list of leading technology companies that includes Google, Facebook and Amazon all growing under the financial support of venture capital and private equity firms. The venture capital model is similar to the private investor model because the venture capital firm will usually ask for an equity stake in exchange for a capital injection. But unlike most private investors, the venture capital firm can be backed by billions of dollars, is managed by a team of highly successful professionals and frequently comes with strategic and operational support. For small-business owners used to making uni-lateral decisions, sacrificing some of that authority can be a difficult transition. But when considering the upside potential of a partner with huge financial resources, incredible industry insight and strategic relationships, the benefits of a venture capital firm can easily outweigh any negatives.

GOOD OLD CASH

Considering the other high-octane options on the table, this may seem downright clunky and boring. But there are so many reasons why cash is still called "king" on the street. A self-funded capital injection means you retain total control of your company. It also means that you retain additional financial flexibility to eventually go after a loan if needed. And companies with cash will definitely have a higher chance of securing a loan from a bank, a valuable source of collateral. Using cash to invest in your small business and excluding outside partners also means that when the profits come rolling in, they do not have to be shared with anyone else. Cash may seem a bit old fashioned these days, but that's also the reason why it can be so incredibly valuable to grow your small business; it's extremely rare.

THE TAKE AWAY

Becoming a small-business owner is a huge accomplishment in its own right. But for many people, the dream doesn't end there; they want to take their small businesses to the next level and become moguls like Tory Burch. But without capital, that dream has little chance of coming to fruition. Capital for a company is like food for a human being; it's almost impossible to grow without it. So stay informed about what options are available for raising capital for your company and make your dream of "next-level" success a reality.



MORE THAN MONEY: ARE YOU READY FOR IT ALL?

Contributed by Retail Minded

Owning more than one store takes more than money. It takes time and people. If having more than one storefront is in your dreams, consider the following:

Many customers shop stores simply due to the people that work there – particularly the owner.

Seeing as it's impossible for you to be in more than one place at once, consider how this may affect your business. If owning more than one store still makes sense for you, identify what you can do to be sure the standards and personality you set are implemented in each of your stores – even when you are not there. Additionally, ask yourself the question – “Can a store succeed without me being in it the majority of the time?”

Multiple stores equal greater inventories, which can translate to stronger sales or more mark-downs.

The good news? If one store isn't selling a product well and yet the other is, you can transfer product between stores. This said; the logistics, time and man power to do this takes some efficient organizing and inventory management. Are you prepared to link your store inventory together to best manage your total sales? Of course, this is assuming your stores offer the same product assortment.

Having multiple storefronts means having more competition – which you need to know about.

It's critical to know the demographics and competitive retail market in each area you have a store. Ideally, you should be involved in the local community chambers, cities and other area organizations to leverage the perks they can provide your business, while also getting to know that particular consumer market as best you can. Are you prepared to invest your time into this? If not, is there a point person you can trust to get engaged, stay engaged and represent your business effectively?

Store owners of one or more stores must be efficient in their time management and delegation.

Are you prepared to add more to your plate, including managing more people? Deadlines will increase, personalities will collide, responsibilities will heighten and your down time will diminish. If “the more the merrier” is your motto, this just may be a recipe for success for you. However, if you cringe at the thought of putting out fires, giving employee reviews or having to tell people “no”, then more than one store may not be for you. Essentially, what's your comfort zone in being the boss?

Increased storefronts offer the opportunity for increased exposure.

This can be fantastic and help strengthen your at-large store reputation. This said, exposure can come at a cost. Are you prepared to send out more store news to your local media? Are you ready to keep a constant, consistent marketing calendar among all your stores? Are you able to keep up with the multiple events, in-store marketing, outgoing press and other promotional opportunities for more than one store? If so, you're one step closer to being a successful, multiple store owner!

IF MONEY GREW ON TREES, IT WOULD LOOK LIKE KABBAGE

By Nicole Leinbach Reyhle

If loans, investors or cash aren't on your side, there is still hope for independent business owners who are looking to buy more inventory, get new supplies, increase their staff or even open another store. Through Kabbage, a business that provides funds to small merchants and other small businesses, owners can quickly and securely get funds deposited to their personal accounts that include PayPal, Quickbooks, eBay or Intuit – allowing them to move forward in their business goals. Created to look at data that banks and other traditional lenders often overlook, Kabbage was designed uniquely to support merchants – offering the “fastest way to get working capital on the planet,” Co-Founder and Chairman Marc Grolin states. And amazingly, this can all happen within seven minutes or less... for real.

Retail Minded's Nicole Leinbach Reyhle had the chance to sit down with Grolin at the March 2013 ASD Show in Las Vegas. Here, gain his expert insight on the three key factors you should consider before seeking more capital for your business.

“KNOW YOUR NUMBERS.”

It's no secret that running your own show costs money, but what you do not want to be a secret is just how much it is costing you. From what the total fees of keeping your website live, active and efficient to how much you spend on warehouse or store space to hold your inventory to the expenses involved in PR, marketing and social media, know exactly what your total operational costs are.

“KNOW YOUR INVENTORY.”

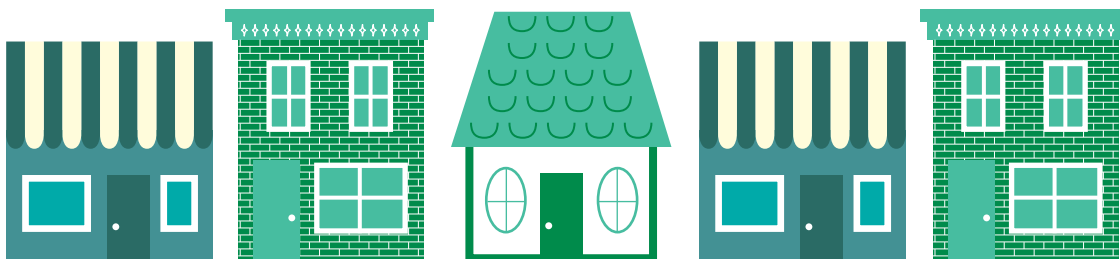
Kabbage's March Grolin explains that “knowing when to buy your inventory and when to sell your inventory is key when identifying your losses and gains on inventory purchased.” In other words, are you buying your products from the strongest vendors at the best prices, or are you buying from a vendor simply because it's most convenient? Do you purchase closeouts? Should you? Do you buy last minute and pay extra for shipping? Consider how you buy and why you buy, then consider if your current buying strategy allows you to make the most profit for your business.

“KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS.”

Every decision you make should ultimately be made with your unique customer in mind. Are you catering to seasonal customers or tourists? Do you have a high percentage of loyal, repeat customers? Are most of your buyers shopping for a “need” or for a “want”? Understanding your core consumer will help you better understand how you can further – and better – support them. Let this be your guiding force in helping you determine how to spend any capital may decide to invest in your company.

Sometimes the holes you have to jump, dive-thru, hurdle and run by are often enough to make you stand still in your efforts of gaining capital and moving forward in your business growth. Yet now, you just need to ask yourself if you have seven minutes to spare. While analyzing your goals, strategy and current business may take more than seven short minutes, getting capital doesn't have to anymore.

Learn more about Kabbage at www.kabbage.com.



GOING TO MARKET? BUYING AT A SHOW?

Gain industry insiders' tips to make your trip easy and - dare we say it - fun.

By Amy Knebel



Many trade shows offer a cash and carry section, such as the ASD Show in Las Vegas does. While not all exhibiting vendors participate in this, many jewelry vendors take part in this popular category of the ASD Show. For show attendees, it's important to plan ahead as to how they will both pay for the jewelry – since payment is expected right away - as well as how they will transport it back to their stores.

It's an inescapable fact. You own a store and you must fill your store with goods for your customers to buy. Even if you have a group of independent local designers to partner with, you still need to go to market for the bulk of your wares. Depending on what kind of store you own, you may be going to market a few times a year or several times a year. You might even be attending several different kinds of markets in several different cities. Regardless of your situation, there are ways to make your trip to market easier.

Retail Minded gathered four retail veterans to ask them what

they would do. We're grateful to Starr Cumming, director of Business Development at Urban Enterprises in Atlanta, GA, Deanna Price Boyanton, veteran showroom manager at AmericasMart in Atlanta, GA, Susan Lilly Gerock of Zoe Boutique and Amy Rutherford of Red Barn Mercantile, both located in Alexandria, VA, for sharing many years of going to market lessons... some of them learned the hard way.

When we asked our retail veterans for input, one particular tidbit really stood out as a way to put your entire trip to market (and the planning for it) into perspective.

“Think of a trip to market like a vacation. You wouldn’t just get on a plane and go somewhere without booking a place to stay, finding out what special requirements your destination has, deciding how you would spend your time while you were there, and most importantly, budgeting for it. Going to market is no different. The more you plan before you go, the more you get out of it,” Cumming explains.

We couldn’t agree more. Read on for candid, unfiltered advice straight from the pros.

BEFORE YOU GO

Overwhelmingly, each of our contributors maintained that significant planning was the most important way to ensure a successful trip to market.

PLAN YOUR LOGISTICS AND CALENDARS

PRICE BOYANTON: At some markets, depending on where you have traveled from, you’ll need a hotel room. Due to the number of people trying to stay close in to market, pre-arrange to book your hotel room almost a year in advance. If you book too late, you’ll only find open hotel rooms farther out, which makes transportation to market more than time-consuming. Also plan on taking public transportation whenever possible. Sometimes booking hotel, air and car through the market website can save you money and time.

RUTHERFORD: Stay at a hotel on the shuttle line if your market offers one and try to stay at the first stop after market. You’ll be the first to exit when you are tired after a long day.

CUMMING: Take a look at your calendar and prepare a spreadsheet broken out by the week for notes of the dates you want orders shipped. This way you can spread out your shipments in a way that works for your storage and floor space. People can’t buy what they don’t see.

EFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT NEEDS TO BE PLANNED

PRICE BOYANTON: Use the market or show’s website. Download anything (maps, guidebooks) you might need ahead of time and either print it out or save it to your iPad. For example, the Dallas Market Center has a great Glossary of Industry Terms that’s helpful for new buyers.

GEROCK: Have a plan. Know which brands will be there. Whom do I want to meet with? Note that this can change from season to season. During big buying seasons like spring and fall, I want to hit everybody, but during shoulder seasons like resort and holiday, I adjust my list. I also ask myself if there are any brands I’ve wanted to look at and haven’t yet had the opportunity to see them in person. I make a list of those. Allow yourself some time to wander around and see if there are brands that would be a good fit for your store, especially

if it is a line that is completely new to you. Don’t overschedule yourself.

RUTHERFORD: Especially for the New York shows, I create walking lists pre-show. I look for my current vendors and note where they are. Then I make a note of the new vendors I want to check out and their locations. It’s so enormous; you have to be strategic about which aisles you go down. Since the walking lists don’t come in alphabetical order or by pier or Javits Center locations, I then redo my walking lists in a spreadsheet so that I’m organized to see what’s new and intriguing while making sure I get to see my trusted, tried and true lines.

PRICE BOYANTON: Pre-register if it’s a market new to you or double-check your registration for your regular markets. The goal is to do as much paperwork ahead of time so that your wait times at check-in are at a minimum. Some markets change their procedures from year to year as technology changes, so this can save you time and a potential headache. Some markets have workshops for new buyers or trends. Pre-register to take advantage of these workshops and write them into your show schedule. Sometimes you can sign up for these when you pre-register, and sometimes you can’t sign up for them until you check in, but they’re a valuable way to spend your time either way.

RUTHERFORD: Know the rules before you go. Some markets are OK with rolling bags, and some aren’t. Things like photography, strollers, children, guests and bag size are all handled differently at different markets. Make sure you check the rules for that particular market before you go.

CUMMING: Some markets are really daunting, so lay out your plan in as much detail beforehand. Get a map and make an hourly schedule for each day. Know what you will focus on, but also leave time for exploring in each day.

GEROCK: Make appointments with your local reps and allow enough time for your appointments. Big season and foundation brands for your store usually need an hour.

RUTHERFORD: Know your reps. Know who reps whom in which city before you go if you are going to multiple markets in different cities. Some reps are not at every market.

GEROCK: Anytime you have an opportunity to preview look-books online or on Joor, use that chance to review line sheets before market. This can often help you focus on certain pieces that are good fits for your store.

KNOW YOUR BUDGET, PRICE POINT COMFORT AND MARKUP

PRICE BOYANTON: Not only should you know your budget for that show, you should also have a clear grasp on what your budget for the entire year looks like so you aren’t tempted to blow it.

GEROCK: Be aware of the price point that your customer is willing to pay for something. Ask yourself when thinking from wholesale to retail points of view. For example, it may be gorgeous, but will my customer buy it?

CUMMING: Keystoning. Know your markup. Ask yourself what your customer will spend after markup and remember this is different for different geographic areas. Make sure when you are thinking about your markup that you might need to factor in shipping or export fees in your calculations.

HAVE IMPORTANT CONTACT AND CREDIT INFORMATION PREPARED

RUTHERFORD: Let your credit card company know where you are going and that large amounts may be charged in a short period of time. Also know your credit limit. This can save you from wasting time on the phone with your credit card company while you should be buying.

GEROCK: Since you will be making large purchases, use a credit card that rewards you somehow. Sometimes the points you earn can be used for your travel to market or to offset other business expenses

PRICE BOYANTON: Prepare a 1-pager cheat sheet with your business information for showrooms, especially new showrooms. You can print these on half-sheets. Make sure it

GEROCK: Make notes of what customers say they want or need.

CUMMING: Remember that you're buying for your customers and not shopping for yourself. You are buying inventory, in bulk, and tempting as it may be, it isn't personal shopping.

PRICE BOYANTON: Know your floor space square footage and your storage capabilities. Make a list of large items you need to fill floor space. Think if you need to buy point of sale items to sell at the counter or fill-in items. Also determine if you need fixtures/cabinets/visual display items or mirrors for your dressing rooms. Don't overlook your display or other physical store needs. Functional merchandising items are great pick-ups at some markets.

CUMMING: Take advantage of your POS system and know what you already have in inventory. Know what sells well and what doesn't sell well. Going to market with this in mind can keep you from repeating past buying mistakes.

RUTHERFORD: Wear the right shoes. Flats, not heels. Don't feel the need to be fashionable. Only the vendors who get to sit down get to be fashionable. Identify where the food and restrooms are located so you can eat quickly and move on fast. Try to go to lunch early to miss the rush.

CUMMING: Eat healthy and stay hydrated. Avoid alcohol and

“The more you plan before you go, the more you get out of it.”

contains the following information: your contact information, Federal (for shipping over borders or non-US distributors) and State tax ID, bill to and ship to addresses, credit references for terms, and/or credit card information.

CUMMING: You can also print out ship to and bill to information on labels or use a pre-inked stamp to make ordering run smoothly. Have plenty of business cards. Some vendors won't charge until an item is shipped, but always double check so you can manage your credit limit on your credit card.

REVIEW YOUR CUSTOMER BASE, INVENTORY AND STORE NEEDS

CUMMING: Know the upcoming trends for the season you are buying for and have a plan to shop for that season. Take a hard look at your customer base as it stands at this moment in time so you have a clear vision of who you are buying for, how much money your customer is willing to spend on what, and which trends your customers will embrace.

the temptation to party since you are away from the shop. There is an amazing amount to cover in such a short period of time and you need to physically be on your game.

GEROCK: Pack a protein bar or some nuts and some water in case you are too busy to eat. Your judgment can be affected if your blood sugar gets too low. Even though some booths offer water and snacks, it might not be enough to keep up your strength.

ASK QUESTIONS AND THINK SMART

CUMMING: Ask if there is a show special. Usually it is a lower minimum or free shipping. Both can add up to savings for you.

PRICE BOYANTON: Ask about minimums. Some places don't have them and some ask that you buy a certain amount and then free shipping kicks in. Make sure that you can get to the minimum especially if you are a small store.

RUTHERFORD: Don't get bogged down trying to lug around a bunch of catalogs; ask reps to send catalogs to you. Also, try to use the smallest guide available to you at check-in. Use your badge as a stash spot for business cards and your coat/bag check ticket. Keeping those items easily accessible means you are digging through your purse less often.

CUMMING: Labels can be hard to figure out, so ask what sales quantity (SQ) you are required to buy. This is based on how items come packaged from the manufacturer, so there isn't a lot of wiggle room. The amount is usually per item at wholesale cost. Take the time to understand the terminology and numbering on showroom labels so you have an accurate idea of what you are about to buy.

MANAGE YOUR TIME EFFECTIVELY

PRICE BOYANTON: Take the time to explore the entire showroom, you never know what might be around the corner because some showrooms are awkwardly shaped or have too much merchandise in a small space for everything to be seen easily.

PRICE BOYANTON: Even though iPads and the like have changed buying in many places, not everyone has adopted these newly available technologies, so be ready for anything.

GEROCK: Once you have made an appointment with your rep to get the right attention, do your absolute best to respect these appointments. It helps the reps manage traffic in the booths/showrooms.

PRICE BOYANTON: At some shows, permanent booths are open the entire show and temporaries are open only part of the show, so plan accordingly. It's smart to hit the permanent booths when the temporaries are closed.

RUTHERFORD: Try to be 30 minutes early for things like the shuttle and checking in.

MANAGE YOUR BUYING EFFECTIVELY

GEROCK: Some reps want you to spend as much money as possible, so if you can't add quickly in your head, use the calculator app on your phone to keep track. After you have gone through the whole collection, sit down with the line sheet and edit while you are in the booth when you can see everything, touch everything and ask questions. Then place your order right then and there.

Some lines will tell you that a particular item is on everyone's order, and sometimes it's just not for your customer, so don't be swayed. Always keep your customer in your head.

Minimums can sometimes be negotiated. While you should always try to respect them, don't let a minimum bully you into making a bad decision. You can tell the rep that you won't or can't write that order and sometimes she will back down and change her mind.

If it's allowed, take pictures of what you ordered when you are ordering. This will prevent you from buying multiples of similar items as you go from booth to booth.

CUMMING: If you are unable to take photos, use your line sheet to take copious notes. Carry a notebook with page protectors in it. You can pop the line sheet into the notebook along with your spreadsheet where you are taking notes on what's being delivered each week.

GEROCK: Give feedback (tactfully) to reps so designers can adjust accordingly for what buyers really want. Work to develop good relationships with your reps so that they listen to you and develop a good understanding of your customer.

REVIEW AND ORGANIZE EVERYTHING

GEROCK: When you are back from market and have had a chance to catch your breath, take the time to go through your orders and line sheets and do a formal totaling. Then go through and put on the calendar when to expect items. You really need to think about when things are going to come in, especially if floor space and storage are tight. From a budgeting standpoint, you need to have your shipments timed right.

CUMMING: After a show closes is the perfect time to take advantage of what vendors and reps are throwing out. Look for pieces that are good for visual merchandising or fixtures. For people who drive to market, this can be a great way to pick up cast-off items.

GEROCK: For some brands with permanent booths or showrooms, it's worthwhile to make an appointment go to after market is over to have a more relaxing time and have a better opportunity to look at things more carefully. Often you can bring a guest on non-show days, so this might be a way to work around not being able to bring a guest during a show, depending on which market it is. Bringing someone else for perspective can be helpful when you can manage it.

PRICE BOYANTON: This is the time to look at your calendar and make your hotel reservations for next year's show. This is also the time to make notes about how this past show went, what you'd repeat next year and what you would change for a better experience.

FINAL THOUGHT

Trade shows and markets are not just a destination to buy for your store. Many offer fantastic educational and networking opportunities. Allocate time for these types of experiences in advance, making sure you don't miss those that can help your business. Additionally, many trade shows and markets host networking or social events that can be fun as well as introduce you to like-minded retailers, vendors and more. Combined, your participation in trade shows and events are bound to help both you and your business.

Spring *Clearing* Tips

Don't Just Clean.

Clear Out This Spring for An Effective Home & Business.

by Lisa Zaslow



Traditionally, spring cleaning meant scrubbing soot from fireplaces and beating rugs outside. Go beyond cleaning and follow these spring “clearing” tips to bring a feeling of renewal to your home and store.

at home

1

Do some spring CLEARing. Pare down your cold-weather items. Toss singleton gloves; donate or sell the sweaters you didn't wear all winter; donate or sell the winter stuff that your kids will outgrow by next year.

2

Follow these smart storage tips. Use sturdy containers that will protect the items you're storing. Use plastic containers in attics, basements and garages to keep out dirt, moisture and pests. Add moth repellants to clothes containers. Label boxes and bins so you know what's inside.

3

Make a seasonal clothing switch. Move heavy winter clothes into deep storage – basement, attic, under the bed, top closet shelves – and put your spring stuff in your most-accessible spots.

4

Swap seasonal items in the kitchen, too. Holiday cookie cutters, the Thanksgiving turkey platter and the fondue set can be relegated to high, inconvenient cabinets during the warmer months. In their place, bring out your lemonade pitchers, outdoor plates and cups, grill accessories and other spring and summer inspired items.

5

Get your home paperwork in order. Your tax obligations may have already hit deadlines, but that doesn't mean you can neglect all your household paperwork duties. File medical paperwork, organize end of year school papers, get your summer extra-curricular activities set up and more. Keeping things in order will help you live more efficiently plus save you money by not missing deadlines.

at the store

1

Clear out winter merchandise. Run a sale on items that aren't worth storing until next year. Unlike fine wine, most things don't get better with age. Remember, old inventory weighs down your open to buy dollars... and no one likes that!

2

Make time in your schedule for strategic planning and visioning. Updated store windows, stronger employee meetings, inventory analysis, B2B networking. Make time for the activities that are important for your business but not always on the top of your list to do.

3

Spiff up your storage space. Spend a few hours – or more – tending to your storage spaces as if it was your selling floor. Toss anything that's broken, out-of-date or that you never use. Arrange merchandise, supplies and marketing materials so you can easily see what you have.

4

Spruce up the shop. Walk into your store and pretend you've never been there before. View things with a fresh perspective and notice anything that looks worn, dirty, damaged, or unappealing. Make a plan to fix any flaws. Then stick to it! Get your entire team to help and call on friends and family, as well, for some extra hands. Make it fun, but be effective.

5

Organize all paperwork. Whether sending invoices, paying invoices, reordering inventory, scheduling employees, filing for city permits or archiving retail resources, make this a priority to have streamlined and efficient. Use color coded envelopes, file folders, stickers and labeling systems to help get you started. Toss anything that isn't necessary to keep. And date everything!

Organization expert Lisa Zaslow is the founder of GothamOrganizers.com - a professional organizing firm in New York City. Visit to receive super-easy free organizing tips to save money, time, space and effort. Connect at www.Facebook.com/GothamOrganizers and www.twitter.com/GothamOrganizer.

ONE GIRL, ONE STORE & HER RETAIL LIFE.

*IF YOU THINK ONE PERSON CAN'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE, THINK AGAIN.
HEAR HOW ONE SMALL TOWN GIRL MADE A HUGE IMPACT ON HER COMMUNITY.*

By Nicole Leinbach Reyhle



PHOTO: IVY LEE PHOTOGRAPHY

Nicole Nichols was a young girl with countless opportunities ahead of her. A recent MBA grad, Nichols was lucky to have a strong education that could help her land (almost) any dream job she wanted. But what she wanted and what she saw a need for were two different things. Based in Florida at the time, a visit home to Bainbridge, Georgia in 2010 would change her life – and those in her community – forever.

“The clothing retail options in Bainbridge were extremely limited, so people were always driving to surrounding cities, many of which are up to 40 miles away, just to buy

new clothes. Trying to find a decent outfit would take an entire day, which involves a lot of time and money. After experiencing this myself over the course of three days and three states, I realized how much Bainbridge needed a boutique to call its own,” Nichols explained.

Luck was on Nichols' side, as her family owned a building in town that was sitting vacant. But not everything came as easy. Hard work was ahead of Nichols, who had yet to even hold a true job to her name.

“This was – and still is – my first and only job. But what I did have is work ethic instilled in me by my grandfather who was – and remains – a very sharp businessman. Our family

is very business-oriented, so I grew up with the teachings of how to conduct business properly,” Nichols states.

While Nichols may have learned a lot from her family, she was not prepared for the non-stop pace of owning her own retail store.

“I realized fast that my business would sink fast if I only worked 9-5 Monday through Friday. My friends would decide last minute on a Friday afternoon to head to the beach and I would have to stay behind because we’re open on Saturdays. People think you can do what you want when you are the owner, but as any small business owner knows, this isn’t the case. I’m the person who has to be accountable for everything,” Nichols firmly explains.

While Nichols has poured her heart and soul into her store,

Bella’s Boutique, she has also learned the value in knowing when to have some fun.

“As hard as it may seem, when you are away from your store, be sure to enjoy yourself. When I am on vacation or at home after dinner, I try to leave my cell phone untouched until the next day. Try is the key word, though! It can be very hard. Sometimes you’ve just got to sit back, relax and watch a good movie with no interruptions - or whatever your escape is,” Nichols states.

Nichols seems to have found a successful balance between work and play, even tripling her store size since it originally opened in 2010. Crediting part-time employees as part of her key to “balancing it all”, we can all learn a lesson or two from a young retailer who is on her way to becoming a retail veteran.

66 99
**WHEN
YOUR WORK
BECOMES A
JOB, YOU’RE
DOOMED.**

5 TIPS FOR LIVING A RETAIL LIFE

Nichols dove into owning her store directly out of graduate school. While she may have a keen sense for business, she wasn’t prepared for the total impact retail would have on her entire lifestyle. Hear her take on how owning your biz impacts your entire life.

“YOUR FACE IS YOUR LOGO.”

When you own a business, you are part of the brand and what customers remember your business by. From how you dress to how you act to what you say, it all impacts impressions that customer’s make of you. Like it or not, this is a reality.

“YOUR BUSINESS IS YOUR WAY OF LIFE.”

Customers are often members of the community your work is in. This means you will engage with them at school functions, church, social events and even the grocery store. Recognize that if you have a business, you stand out in your community in everything you do – even on personal time. Use this to your professional advantage. This said...

“YOUR WORK CAN’T BE ALL YOU HAVE.”

Nichols began to resent her store in the Summer of 2012, feeling stressed and overworked. Another big struggle she had? Her lack of a social life.

This turned into resentment on her store, which could have easily spiraled into a downward battle. Instead, however, Nichols hired part-time help and made “me-time” a priority.

“YOUR EMPLOYEES CAN BE FRIENDS - JUST MAKE SURE THEY KNOW WHO IS BOSS.”

After years of long days that were physically and mentally exhausting, Nichols credits the addition of three part-time employees to bringing relief to her busy schedule. While hiring friends weren’t off the table for her, how her friends hired would perceive and understand her role was critical. Her perspective? Encourage employees to “treat the store like it’s their own”, while also making sure everyone knows who is boss.

“YOU CAN’T TAKE EVERYTHING PERSONALLY.”

Nasty comments from customers use to ruin Nichols’ day. But now, she recognizes the nasty is far less than the good, and accepts that even though she makes 100% of her store buying and operational decisions, she can’t please everyone. As Nichols’ states, “It’s okay not to be right for everyone.”

Want to get to know more about Nichols’ and her boutique? Visit BellasBoutiqueBainbridge.com.

MEET BRUCE GOLD:

THE MAN BEHIND SOME OF TV'S BEST SELLING INFOMERCIALS

Plus! Hear his take on what storefronts can learn from infomercials.

By Nicole Leinbach Reyhle



PHOTO: BRUCE GOLD PRODUCTIONS

Retail isn't always about selling in brick and mortar stores. Infomercial pro Bruce Gold shares his insight on how selling to consumers on TV isn't all that different than selling in storefronts.

Retail comes in all shapes and sizes. From big box stores to mom and pop boutiques to e-commerce to infomercials. Can you tell us a bit more about your platform of selling to consumers? How did you get into this business?

Through my company, Goldmine Productions, we usually launch a product via a 30 minute infomercial or what we call a two minute Direct Response spot. For lower priced and easily demonstrated products we tend to use a two minute spot. The more expensive and harder to explain products lend themselves better to the 30 minute infomercial. After success via TV, we bring the products to the web and traditional retail. In most cases we end up distributing the products internationally too.

Interesting! How did you get involved in this?

I had a product myself that I wanted to get on TV in the 90's and through that learning process I have been able to help others with their products via infomercial, web, and international distribution. The product was EagleEye Sunglasses, which still does a lot in sales internationally through infomercials and retail. Which brings up a good point... Just because a product slows up in the US, it does not mean there is not strong demand for it somewhere else. This could be true for retail storefronts, also.

We couldn't agree more. In the case of storefronts, it may mean the difference of one town versus another in the US. Location really does influence product and store success.

And timing, too.

Very true! Speaking of timing, the infomercial business model has been around for a while and does not seem to be fading despite many other avenues for B2C sales. Why do you think this is?

Although not every product is appropriate for an infomercial, if they are it is the quickest and most profitable way to launch a product short-term – with a launching pad to retail for the long-term. A great product may be selling just Ok in traditional retail store fronts, but then with TV exposure the same product can increase sales tenfold in retail to what it was selling prior to the TV exposure. I think the Snuggie was a great example of this.

The Snuggie is a household name now thanks to infomercials. What do you believe independently owned retailers can learn from this type of sales strategy?

The offers we do on TV are tested over and over to get the best net response. So in the end, when you see an offer like buy two get one free, we have tested many other offers. I would encourage retailers to test different offers or promotions more often. We had a product that we sold for \$39.95, however when we ran that same offer at \$79.95 PLUS get one free, we had a much stronger response!

“
I would encourage retailers to test different offers or promotions more often.
”

That's great advice! Any other offers that stand out to you that have been successful?

I'm almost embarrassed to say, but I was able to help a Direct Response TV spot that was not performing. It was for a product called "ZAP", a restoring product. In the original offer they sold two bottles of ZAP restorer for \$19.95. I simply changed the offer to one bottle of ZAP the "restorer" and one bottle to ZAP the "cleaner" to really differentiate that ZAP is not just a just a regular cleaner, but a restorer. The spot performed much better even though buyers were getting less value since ZAP cleaner was just 1/10 ZAP restorer mixed with 9/10 water. However, it did distinguish that the bottle of ZAP restorer was not just a cleaner.

Sounds like this was a great example of how a change of words and general communication can often help customers better understand things – and ultimately, help increase sales. Well done! It seems that you have a strong understanding of


what customers want and what makes them buy something. Can you elaborate on this?

We like to sell products on TV that fill a need and improve your life. For example when you can show someone how you can save them time or improve their looks it seems to be a lot easier sale for us than a passive product such as a clock or socks. Really, it's about speaking to their emotions.

We couldn't agree more with you. With so much competition in every retail category these days, what do you believe helps any retailer stand out among their competition?

If you are not the least expensive retailer, I think you want to be the one known with the best customer service. I always try to make sure our customers are happy in every way, which I can't say is true for the whole infomercial industry.

Thanks for sharing your thoughts, Bruce! It's always fun to gain another perspective on retail.

Editor's Note: Have a product you think is right for TV? Email Bruce at bruce@gpiv.com to see what he thinks! 



SPRING IS HERE

By Nicole Leinbach Reyhle

Whether your store is open from 10 to 5 or 12 to 7, Spring is the perfect time of year to find time to get outside. Walking your neighborhood streets or biking a local trail, there are plenty of fresh air activities to help keep your body healthy. But what about all those hours you are in your store? Don't let the routine of working in retail keep you from staying active and healthy. Here are some tips that you can do in between customers, merchandising, operations and everything else on your never-ending to-do-list.



TIP 1: CLEAR CLUTTER

Getting healthy isn't just about exercising and eating right. Often, it means letting go of baggage... either personal or physical. If old inventory is stocking up, consider donating it or incorporating it into a clearance sale. If you have something on your mind or from your past that is weighing you down emotionally, resolve to find a way to move forward. Make both your physical and personal "clutter" a priority to get rid of this Spring. It's amazing how refreshing it can feel to have a lighter load on your back and in your backroom!



TIP 2: EAT GREENER

Even if you aren't a veggie type of person, you can still enjoy green-eating. It's more about being a smarter eater versus the best eater. After all, it's all about you here... so be realistic with yourself. Pick one eating habit you know you could strengthen, then focus on fixing that during the next month. You may be surprised how easy it is to stop drinking soda or start drinking more water – depending on whatever your food battle is. If you have a sweet tooth that just won't cave, consider eating just a single serving of dark chocolate versus an entire candy bar. If you bring your smarter food picks to your store, you will be less inclined to sway from your smart good choices. Another tip? Invest in a mini-fridge for your store if you have not already.



TIP 3: BE NICER

While most of us think we are perfectly nice, customers often think differently. Time and time again, Retail Minded has spoken with customers who have said they leave indie stores due to the lack of customer service. Which makes us wonder... are you one of those stores? If you don't believe you are, consider the employees that work in your store and make impressions on your customers. Is it time for a customer service training? Can you challenge yourself and your team to smile more, appear less distracted and offer more customer service when people walk through your doors? One of the main reasons people who choose to shop indie do so because they love the charm and TLC indie businesses are expected to deliver. If you think you can improve your customer service, there is no better time than Spring to amp this up. All this aside, studies show people who smile more actually live longer. If that isn't healthy, we don't know what is!



BONUS TIP

In honor of Earth Day, which takes place annually on April 22, consider how you can make your store more environmentally responsible. A few thoughts how? Encourage consumers to drop off old magazines... Which you can then make available for free to your other customers. Offer a recycling station for specific items that are a bit unexpected, such as old cell phones or lightbulbs. No matter what it is that you do to become "greener", share your news with your customers. Good deeds have a habit of spreading. And in the case of supporting Mother Earth, there is an endless opportunity of what you can do that is good for both our Earth and your store.



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Attendees will leave feeling better educated and more inspired - with takeaway tools to bring back to their stores and communities!

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10 REASONS TO LOVE RETAIL DURING THE SPRING

1

The Fresh Air

The winter months beg for closed doors. Spring, however, welcomes opened doors and windows – which also helps to welcome customers into your store.

2

Nature's Colors

Gone are the days of dead grass and empty tree branches. Spring gifts us with blue skies, green grounds and more. For retailers, this is a great excuse to brighten up your store with new product and merchandising – much of which is inspired from nature itself!

3

Cabin Fever Customers

Long winters can make customers stir crazy! Plan a Spring Kickoff in your store or community to help get customers out of their houses. Embrace customer's readiness for new things that scream spring – from home décor to clothing and more.

4

New Items

A change of seasons means more than a change of temperature. It also means new inventory! Announce your new arrivals to customers and work with your vendors to create some exciting, seasonal events around some expected best-sellers.

5

New Faces

Call it hibernation. Call it whatever you want, really. But the reality is, a lot of people disappear in the winter and the spring welcomes faces onto the streets and into stores again. Get ready to say “hello” with open arms (and packed shelves).

6

Relaxed Holidays

Easter and Mother's Day are strong holidays for spring sales. Amplify your store marketing and inventory to support these days, offering products, promotions and events that get customers excited. A bonus? These holiday items blend well with spring items in general - which makes merchandising strong, as well.

7

Spring Cleaning

It wouldn't be spring unless a serious clean-up was on your calendar. Now's your chance to clear clutter, move marked down inventory, re-merchandise your store, re-organize your storage space and get ready for a vibrant season of customers and sales. Sidewalk sales are always fun this time of year, also!

8

Business Buddies

Warmer weather – even if it isn't summer just yet – is a great time of year to work with like-minded businesses to help build both your brands. Reach out to a nearby community business that has a similar audience of customers, and then determine how you can work together. B2B is big – don't neglect this!

9

Money Madness

Whether to update wardrobes, outdoor accessories, sporting goods or swimsuits, warmer days welcome customers looking to buy things. Play this up with some spring events, email marketing, social media campaigns and customer contests to help increase your store sales.

10

Energetic Employees

Any time of year is deserving of employee trainings, but a new season also screams for employee reviews, trainings and workshops to help strengthen your team. Not sure where to start? Visit RetailMinded.com for more tips on employee trainings and much more!

WISHING YOU & YOUR STORE A WONDERFUL,
COLORFUL, SUCCESSFUL SPRING!



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BAGGU® Bags (www.baggubag.com) sells high quality yet simple bags, pouches and laptop cases online. They recently opened a Summer Store at 242 Wythe, No. 4, in Williamsburg.

When the Summer Store began getting lots of foot traffic, BAGGU knew they needed a POS system that provides robust reporting like the ShopKeep POS ClearInsight™ Reports. BAGGU had outgrown the simple credit card swiper they had been using.

According to Joe, the store manager:

“We were using a credit card swiper on an iPhone. Now that we have solid retail foot traffic and need to really analyze our business, we needed something much more robust and we switched to ShopKeep POS. We now have amazing insight about our retail store traffic and sales.”



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