

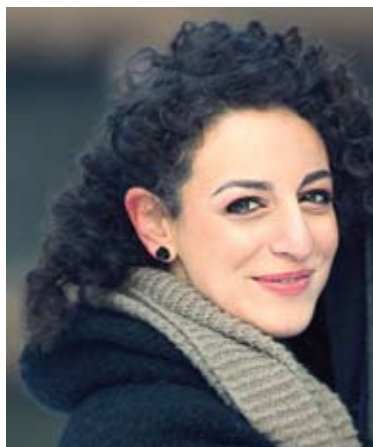
# Put On Your Customer Glasses

By Ani Nersessian

If something is in one place for too long we stop noticing it. This is true for your retail space as well. When you are in your store every day, you stop seeing what your customers see. That's when you need a fresh set of eyes.

Gain a fresh perspective by monitoring your customer's navigation and in-store shopping behaviour, listening to input from a part-time staff member, or asking someone new for their honest opinion. Avoid friends or family who will only pat you on the back - an ego boost will not equate to a sales boost.

You may have a gorgeous store set-up, but that doesn't necessarily mean that your products will sell. Sometimes customers treat overly displayed stores as showrooms or exhibits, rather than a shoppable space.



Here are a few of the most common and important visual merchandising considerations in any setting:

## A WELCOMER

The windows and the feature launch zone are the most common welcomers. You need a trigger to attract your customers, reel them in, and introduce them to the space. Capitalize on your entry space by making an impactful first impression.

## CLEAR ZONES

A large space is no excuse for an undefined shopping journey. A small space is definitely no excuse either. The first step to making navigating the space easy and effortless is to clearly define each zone. This is done with effective product groupings that tell your story, as well as a fixture layout that guides their path.

## ROMANCE CHARM PIZZAZZ!

Physical spaces are no less significant since the upsurge of e-commerce. In fact, they are more significant. Woo your customers by putting your products in the right visual context so that they register and appreciate the value of your goods.

This can be done by introducing focal displays, improving the overall ambience, or presenting special experience areas. Even during the heaviest, discount-driven periods the amusement factor should not be compromised altogether.

## THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

Don't expect customers to make an effort to piece together coordinates or even to know how to do it.

A part of educating and upselling is making it effortless to create the whole package. This is achieved not only by grouping specific products per area, but by ensuring that all coordinating items are within sight.

## A LASTING BRAND IMAGE

Keep your brand in your customers' minds by telling a story. It is fairly easy to find similar products across different retailers so ensure that everything visible within the shopping space contributes to a cohesive style that reflects your brand and elevates your image.

By developing a strategy to make more productive use of your space you will optimize your ability to shape your customer's perception, navigation, and shopping tendencies.

Ani Nersessian is the founder of VM ID, a Canadian business serving the visual merchandising needs of other small businesses through tools, training and services.

Her talents have been employed by Holt Renfrew's flagship and Yorkdale stores, and by Adidas, Reebok and Ryerson University.

**JEANNE<sup>®</sup> LOTTIE**

Mode Show  
Booth # 1016

Head Office  
32 Scollard St.  
Toronto, ON.  
M5R 1E9  
Tel: (416) 968-2299  
Fax: (416) 968-2281  
wholesale@jeannelottie.com