

Drawing in the customers

Getting customers from the pavement into your party shop is not a simple task. Follow the advice of Sally Farmer and watch your customer flow increase.

As retailers in fun you have the advantage of being able to develop a humorous and eye-catching theme using your merchandise as display props/accessories. Depending on the size of your window you could consider using a model to display your latest couture witch outfit. Why not phone your local department store and ask the display manager if he/she has an old mannequin in the basement that you can have on loan for a few weeks. You will need to be prepared to collect.

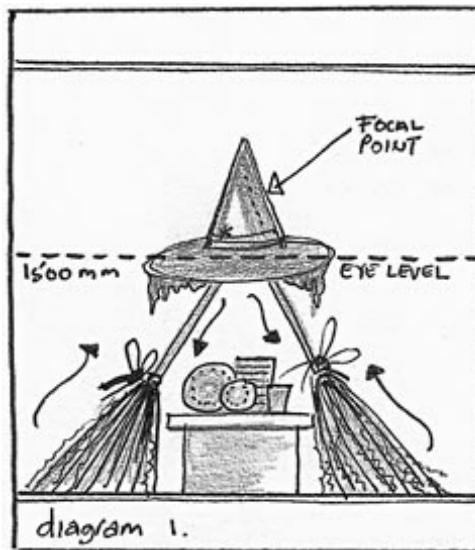
If you are successful in getting a model and it is in a poor state, give it two coats of white emulsion paint, eyes and mouth included, and it will look great dressed in a witch's outfit. Witches are supposed to look weird and ghostlike! You can also add a bit of mood enhancement by sticking a spider on the cheek! Or use black plastic cauldrons that you can buy in garden centres suspended with nylon in the window and filled with small merchandise. Keep thinking THEME.

If you want to invest in a new or reconditioned mannequin send for a brochure and price list. See stockists at the end of the article. If you stock a large selection of fancy dress clothing it may well be an investment, but they do not come cheap. If your window lacks height get a model that is in a sitting position: a fully dressed model in a window without sufficient head room will look ridiculous.

The basic theory of display is concerned with: eye level; using lines of sight; grouping; colour; lighting; and movement.

Eye level selling

Your customer views your window looking straight ahead, which varies with their height. The direction of the consumers' eyes to the merchandise from an appropriate invisible eye level (approximately 1500mm to 1700mm to either up or down) is achieved by using lines of sight.



Lines of sight

The discreet direction of your potential customer's eyes to the merchandise can be achieved by using display props (see diagram 1) or through the composition and grouping of merchandise so that the customer's eyes are guided to different silent selling areas (see diagrams 1 and 2).

Grouping

The grouping of merchandise is fundamental to good presentation techniques.

It is the placing of merchandise in groups within an area in the window that ensures a well balanced display which allows the customer's eyes to focus on the

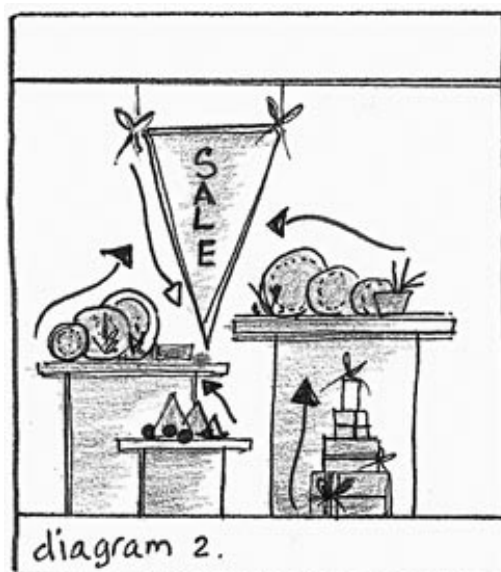
merchandise. The grouping of merchandise also allows you to place selected items together, to make a feature, or special promotion (see diagram 3). You should refer to previous editions of *partytimes* for the theory on composition (layout) and focal points.

Colour

Colour plays an important part in all our lives, and in retail it is a powerful attention-holding tool. It affects the way we

see and feel eg on a cold day if you walked past a window with a glowing log fire as part of a display you would want to get closer to feel the warmth (not that I am suggesting that you light a bonfire in your window for Guy Fawkes night!) Colour and light are a science and are worthy of more than just this brief mention here (see diagram 3).

With a basic colour knowledge and practice you will be able to select colour schemes to create an appropriate mood within the display area which will reflect the desirability of the merchandise. To help you consider the use of colour, remember that the warmer and brighter colours (red – purple – orange – yellow – bright green)



will seem to advance towards the front of the window, while the cooler colours (blue – violet – dark green – brown) will recede.

You should consider colour as part of the planning stages of your window display. Party retailers have very colourful merchandise which presents a challenge particularly as far as composition is concerned.

The colour of floor coverings, side panels and backgrounds of the window is important and should be sympathetically selected to enhance and not dominate the merchandise.

The display of merchandise selected and arranged in groups of type and colour can be a powerful selling feature and will focus attention on to a special promotion or indeed a range of merchandise that is "new in" which you want to ensure features with impact in your window. See diagram 3 – which area did you look at first?

BUT – without appropriate display lighting your customer will not see the colours or indeed the merchandise.

Lighting

Lighting is essential and if you are considering installing new, you should get advice. There is a huge variety of systems and fittings available and unlike the displays in your window once installed (at considerable expense) as an independent retailer you and your lighting will be together for many years. Choose a flexible system, cost effective to use and with plenty of replacement spotlamps readily available and not too expensive.

Use your lighting efficiently and direct the beam of the spotlamps onto the groups of merchandise, and do make sure that the beam is not directed into the customer's eyes, unless you intend interrogating them. Also remember good housekeeping and keep the spotlamps and fittings clean and well dusted or you will lose valuable light.

Keep your spotlights on, you might have shut shop and gone home for a well deserved rest but hopefully the window shoppers are still treading the pavements on their way to the cinemas, restaurants or the late night supermarkets.

Movement

Animation in a window can attract attention to your window and can be quite simple yet effective. Let's go back to the "Witch" again and design an animated window. Open up your wallets and buy a turntable. They are available in various weight-bearing sizes, suitable for small items such as jewellery up to cars and revolving stage sets. Choose one that will accept up to at least the weight of a mannequin and also consider that you may wish to use it in future for more shelving in tiers with groups of merchandise.

Next – put a circular (MDF or similar) shelf on the turntable, suitably covered in felt and escort the Witch to her animated position in the window. Switch on and,

wow, a witch in motion, clutching her broomstick, ready for take-off.

You can add to this spellbinding activity by installing a small domestic fan, discreetly camouflaged by a group of

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merchandise blowing air on to the witch's clothes. You can also buy small battery operated ceiling revolving display hooks onto which you could suspend a spider or two.

Suppliers

Dann Zwart Dann (All display props / tools/accessories)

Lower Ground Floor, 145 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9LL phone 020 7388 7488, fax 020 7388 7499, email enquiries@dzd.co.uk – phone for a brochure, everything from a pin to a prop for all seasons;

Anjay Displays Ltd Shop Fittings Centre 227 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8XH phone 020 7928 3663, fax 020 7652 2668 – garment rails, models, hangers, point of sale, etc;

Proportion Ltd 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ phone 020 7251 6943, fax 020 7250 1798;

Morplan 5b Gt Titchfield Street, London W1P 8DX phone 020 7636 1887;

Siegel & Stockman (UK) Ltd

6 Bakers Yard, Bakers Row, London EC1R 3DD.

There are lots of more, I have just selected a few that I have used for years. If you have time there is a

called International Display Week where you can see a lot of display equipment, it is held in London at the Business Design Centre in Islington. You may also have some suppliers closer to home, so use the *Yellow Pages*.

Calling all party retailers

It is now time for some reader participation. We are going to have a competition to encourage you all to send us a photograph of your Halloween windows.

The photographs will not be returned to you, so keep a copy, or the negative. After we have enjoyed looking at them all and made our decision, we will reproduce picture of the winner/winners for publication and provide general feedback on the standard of the displays (no names mentioned of course). Please send entries by November 7.

Sally Farmer is a former vice-dean at the London Institute of Retail Studies at the London College of Printing, where she had developed the largest Access to Design programme for visual merchandising.

