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Merchandise Budgeting and Planning, Defined

3 Ways to Thrive in a Retail Slowdown

Turnovers: A Win-Win Situation

MAGIC & WSA Shows Review



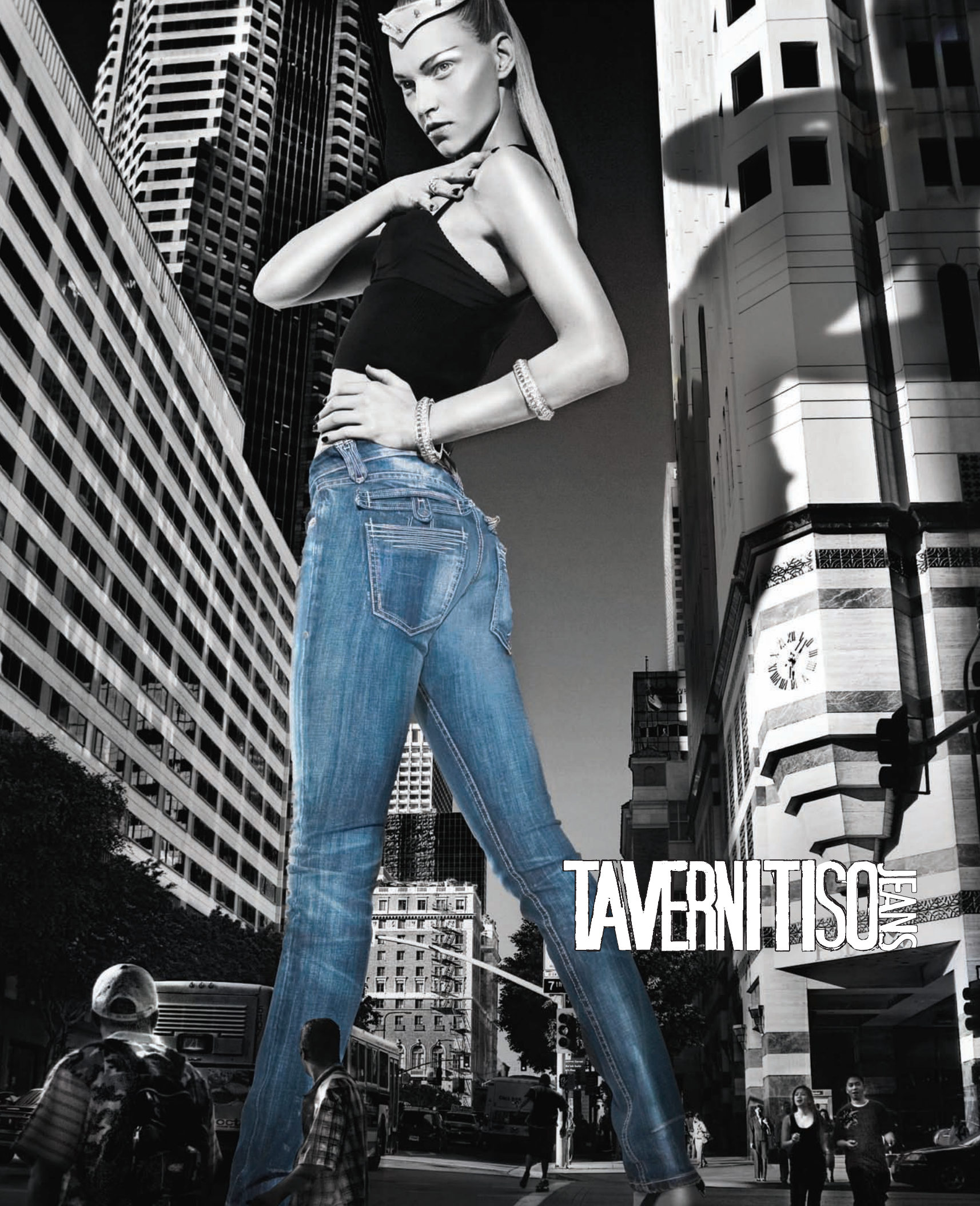
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So, here we go again....

Another day I was watching Charlie Rose's interview with a known cardiologist Dr. Valentin Fuster. According to him, no medicine will work until people will learn to follow through with their prescribed regiment and medications. Statistically, about 75% of heart patients stop taking their medications at any time, at their own decision, disregarding all warnings. And that is a problem, a BIG problem, because people die. Same with cigarettes- everybody knows they might kill you, how many still smoke?

The reason I am telling this is this- unfortunately, I see exactly the same sick attitude about business in people around. Roughly, about 75% of new businesses close within first few years. Most common causes- inability to manage inventory, finances, customer satisfaction, marketing, etc. Unpreparedness.

There's a reason why this century is often called the age of information- knowledge is the winning ticket to better life. And this is what I always try to convey to our audience- in business, as in life, you either do it right or die.

By now, all possible solutions to all possible situation have been described and tutored in magazines, books, on TV, at seminars, classes, lectures... Donald Trump, Joe Girard, Jack Welch, Zig Ziglar, Robert Kiyosaki and many other experts who have been here you are now and made it and so can you if you just DO WHAT THEY SAY!

Please read FOS, this is a magazine for those who are serious about being successful. Please read and DO IT! Stop playing Russian roulette with your business! The editorial contents in FOS have been prepared or contributed by experts, with solid credentials in retail business and respectful backgrounds. Knowledge. This is your key to success, but it is up to you to take it and to use it.

We'll provide the information you need—about fashion, retailing, business—everything you need to succeed in the modern marketplace.

Please feel free to contact me at editor@focusonshoes.com with any questions, needs, or concerns you may have.

Alex Geyman
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3 Ways to Thrive in a Retail Slowdown
 by Anne M. Obarski
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Turnovers: A Win-Win Situation
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FALL-WINTER '08 STYLES

FOS picks hot styles for Fall-Winter 2008

WOMENS' DRESS BOOTS



1



2



3



4



5

1. Casadei
2. Marino Fabiani
3. Baldinini
4. Duccio Del Duca
5. Gigi Favela
6. Franco Ballin

6



1



2



3



4



5

6



5

6

1. Donna Serena
2. Principe di Bologna
3. Baldinini
4. Loriblu
5. Gigi Favela
6. Twice
7. Mary-Kyri



7

WOMENS' DRESS SHOES



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- 1. 6267
- 2. Casadei
- 3. Gianna Meliani
- 4. Donna Karan
- 5. Moschino
- 6. Emilio Pucci
- 7. Velvet Angels

⑤



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⑦

ACCESSORIES



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- 1. Baixada
- 2. Franziska Hubener
- 3. Franziska Hubener
- 4. Mary Norton
- 5. Clara Kasavina
- 6. La Chica Chic
- 7. Mary Norton



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WOMENS' CASUAL BOOTS



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7

1. Roberto Catani
2. Manas
3. Dyva
4. Boemos
5. Dino Bigioni
6. In Blu
7. Action Tosi



7

1. Duccio Del Duca
2. NASCAR
3. OSX
4. Trep
5. Roberto Catani
6. Khrio
7. Franco Ballin

WOMENS' CAUALS



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1. Fly Flot
2. OSX
3. Igi&Co
4. In Blu
5. In Blu
6. Pakerson
7. Igi&Co

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Q: What does it take to successfully start a fashion products (apparel or shoes) store? Where can I find reliable information and statistics about shoe retailing?

A: To successfully start and run a fashion apparel or shoe store today it takes a significant amount of capital, enough to build out the store so that you do not look like you are "playing store". This means hiring a store designer who can give you a design that makes your store stand out and look professional. You can plan on at least \$150 per square foot for design and build out of a great looking store. Then you need money for opening inventory as most vendors will expect payment on delivery for new stores and even repeats may be COD (Collect On Delivery) for some time until you establish a good credit track record. You also need to plan to have enough cash for at least six months of operations because sales early on may pay your operating expenses but replenishing inventory will cost more than you might expect and you need to plan for it. The National Shoe Retailer Association has statistics on what to expect in stock turns, GMROII and other benchmarks. Reading books like my new "Complete Idiot's Guide To Starting And Running A Retail Store" would also be a good idea (the book is due to come out in April 2008 and will sell on Amazon.com and at your local bookstore)!

Q: Can I Rent Software over the Internet?

A: Yes, you certainly can. There are many companies today who are providing software that you "rent". This is called an ASP model, or in computer talk, an Application Service Provider model. You can search Google for these companies under ASP Retail Software. Most of them are very reasonably priced, provide secure data connections and back up all your information every night. You do need a good internet connection however to use them. Many have a local POS module that will still work if your internet connection fails and then updates everything when it comes back on.

Q: I am interested in e-commerce to sell shoes, fashion apparel and accessories on the web. What are the challenges?

A: The challenges are enormous, and they are called Amazon, Zappos, Shoes.com and many other established web merchants. The real dirty secret of these business is the return rates which are often in the +30% range and can cause huge problems in processing all those returns. A few years ago a large name brand shoe brand had a huge prob-

lem with returns that were mis-matched. Customers were ordering two different sizes (bracketing their purchase) and then mixing up the sizes in the boxes that then went back to inventory, causing even more returns! This is not a business for the novice. Having said that, there are opportunities on eBay to clear out old inventory at often a higher price than you can get in your store.

Q: What Is Business Debt Refinancing?

A: This is a very dangerous method of re-financing your debt, often using inventory and even personal assets to secure a new line of credit. I would advise against it in almost all cases. If your debt is growing too high this should tell you something! Look to radically cut expenses and at the same time grow revenue. Not an easy thing to do.

Q: We are recent fashion school graduates who've come up with new original designs and would like to promote them. How to find a good PR and Marketing agency?

A: You can search for them on Google, but you may be further ahead to try to do it yourself. You can create a great web presence, contact local celebrities and gatekeepers and offer them free designs to wear to important events. Also local fashion editors are always looking for good stories and having a fashion show and sending invitations to the press can also work, but it has to be a very good show. There are thousands of new original designs that never see the mass market because they may be original but cannot be worn by very many people.



James E. Dion is an internationally known consultant, keynote speaker, trainer, and author of the best-sellers *Retail Selling Ain't Brain Surgery*, *It's Twice As Hard, Start and Run a Retail Business* and *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Starting and Running a Retail Store*. James consults, trains and speaks on consumer trends, retail technology, selling and service, retail merchandising and operations, marketing and leadership. With a MS degree in Psychology and a PhD in Industrial Psychology combined with over 30 years of progressive retail experience working at Sears, Levi Strauss and Gilmore Department Stores, James is one of the most sought after consultants and speakers in the US and internationally. He can be reached at jimdion@dionco.com; www.dionco.com

MENS' CASUALS



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- 1. Alberto Guardiani
- 2. Rockport
- 3. AURI
- 4. Due Elle
- 5. AURI
- 6. Kebo
- 7. AURI



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MENS' DRESS



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- 1. Artioli
- 2. Brumas's
- 3. Due Elle
- 4. Flexa
- 5. Mac Dugan
- 6. Rockport
- 7. Magnanni



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MENS' BOOTS

1. Ariat
2. AURI
3. Brumas's
4. Dino Bigioni
5. Flexa
6. Rockport
7. Vittorio Virgili



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CHILDRENS



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1. Nero Giardini Jr
2. Bi Key
3. Primigi
4. Falcotto
5. Naturino
6. Nero Giardini Jr
7. Flexa



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1. Primigi
2. Ninette
3. Mitica
4. Bi Key
5. Gallucci
6. Naturino
7. Naturino



TURNOVERS: A WIN-WIN SITUATION

BY HARRY J. FRIEDMAN



Turning the sales over to another salesperson ensures that each customer contact is maximized.

Have you ever served a customer that you couldn't close? Of course you have. Everyone has. Is it ever possible that another salesperson could have closed the sale that you couldn't? Absolutely. It doesn't necessarily have to do with the other salesperson being better at selling than you either. Sometimes customers just respond better to different personalities.

So if we realize that we might not make every sale with every customer, but other salespeople might be able to pick up a few of the ones we can't, how do we solve the problem? The turnover, commonly referred to as a T.O., is the solution.

Every customer that enters the store is the result of an extremely large investment in advertising, buying, merchandising, and store design, among other things. The store can't afford to let customers walk out the door empty-handed simply because one particular salesperson doesn't succeed. Before any customer leaves, a second salesperson must be given a chance to save the sale.

Turning the sale over to another salesperson ensures that each customer contact is maximized. The T.O. creates a win-win situation. The customers win because their needs are met with their purchase. The store wins as its investment is realized. And you win because you make half of an additional sale.

Half of an additional sale? Yes, when a T.O. occurs and the second salesperson makes the

sale, the credit for the sale is shared with the original salesperson. Instead of losing credit for a full sale, the original salesperson gains partial credit for an additional sale.

T.O.'s require that you think of the store's benefit as well as your own. Just as professional basketball players know when to pass and when to score, you must know when to T.O. and when to close on your own. Remember, that you will be getting customers turned over to you as well!

First let's take a look at THE REASONS WHY YOU WOULD NEED TO T.O.

1. Personality conflict with the customer. Some customers have silly hang-ups that can't be explained. For instance, they just don't like people with beards or who wear glasses or who have green eyes or blonde hair, etc.

2. The customer isn't responding to you because of:

» Your age (you look too young to know what you're talking about);

» Your gender (for example, some men might not feel comfortable having a woman help them while others will prefer it);

» A language barrier (you may have someone else in the store that speaks a bit of another language who could step in and help);

» Your race (you run into a customer who has personal prejudices that prevent you from getting to first base).

3. The customer knows more about your merchandise than you do. When a customer is an enthusiast in the area you are selling, he or she wants the salesperson to be a real expert. Enthusiasts sometimes want to converse with a salesperson on the highest level of technical information. If this seems to be the situation you are in at any point during your presenta-

tion (you would normally discover this in probing as the customer begins to answer your questions using very technical information), it is your responsibility to give the customer what they want and turn over the sale to someone with more product knowledge than you have.

4. You find that during probing or demonstrating an item that the customer just isn't responding to you. We call them VGI's (very good indicators). When customers are giving you VGI's, they will be nodding their heads, touching the item, listening intently to you, asking questions, etc.,. If you aren't getting VGI's, something isn't clicking between you and the customer.

5. If you have had VGI's and you can't seem to get the customer to commit to buying, just because you are unable to close doesn't mean someone else can't.

Turning over the sale if any of the reasons mentioned in the first two points listed above are the case will be most effective if done prior to demonstrating any product. The T.O. should take place in opening. In this case, the sale is not a split between two salespeople. If you can't get to first base with a customer, there is no reason you should get partial credit for any sale that is made. It just makes good sense to work together in these instances. Simply allow the customer to browse and get another salesperson to re-approach him/her.

But the last three reasons for turning over the sale will all occur after the presentation has progressed past opening.

Now let's address the issue of how to T.O. When turning over the sale, you must have the customer's best interest at heart. You have to genuinely want your customer to get the right item. Likewise, the customers have to feel that your T.O. will help them in making the selection. This way, the customers feel reinforced as opposed to manipulated.

1. Explain to the customer prior to bringing someone else over that you are getting help from the "expert." There are several different ways of expressing this notion. For example, the expert might be referred to as a senior staff member, product knowledge expert, woman's (or man's) point of view, a mature (or younger) point of view, buyer, manager, technical expert, salesperson who is most familiar with a particular line or inventory, etc.. Even if the T.O. salesperson has less experience than you, he/she will become the expert for that moment.

2 Don't ask permission of the customer to call another salesperson in. Just do it.

3. Politely introduce the customer to the T.O. sales-

person, using the appropriate title and Mr., Mrs., or Ms. The T.O. salesperson should then offer his/her first name instead to convey a friendly attitude to the customer immediately. If the atmosphere in your store is more casual and first names have been used prior to this point, you can drop the formalities of using Mr. or Mrs.

4. Clearly explain the details of the situation to the T.O. salesperson right in front of the customer, adding why you feel the T.O. salesperson will be better able to meet the customer's needs.

5. Then politely excuse yourself from the sale so the customers don't feel as if they are being double-teamed. Do not interfere with the sale again unless it is appropriate for you to do so.

BELOW IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW A T.O. MIGHT SOUND:

1st Salesperson: "You know Scott, I don't feel like I'm connecting very well with what is exactly right for you. I'm going to ask Dave to help you since he really is the expert on mountain bikes. He may be able to make some great suggestions; and I want you to make the right selection."

2nd Salesperson: "Hello, how are you? I'm Dave."

1st Salesperson: "I've been showing Scott some mountain bikes and I just can't get a handle on what might work for him. He's going to the mountains on vacation so he wants a smooth, comfortable riding bike. Based on his cycling experience, I'm really not sure which model would best suit his riding style and needs. I feel he likes this bike the best, but it may not be appropriate. Perhaps you can solve this dilemma. Scott, it was really a pleasure serving you. I leave you in good hands."

T.O.'s are easy and a very effective selling tool. However, just like any selling technique, you may want to run through some scenarios with your coworkers before practicing on your customers. Like everything else, it will take some practice to perfect the technique. T.O.'s are designed to make us all winners: the customer, the store and you. Use the turnover and you'll likely find more customers heading for the cash register instead of the door.



Harry J. Friedman is an internationally acclaimed retail consultant and CEO of The Friedman Group. Since 1980, his retail sales and management techniques have been used by over 500,000 retailers worldwide. For a FREE subscription to his monthly On The Floor Journal e-newsletter, information on upcoming retail seminars, training programs, or on-site consulting, call 800-351-8040 or visit www.thefriedmangroup.com

TWO GREAT SHOWS

TOO FEW PARTICIPANTS

Review of February 2008 WSA and MAGIC Shows

By Alex Geyman



MAGIC Show



WSA Show

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SA and MAGIC, two major American footwear and fashion trade shows, were held in Las Vegas in February. The following review, providing trade show highlights and analysis, is based on my personal observations, conversations with show participants, and available official data.

WSA:

The World Shoe Association (WSA) trade show was bumped to the end of February after MAGIC Marketplace and the FFANY New York Shoe Expo saw a 20% attendance drop, compared to February 2007 edition (based on released numbers).

WSA was again spread throughout three locations: The Sands Expo Center, Mandalay Bay Convention Center, and Venetian Suites. This show offered excellent logistics and quality service (entertainment, transportation, and food), along with professional seminars covering fashion trends, merchandising, marketing, customer service, etc. The atmosphere of this edition was, as always, friendly and professional, but unusually quiet and empty, if I may say so. The cost to exhibit at WSA is moderate and quite reasonable, with free admission to buyers.

The show's newest addition, The Materials at WSA, complements the finished product very well and according to a show official, "... further expands the breadth of WSA as an industry marketplace by focusing on materials, design, components, technology, and sourcing, with easy access to brand and retail leaders." Key features were the workshop program presented by reputable experts and a "Trend Area" where attendees could examine products up close.

Another interesting new addition was The Box partition, which displayed a selected assortment of trend-driven contemporary footwear and accessory collections. The new feature is a happy medium between common floor exhibition and exclusive, high-end displaying at the Collections; and I hope it will last and grow.

Closing on a quiet note, WSA anticipates that its summer edition, scheduled for a week before August's edition of FFANY and three weeks before MAGIC shows will gather far larger audiences of buyers and sellers. But, we'll have to wait and see.

MAGIC:

MAGIC Marketplace includes the following:

- MAGIC (men's apparel, footwear, accessories)
- WWDMAGIC (women's apparel, footwear, accessories)
- MAGIC kids (apparel, accessories, footwear, gifts for children)
- Sourcing at MAGIC (apparel supplies)
- Project (designer denim, premium contemporary sportswear)
- POOL (emerging designers' apparel, shoes, accessories; various lifestyle products—from art to music to home decor)

The show was held at its traditional locales: Las Vegas Expo Center, Hilton Hotel, and Sands Convention Center (Project show). The show featured useful, high-quality retailer-manufacturer seminars, along with fashion shows, entertainment, food, and transportation. (Shuttles operated between all major hotels—except those hosting alternative trade shows.)

Clearly the largest trade show of its kind, MAGIC provides complete seller-buyer services. Its immensity is difficult to grasp, yet that's what makes its marketplace-wide presentation of all conceivable goods and services to such a large group of potential buyers possible.

Like WSA, MAGIC's enormous scale is also its weakness, due to difficulties with parking, crowds, noise, long walking distances, etc. Organizing separate POOL



and Project shows, in addition to the main exhibition events, has helped mitigate these problems, however. Both shows, focused on fashion lifestyle, premium denim, and upscale athletic and boutique markets, furnish an original, comfortable working atmosphere for the younger market buyers.

Participation is expensive for exhibitors, but free to buyers. The February MAGIC gathered noticeably fewer exhibitors than previous editions, and traffic was considerably slower than at prior editions—especially during the last two days. This is probably why the show is moving to a three-day schedule beginning with the upcoming August edition.

FOS comments:

The common notion I picked at both MAGIC and WSA—slow! Yet, while I don't have a responsible answer about MAGIC, I disagree with the people who put all the blame for WSA performance only on its scheduling after FFANY and MAGIC, because these shows also visibly under performed. Yes, late dates DID played a significant role, but in my judgment, the problem most likely stemmed from other factors not directly related to any of these shows and for which they aren't responsible (i.e., lack of exciting new styles and products on the market, economic slowdown, rising cost of staying in Vegas, etc.)

Our recommendations to the shows' organizers are these: Don't schedule a show that includes weekends. Saturdays are no-work days for many Jewish exhibitors and buyers, many retailers dislike leaving their stores during weekend shopping, and Thursday through Sunday are the most expensive and stressful days to visit Las Vegas!

WSA's change from a four-day to three-day duration (except for Collections at the Venetian) has been helpful; and beginning August 2008, MAGIC will also adopt the three-day format.

That said, clearly WSA and MAGIC remain the most important events in the international footwear, apparel and fashion accessories trade markets held on American soil. Both provide buyers a worldwide multitude of choices of products and services in all categories.

At both February shows, buyer attendance was in the thousands, and most succeeded in finding and ordering needed merchandise. Some booths teemed with happy buyers every day, while others featured only bored and yawning sellers. The difference? The latter expected the show to do their selling for them. Let's be fair to the show's organizers, everyone! If exhibitors don't try hard enough, through either pre-show advertising and promotion or in-show marketing, who's to blame if they don't make any sales? Certainly not the show.

MERCHANDISE BUDGETING & PLANNING, DEFINED PART ONE

BY JAMES E. DION



Knowing your Customer's profile will guide you in your buying and merchandising decisions (as well as marketing, human resources and customer service decisions.

As a retailer, planning your stock levels and assortments is one of the most complex and vital functions of your job. My goal is not to make an expert on this complex function, but to provide you with an understanding of the process of merchandise budgeting and planning one step at a time and help you embrace this task with more confidence and better results.

Merchandise Budgeting and Planning, Defined

Merchandise Budgeting and Planning is about planning and profitably managing what your store will carry for the next season. Your goal is to get what are known as the "Five Rights of Retail" right. The Five Rights of Retail are:

1. The right product
2. In the right place
3. At the right time
4. In the right quantity
5. At the right price

A Merchandise Plan concerns itself with product (inventory and assortment), place (where to display it or if you have multiple stores, what stores to distribute the product to), time (the delivery time required to have it when the Customer wants to buy, i.e., having some of the newest styles of fall shoes after the beginning of November is too late!), in the right quantity (good Merchandise Plans identify the proper

amount that the store needs to have to make its Sales Plan. No more and no less than required) and at the right price (the Merchandise Plan assists you in setting a price that will sell the article and return a fair profit to your company). While this list is over 90 years old, it has been the standard of success in the retail business for all this time. Today retailers have also added "with the right service" to this list, because no matter how good your product is, unless you have the right people with the right training to effectively sell it to Customers, it likely will not sell itself.

For most retailers the value of the retail inventory is greater than any other investment the retailer has. That is why, once you manage to plan the right merchandise for your store(s), the next crucial step is its profitable management, which involves constant monitoring of performance and actions to maximize the sales.



When you are a destination for your Customer because of a unique product offering you have, you need to make sure you do everything you can to never weaken or lose that reputation.

Customer's profile will guide you in your buying and merchandising decisions (as well as marketing, human resources and customer service decisions). If you know that your Customers are low to mid-income, you might want to avoid carrying high price shoes. Or, if you are located in a community with a high concentration of Hispanics who shop in your store, you might want to consider carrying more products in sizes and styles that match their preferences and needs. Also, you might want to bear in mind that of all ethnic groups, Hispanics are the group with the highest loyalty to a brand and a product (64.4% according to a recent study by McDonald Marketing, vs. 19.7% of Non-Hispanic Whites and 35.2% nationally). So, you will most likely need to analyze your sales from the previous season and carry the brands that received the most votes (sales) and in general you need to know what are the brands that are most popular in that season. Or, if you are in a university town, you might want to think of carrying more styles that cater to younger crowds. If you have multiple stores you may also have multiple customer markets, which would require an understanding of the customer profiles for each store's trade area.

What does Merchandise Management Entail?

The planning process encompasses more than just forecasting and planning sales and inventory. There are at eight additional tasks that you will need to fulfill to ensure profitable sales. They are:

1. Market Analysis
2. Store Positioning Analysis
3. Promotions Planning
4. Sales And Stock Planning
5. Sourcing
6. Shoeline Building
7. Assortment Planning
8. In Season Stock Analysis And Actions
9. Season End Stock Analysis

In this article, I will focus on the first two tasks: Market Analysis and Store Positioning Analysis.

Market Analysis

Good Merchandise Budgeting and Planning begins with a look at the market. The market consists of your Customers and your Competition.

The questions that you will need to answer about your Customers are:

>> Who are they?

Your goal is to identify and clearly define their profile. This includes knowing their age group, occupation, sex, ethnicity, profession, income level, leisure-time interests, where they live, fashion and utility needs and wants. Knowing your

>> What are their buying criteria?

Is it price, utility, quality, durability, fashion or impulse? So, for instance, if you established yourself as "the place" for the latest and most fashionable styles for young women and men, your merchandise plan will need to take that into account. You will need to make sure that you budget for those higher fashion shoes and make sure that you have a constant supply of new styles at least every month if not every week. When you are a destination for your Customer because of a unique product offering you have, whether it is price, the latest or assortment, or another, you need to make sure you do everything you can to never weaken or lose that reputation. They will likely not forgive you and you may lose them to another store.

>> How do they choose a store?

Based on the store image, atmosphere, staff, service, location, convenience, opening hours, choice, variety of assortments, promotions, advertising, or impulse? This requires a review of your Customers' shopping habits which

includes, among the other things, learning about where else they shop. I am not talking about other shoe stores. I am referring to all other stores that they shop at in a day, week or month. Customers shop horizontally not vertically. This means that they do not compare you to other shoe stores, or at least not just that. They compare you to all the other stores that they went in before coming to your store and even restaurants or bars that they frequent. They compare you to the Gap, Whole Foods, Lowe's, Victoria Secret, Cineplex and so on. If your store's image, assortment, pricing, display, look and feel, service and so on do not match or exceed what they find at these other establishments, they may not shop with you.

>> What products are they looking for?

Traditional or the latest and hottest fashion and design? Are they looking for international or local brands, price only, or price and value? Again, a good analysis on your Customer's preferences and lifestyle will help you determine what products you should carry that cater to their specific needs and make you stand out from the competition.

>> What are their buying habits?

Do they buy different products from different stores, full service, self-service, or assisted service stores? This again refers to your Customer's expectations when they shop with you, which you will need to match to your strategy. The questions that you will need to answer about your Competition are:

>> Who are they?

Make a list of your competitors whether they are independent stores, large chain stores, big box stores or the shoe department in a department store.

>> How to they attract Customers?

Is it price? Convenience? Assortment? Quality? Promotions? Ambience? Service? Fashion leadership? Windows? Identify for each of your competitors their strategy or, in other words, how they do business with their Customers.

>> What are their strengths? What are their weaknesses?

When analyzing your competitors, make a list of all the strengths and all the weaknesses as it relates to their product selection, pricing strategy, service, fashion and ambience. Your goal is not try to compete with them on their strengths but focus on their weaknesses and fill any gap that you see. So, for instance, if one of your competitors down the street carries an extensive assortment of shoes and they are never out of stock but their associates have very limited product knowledge and can't really service their Customers, there's a gap there for you to fill. Particularly, with shoes that have advanced features, it is paramount to fit them to the right Customer and for the right reasons. Selecting and training competent staff then becomes crucial and a key factor in your unique identity and competitive position.

Store Positioning Analysis

Store positioning analysis is about determining for your store or chain:

>> What do you want to be?

What image do you want to project or, in other words, how do you want to be perceived by your Customer? Do you want your store to be known for the lowest prices, the widest assortment, the latest fashion styles, the most technologically advanced styles for professional athletes, the highest level of product knowledge of your staff, etc.? Whatever it is, make sure you do not try to be everything to everyone. Pick one strategy, excel at it without forgetting the others but don't make them the focus of your attention.

>> Who is your Customer?

We saw that earlier.

>> What do you sell?

And what should you sell and shouldn't sell. Do not carry products that you cannot be believable in stocking and selling.

>> Who are your competitors?

We talked about it already.

>> What services do you provide?

This is very important particularly if your strategy is not to be the lowest price store in town (a very smart one, by the way – big box retailers will kill you all the time on price). What else can you offer besides well-trained and passionate associates? Can you do regular notifications via e-mail on new arrivals? Invitations to trunk shows by vendors of their products and product test-drive opportunities? What else can you offer that other stores don't? What can you learn from the Gap or the gourmet shop down the street (remember Customers shop horizontally and you can too for ideas how to amaze your Customers!

(continued in next issue)



James E. Dion is an internationally known consultant, keynote speaker, trainer, and author of the best-sellers *Retail Selling Ain't Brain Surgery*, *It's Twice As Hard*, *Start and Run a Retail Business* and *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Starting and Running a Retail Store*. James consults, trains and speaks on consumer trends, retail technology, selling and service, retail merchandising and operations, marketing and leadership. With a MS degree in Psychology and a PhD in Industrial Psychology combined with over 30 years of progressive retail experience working at Sears, Levi Strauss and Gilmore Department Stores, James is one of the most sought after consultants and speakers in the US and internationally. He can be reached at jimdion@dionco.com; www.dionco.com

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3 WAYS TO THRIVE IN A RETAIL SLOWDOWN

BY ANNE M. OBARSKI

When the economy starts sputtering that's when savvy retailers take action. Every newspaper, news program, news website is full of doom and gloom these days. Stores closings, foreclosures, rising gas prices, job cuts, rising food prices are all the top stories in the media. I have lived long enough to know that we have seen this all before.

If you own a business, the question is, what changes can you make immediately to remain healthy during this period of "business sickness"? For some retailers that could be like turning around the Titanic, and for others, it can be a small course correction.

If you own a business, the question is, what changes can you make immediately to remain healthy during this period of "business sickness"?



If you are a retailer who sells "non-essentials", it would be advantageous to focus on the three areas that could help ease the pain of a spending downturn.



Focus on your Consumer: I recently saw a list of survey questions about consumers that made me think. The four categories were; shopping closer to home, shopping for sales more often; spending less on clothing; and taking fewer shopping trips. The responses were about even between all four areas. Customers are saying that they would rather buy less frequently, but locally and are looking for good deals.

The worst thing a business can do now is to stop promoting itself. The customer needs to know that you are just like them and you are sensitive to their situation. By using as many cost effective tools to stay in touch with your customer, even more than before, will help to keep your name first and foremost in their mind. Make the most of your customer database through email, phone, web, even direct mail communication. Use your customers to step up your consumer research. Call them

and interview them to get "real-time" opinions of what they like and don't like and wish you had more of.

Focus on your Inventory: Retailers must be very aware of their stock levels. Strategic buying plans will help keep stock levels lean. Analyze each and every department and classification and be brutally honest as to what is selling, what isn't and how you are going to deal with that situation, now! By cutting back on selection, you actually may be making it easier and quicker for the customer to make their buying decisions.

As the customer is making fewer purchases, they are hoping that most of them will be "on sale". Having flexibility in pricing is a direct reflection on your buying structure. Too often, carrying national brands can dictate the retail price you must charge. Private labeling and carrying products that are locally made can give a retailer the ability to price with a larger gross margin but remain competitive in the marketplace.



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Put milk on sale! What does that mean??? Milk is a staple item for any grocery store. If a grocery store would put milk on sale, I would guarantee customers would buy more than one. What "milk" item do you have in your store? What basic item do customers buy from you day in and day out? What would happen if you put it on sale? My hope is that they would buy more from you. Along with that basic item, what else would they buy to go with it? The goal during a downturn is to be able to sell more items to more customers and this is known as an increase in UPT's or Units Per Transaction. You see, the customer has already told us that they want to buy locally and less frequently. If they are a captive audience in your store, then it is your responsibility to appreciate their desire to save time, money and energy and still get what they need at a good price.

Focus on your Staffing: I was just in Las Vegas on a business trip and I mentioned to the cab driver that business seemed brisk. He actually said that it was down but that his boss never gives the cab drivers time off when business is slow. His boss said that he wanted his fleet of cabs to be seen all over town and that if there was business to be had, they would get it. He told me that he could take vacation when business was really good.

What does that mean to you? Don't cut your staffing unless you absolutely have to. Customers who can't find someone to wait on them will go elsewhere. They don't

care that you are watching your staffing budget. By having a sharp, knowledgeable, hard-working staff whose schedules are planned around the pace of store traffic will generate more sales from customers who realize that service is a priority in your business.

Tough economic times tend to reduce a customer's loyalty to any one store. The question is are you top of the consumers mind when they think of the product or services you offer? Now, more than ever is the time to make the course correction through consumer research, inventory evaluation and strategic scheduling so that your business will thrive in a recession even as others struggle.



Anne M. Obarski, the "Eye" on Performance", is the Executive Director of Merchandise Concepts, a retail speaking and consulting service since 1984. Anne is an internationally

published author and professional speaker, a member of the National Speakers Association and the International Federation of Professional Speakers and presented for the WSA in 2007 and 2008. For more information, go to <http://www.merchandiseconcepts.com> or email her at anne@merchandiseconcepts.com

FOUR EMOTIONS THAT CAN LEAD TO LIFE CHANGE

BY JIM ROHN

Emotions are the most powerful forces inside us. Under the power of emotions, human beings can perform the most heroic (as well as barbaric) acts...

To a great degree, civilization itself can be defined as the intelligent channeling of human emotion. Emotions are fuel and the mind is the pilot, which together propel the ship of civilized progress.

The day that you allow these emotions to fuel your desire is the day you'll turn your life around.

Which emotions cause people to act? There are four basic ones. Each, or a combination of several, can trigger the most incredible activity. The day that you allow these emotions to fuel your desire is the day you'll turn your life around.

1) DISGUST

One does not usually equate the word "disgust" with positive action. And yet properly channeled, disgust can change a person's life.

The person who feels disgusted has reached a point of no return. He or she is ready to throw down the gauntlet at life and say, "I've had it!" That's what I said after many humiliating experiences at age 25.

I said, "I don't want to live like this anymore. I've had it with being broke. I've had it with being embarrassed, and I've had it with lying."

Yes, productive feelings of disgust come when a person says, "Enough is enough."

The "guy" has finally had it with mediocrity. He's had it with those awful sick feelings of fear, pain and humiliation. He then decides he is not going to live like this anymore. Look out! This could be the day that turns a life around.

Call it what you will, the "I've had it" day, the "never



again" day, the "enough is enough" day. Whatever you call it, it's powerful! There is nothing so life-changing as gut-wrenching disgust!

2) DECISION

Most of us need to be pushed to the wall to make decisions. And once we reach this point, we have to deal with the conflicting emotions that come with making them. We have reached a fork in the road.

Now this fork can be a two-prong, three-prong, or even a four-prong fork. No wonder that decision-making can create knots in stomachs, keep us awake in the middle of the night, or make us break out in a cold sweat.

Making life-changing decisions can be likened to internal civil war. Conflicting armies of emotions, each with its own arsenal of reasons, battle each other for suprema-

cy of our minds. And our resulting decisions, whether bold or timid, well thought out or impulsive, can either set the course of action or blind it.

I don't have much advice to give you about decision-making except this:

Whatever you do, don't camp at the fork in the road. Decide. It's far better to make a wrong decision than to not make one at all. Each of us must confront our emotional turmoil and sort out our feelings.

3) DESIRE

How does one gain desire? I don't think I can answer this directly because there are many ways. But I do know two things about desire:

- a. It comes from the inside not the outside.
- b. It can be triggered by outside forces.

Almost anything can trigger desire. It's a matter of timing as much as preparation. It might be a song that tugs at the heart. It might be a memorable sermon. It might be a movie, a conversation with a friend, a confrontation with the enemy, or a bitter experience.

Even a book or an article such as this one can trigger the inner mechanism that will make some people say, "I want it now!"

Therefore, while searching for your "hot button" of pure, raw desire, welcome into your life each positive experience. Don't erect a wall to protect you from experiencing life.

The same wall that keeps out your disappointment also keeps out the sunlight of enriching experiences. So let life touch you. The next touch could be the one that turns your life around.

4) RESOLVE

Resolve says, "I will." These two words are among the most potent in the English language. I WILL. Benjamin Disraeli, the great British statesman, once said, "Nothing can resist a human will that will stake even its existence on the extent of its purpose."

In other words, when someone resolves to "do or die," nothing can stop him.

The mountain climber says, "I will climb the mountain. They've told me it's too high, it's too far, it's too steep, it's too rocky, it's too difficult. But it's my mountain. I will climb it. You'll soon see me waving from the top or you'll never see me,

because unless I reach the peak, I'm not coming back."

Who can argue with such resolve?

When confronted with such iron-will determination, I can see Time, Fate and Circumstance calling a hasty conference and deciding, "We might as well let him have his dream. He's said he's going to get there or die trying."

The best definition for "resolve" I've ever heard came from a schoolgirl in Foster City, California. I was lecturing about success to a group of bright kids at a junior high school.

I asked, "Who can tell me what "resolve" means?" Several hands went up, and I did get some pretty good definitions. But the last was the best.

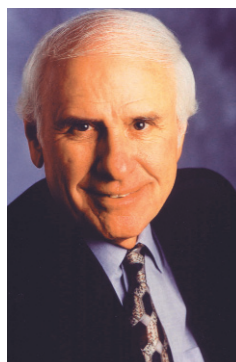
A shy girl from the back of the room got up and said with quiet intensity, "I think resolve means promising yourself you will never give up." That's it! That's the best definition I've ever heard:

PROMISE YOURSELF YOU'LL NEVER GIVE UP

Think about it! How long should a baby try to learn how to walk? How long would you give the average baby before you say, "That's it, you've had your chance"?

You say that's crazy? Of course it is. Any mother would say, "My baby is going to keep trying until he learns how to walk!" No wonder everyone walks.

There is a vital lesson in this. Ask yourself, "How long am I going to work to make my dreams come true?" I suggest you answer, "As long as it takes." That's what these four emotions are all about.



Jim Rohn has shared his success philosophies for 40+ years to over four million people globally. Jim is hailed as one of the most influential thinkers of our time. He has motivated and trained an entire generation of personal development trainers and executives worldwide. For more information visit www.jimrohn.com

HIRING A RECEPTIONIST

BY ALLBUSINESS.COM

Think carefully about the type of business you're in and how your receptionist can best personify the image you wish to project.



Your receptionist is often the first contact customers and partners have with your business, be it over the phone or in person, so it is very important to have the right person handling the job. And to hire the right person, it's necessary to first identify what kind of employee you are looking for.

1. Determine Necessary Skills

Before you craft a job description for your vacant receptionist position, list the most vital responsibilities your receptionist will have. If your phone rings off the hook, a pleasant phone manner is paramount, as is composure under pressure. If you receive a constant stream of visitors at the office, screen for prospective receptionists who are personable and have a polished, welcoming demeanor.

Think carefully about the type of business you're in and how your receptionist can best personify the image you wish to project. Screen for those who are truly interested in a receptionist role, as opposed to those who simply want to get a foot in your company's door the easiest way possible. That said, when it comes time to conduct interviews, ask each candidate what they know about your company and listen carefully to how they respond. You want someone who has a solid understanding of the business, which

helps them to present a confident and capable first impression to outsiders.

2. Assess Your Gut Feelings

Be exacting in interviews. Too often employers focus solely on credentials when considering candidates, but conduct is often just as important, especially when it comes to the receptionist role. A nervous, timid manner can be incredibly off-putting to those having their first dealings with a business. If your receptionist embodies such traits, it doesn't matter how highly trained your staff is; you could potentially lose business on the basis of the receptionist alone.

Your receptionist is often the first contact customers and partners have with your business, be it over the phone or in person, so it is very important to have the right person handling the job. And to hire the right person, it's necessary to first identify what kind of employee you are looking for.

It may seem illogical to form an opinion of a prospective receptionist based on gut feelings, but if you're turned off by his or her demeanor, consider how your clients will feel. In turn, if you get an extremely positive feeling from interacting with a prospect, take that as a good sign.

Interviewing receptionists isn't the same as hiring for

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other positions. Receptionists are required to react on the fly, think on their feet, and tackle whatever situation comes their way. Angry caller on the phone? The receptionist will be the first one in your office with the opportunity to talk them down. Have a glut of visitors all clamoring for attention at once? It's the receptionist's job to ensure that everyone gets where they're going. These scenarios and more are why it's crucial to hire a receptionist with a warm, affable manner.

Allow for an Adjustment Period

While it's helpful to evaluate receptionist candidates based on their abilities, be sure to give your new hire a chance

to settle in before deciding how you think they're doing. Obvious as this may seem, every business is governed by its own processes and filled with its own distinctive combination of personalities. Even the best, most adaptable receptionists will need some time to adjust to his or her new situation. Six weeks is usually a reasonable amount of time to assess how a receptionist is faring. You may wish to consider bringing someone in on a temporary basis at first, and then when you feel confident they make a good fit, bring them on permanently.

10

THINGS TO AVOID WHEN HIRING SUPPORT STAFF

A good support staff can save you from disaster. They're cool under pressure, can make decisions quickly, and can even anticipate problems before they become unmanageable.

Hiring support staff takes time, patience, and sometimes a lot of faith. It's not always easy to predict with 100% reliability who's going to be successful when it comes to keeping the office humming. With some planning, however, you can assemble an administrative support team that's solid and dependable. Here are 10 things to avoid when hiring support staff:

1. Don't wing it. "Support staff" can seem so vague that you tend to let the function define itself. But no office can afford to be that flexible. It's critical for you to know exactly what you're looking for. A position must correspond to a set of skills and functions that will directly support your office operations. Make sure, for instance, that the ad for the position accurately reflects the qualifications you're seeking.

2. Don't skip the screening process. This stage of the hiring process is critical. Reviewing an applicant's résumé, cover letter, and letters of reference (if you've asked for them) should always be part of your hiring strategy. Indeed, this is the first step toward narrowing your search.

3. Don't exclude key personnel from your strategy. It's tempting to want to control the hiring process — too many opinions can prolong what is already a fairly lengthy ordeal. But a support staff by definition is one that comes in contact with many people in the office. Excluding them from the process could lead to mistakes in hiring. Ask for input. What kind of support do people need? How much time does it take to complete certain tasks? What is the working environment in this group? And don't be afraid to ask your colleagues if they'd like to meet your top candidates.

4. Don't get personal. Avoid asking personal questions during any interview, on the phone or face-to-face. Having a set of pre-established questions will help you stay away from personal issues. Focus on your "script" so that you can protect yourself and your company from any accusations a candidate might make regarding your employment practices.

5. Don't hire more than you need. This may seem fairly obvious, but if you're in a crunch and the office is under stress, you may end up hiring more people than are need-

10

THINGS TO AVOID WHEN HIRING SUPPORT STAFF



Anyone can look good on paper. It's when you start checking around for references that certain red flags begin to appear.

ed. Remember, it's much easier to add more staff later on than it is to let people go. And coming up with projects for people with little to do can become a job in and of itself.

6. Don't let enthusiasm for a job replace specific qualifications.

An applicant who's enthusiastic is better than one who exhibits little interest in the available position. But a person's zeal for a job shouldn't take the place of the solid skills you're looking for. If you need someone who's already proficient in a certain software application and you really don't have time to train, don't hire someone who you merely think will pick up the skills needed to get the job done.

7. Don't ignore your instincts.

Anyone can look good on paper. It's when you start checking around for references that certain red flags begin to appear. But one of the best indicators is your gut. If you sense that an applicant isn't right, regardless of his or her résumé, try to listen to your instincts. If you don't, you and the people you're supporting in the company could pay a hefty price.

8. Don't hesitate to test when necessary.

If applicants have the computer skills you need, consider asking them to perform certain functions that will demonstrate their proficiency. If you have a network administrator or someone who specifically manages your computer system, have that person meet your top candidates. This is another good way to weed out unqualified applicants.

9. Don't forget to give people a reason to want to stay.

Hiring a good support team loses meaning if you can't find a way to keep them. Neglecting to assemble an attractive benefits package could turn good people away before or after they're hired. Before you begin the hiring process, figure out what kind of benefits you're going to offer. A 401(k) plan? Medical coverage? Vacation? And be prepared to field questions about benefits you haven't thought about.

10. Don't make an offer until you're ready.

The work may be piling up and your colleagues down the hall may be pressuring you to "get help now!" But your job is to bring in the best people you can ... when you're ready. If you rush through the process, you risk making costly and time-consuming mistakes.

Hiring administrative support staff takes patience, foresight, and careful planning.

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BUSINESS TELEPHONE ETIQUETTE TIPS PART I

Telephone, as well as walk-in reception, is one of the most critical areas of any office. It forms the basis of initial and long lasting impressions of the office by students and parents. It is also an integral part of maintaining and improving our intra-office communication. These suggestions are offered as a way to maintain and improve your telephone skills.

Telephone Impressions

How do you "look" (sound) to the customer? Are you able to convey your thoughts accurately in order to achieve our objective?

1. How to project a sincere quality over the phone:

- >> Use natural vocabulary and tone of voice.
- >> Keep voice clear, inflection up and tone bright.
- >> Avoid extravagant claims, obvious exaggerations, etc.
- >> Relate what you are saying to the caller's needs and point of view.

2. How to project a friendly quality:

- >> Use tone and manner that are warm and cordial. Smile, identify yourself, as well as the caller, with warmth and interest.
- >> Do not be formal or inflexible.
- >> Do not rush. Pace yourself to what the caller says.
- >> Be attentive. Respond to what the caller says.
- >> Be courteous.

3. How to show that you are responsive in a phone situation:

- >> Answer the caller's questions.
- >> Get your facts straight by checking with the caller. Ask questions.
- >> Do not sound as if you are reading something or saying it from notes.
- >> Always listen to what you are saying and what it means, especially to the caller.
- >> Do not speed or rush over points familiar to you, but unfamiliar to the caller.
- >> Avoid soft, low pitch speech.

4. What are some ways to keep from sounding mechanical?

- >> Guard against a tired tone of voice, giving the impression of someone bored with doing the same job again and again.



- >> Vary your phrasing from call to call.
- >> Practice saying the same thing in different ways. Let your delivery develop, as much as possible, out of the response from the caller.

5. Mechanical skills of a professional:

- >> Answer the phone before or during the second ring.
- >> Hold the mouthpiece about an inch from your lips.
- >> Never slam the receiver down.
- >> Let the caller hang up first.

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How to Handle an Angry Caller

Sooner or later, everyone who regularly uses a business telephone has to deal with an angry caller. The way you handle this situation is important both to you and the office.

1. Remember that your instinctive reaction to someone who starts to "chew you out" is to get pretty huffy yourself. That is the worst thing you can do.
2. Listen carefully and do not interrupt. Do not argue or contradict. Agree if you can without misleading. Let them know you understand the cause of anger and perhaps even feel the anger is justified.
3. If you or the office is at fault, admit it but do not dwell on it. Nothing will lower an angry caller's temperature faster than honest acknowledgment of an error.
4. Do everything you can to correct the trouble that produced



the storm. If immediate action is impossible, indicate that the matter will be looked into promptly and followed with a reply. Thank the caller for bringing it to your attention.

A calm, reasonable approach to an angry caller can do the following:

- a. Prevent the situation from worsening.
- b. Solve the problem with a minimum of delay.
- c. Help to avoid undue stress and resentment from both parties.
- d. Create a positive image for you and our office as capable, helpful, pleasant and resourceful.

SURVEY: SHOE BUYING HABITS OF AMERICAN WOMEN

BY BELINDA GOLDSMITH

American women have come out of the closet with a secret – most own about 19 pairs of shoes and some have hidden purchases from their partners.

A poll of 1,057 women by the Consumer Reports National Research Center for shopping magazine ShopSmart found U.S. women on average own 19 pairs of shoes although they only wear four pairs regularly while 15% have over 30 pairs.

The survey also found women would risk injury to squeeze into new slingbacks or stilettos, with 43% of women saying they had been at least moderately injured by shoes and 8% reporting serious injuries like sprains or breaks.

The telephone survey found women on average bought four pairs of shoes a year – with 13% admit-

ting to hiding a purchase from their partner.

6 out of 10 women regret at least one shoe purchase and on average women have worn a quarter of their shoes only once.

Sales of shoes has increased in recent years with figures from retail tracker NPD Group showing U.S. shoe sales rose 9% in 2006 to nearly \$42 billion or 1.4 billion pairs. Figures for 2007 were not available.

But unlike clothing, which is the most often purchased item online by women, Internet shoe shopping has not yet caught on with only 14% of women buying shoes online. Seven out of 10 women, or 74%, said they liked to try shoes on before buying them. Trying on shoes in a store is fun as you don't have to strip off in front of a brightly lit mirror, they say.

YOUR OPINION COUNTS!

As a service to our worldwide audience, Focus on Shoes regularly conducts surveys to determine satisfaction with the various footwear, apparel and accessories trade shows and to rank our readers' favorites. Being an independent media outlet not affiliated with any trade show, we believe that peoples' opinion must be heard, it adds up to the value of our services as well as serves the needs of the industry.

As always, in the closing issue of the year (November) we will be announcing and reviewing the TOP 10 TRADE SHOWS of 2008. For that purpose, we will be conducting the survey throughout the year, offering to rate performance of various shows. Events collected the maximum score will make it to the final list.

If you have attended any of the shows listed below and would like to submit your opinion, please do so according to these rules:

- Rate the shows you have attended on the scale of 1 through 10, where 1 is awful and 10 is awesome;
- You must identify yourself (see opposite side);
- Your opinion must be fair and objective;
- You must be an independent observer, not employed by or not affiliated with any trade show.
- Please rate only those events that you have attended within the last 6 months.

Upon completion, please send this form to FOS.

Your personal information will not be disclosed, nor shared with anybody.
Thank you!

Show	Organization, Planning, Promotion	Attendance, Traffic	Convenience	Services offered at the show	Cost of attending/exhibiting	Value for your business
ASR - Action Sport Retailer						
AMERICASMART ALPHA						
Atlanta Shoe Show						
Bread And Butter Barcelona						
Chicago Shoe Expo						
Couromoda						
Denver Apparel & Accessory Market						
Expo Riva Shuh						
FAME						
Florida Fashion Show						
GDS/GLS						
Kids Shoe Show						
KIDShow						
MAGIC						
MICAM						
Michigan Shoe Market						
MIDEC						
MIPEL						
Moda Manhattan						
Northwest Shoe Travelers						
Outdoor Retailer						
Pitti Immagine Uomo						
Pool Trade Show						
Premiere Classe						
Project						
SAPICA						
SMOTA						
Sole Commerce						
Southwest Shoe Expo						
The Collective						
The Metropolitan New York Shoe Market						
The New York Shoe Expo (FFANY)						
Touch!, neoZone and cloudnine						
Transit						
WSA- World Shoe Association						
WWIN - Women's Wear In Nevada						





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If you wish to receive FOS regularly by subscription, filling out MARKETING SURVEY portion of this form is optional.

SUBSCRIPTION

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Advice for a FREE SUBSCRIPTION: Ask our advertisers or your vendors to pay for your subscription! If your business is important to them, they may agree to pay for your subscription from their marketing funds.

Business Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Name: _____ E-Mail: _____

MARKETING SURVEY

Please fill out this form completely, answering all questions. Incomplete or inaccurate entries will not be considered.

I certify that I am: Retailer _____ (signature)/ Not a Retailer

If retailer, please tell about your store:

Specialty: Men Women Children • Age Group: Infants And Kids Teens 20-30 30-45 45+

Retail Price Point: Discount Budget (\$20-40) Moderate (\$40-70) Upper Moderate (\$70-120) Lower High End (\$120-\$200)

High End(\$200-\$400) Exclusive (\$400+)

Store Type: Independent Boutique Dept. Store Chain Store 1-5 Locations Chain Store 5+ Locations

Merchandise: Shoes Only Apparel Only Accessories Only All

Type: Dress Casual Athletic Comfort/Slippers Special Occasions Western Dance Medical Shoecare/ Footcare Urban

Ethic Beach Gothic/Alternative/Other _____

Best Selling Brands _____

Notes About Your Store _____

Your Primary Business Sources (describe):

Trade Magazines _____

Trade Shows _____

Consumer Magazines _____

Internet Catalogs Just Looking

How Do You Find New Merchandise? At Trade Shows Responding To Ads Sellers Contact You

At Trade Show You: Know Exactly What You Need And Who Sells It Know Exactly What You Need But Don't Know Who Sells It

How Frequently Do You Purchase Merchandise For Your Store? At Trade Shows Every Month Every 3 Months Every 6 Months

Your Average Purchase Is: Less Than \$1,000 \$1-5K \$5-10K \$10K+

Your Priorities Are (Please RATE, 1 is most important): Price Fashion Brand Quality Other _____

RETAILER: Please name your 3 biggest headaches to which you want to find a solution: 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

In this issue of FOS, what you liked/disliked the most _____

What would you like to see in future issues? _____

Any suggestions / comments to help FOS become more helpful to your business? _____



10 WAYS TO BE A BETTER STORE MANAGER

BY DOUG FLEENER

Here are 10 things you can do today (or tomorrow) to be a better store manager:

1. Take one of your employees out for a cup of coffee and spend some quality one-on-one time. Be sure and ask what you can do to improve the store and make it a more enjoyable place to work. Also ask what you can do to help them develop.

2. Watch and listen to your staff interact with customers, and then give them feedback. First tell them three things they did well. Then tell them three things they could have done better. Always end a feedback session expressing your confidence in them and your appreciation for their efforts.

3. Create a fun one-day contest that involves the whole staff. Here's one that is fun to do and fun to watch. First, pick an area of focus. It could be selling products over a certain price point. Or it could be selling add-ons or complete solutions. One of my favorites is exhibiting a desired behavior. Purchase a bouquet of flowers and put it into a container in the backroom or on the back counter. Then with either plastic bottles or cups create a vase for each employee working that day. Every time an employee achieves the goal you've set they move a flower from the bouquet into their vase. At the end of the day the employee with the most flowers in their vase wins. The winner gets to take the flowers home as well as something like a gift certificate to a local restaurant.

Learn how to create great winning contest with our white paper, *Design and Execute an Engaging Contest*.

4. Always, always, always, thank your employees for their contribution and efforts when they're leaving for the day. Chase them out the door to tell them if you have to. Of course, be sincere.

5. Spend 15 minutes working on your own development. Whether by it's reading a book, a magazine, or a newspaper, you must drive your own development. To develop as a leader we must always be expanding our own base of knowledge.

6. Straighten up your office. You can't expect your employees to have spotless work spaces if you don't.

7. Be the first one to clean this morning or at closing. It's



amazing how much your staff respects you when you join in and clean. I know you have a lot of other things to do but working side by side with your staff is invaluable.

8. One of the biggest mistakes store managers can make is to spend hours working in the office and then come out on to the floor and try to take charge. The best thing you can do when you come onto the floor is to ask the staff how you can help. So often I see a manager come out from the office, see a customer in the store and ask an employee if they've been helped. You know the employee is dying to tell the manager "If you'd been on the floor you'd know that we've approached him twice." Come out to help, not take charge.

9. Engage a customer and be the reference standard. Successful managers know that there is no such thing as "do as I say and not as I do". If the reference is to welcome every customer then the manager should be out front welcoming every customer. Leaders always go first.



10. Repeat the first nine things every day!

Doug Fleener is a veteran retailer with over 25 years of hands-on retail experience with world-class retailers including Bose Corporation as well as owned his own retail store. Fleener is now president of Dynamic Experiences Group, a Lexington, MA-based retail consulting firm that works with retailers to improve their customer experience and profitability. He is also a speaker and author of the book, *The Profitable Retailer: 56 Surprisingly Simple and Effective Lessons to Boost Your Sales and Profits*. Learn more at www.dynamicexperiencesgroup.com

Naughty Monkey



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hotd

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ANTIK DENIM



Antik = America
In Jeans We Trust

Trade Shows 2008 Calendar

Chicago Shoe Expo
March 12th - 13th 2008
Embassy Suites Hotel

TRANSIT the LA Shoe Show
March 15th - 17th 2008
California Mart Exhibit Center, LA

Metropolitan NY Shoe Market
March 17th - 18th 2008
NJ Convention & Exposition Center

FFANY
June 3rd - 5th 2008
1370 Avenue Of The Americas
Suite 1101

Chicago Shoe Expo
June 26th - 27th 2008
Embassy Suites Hotel

SMOTA
June 29th - July 1st 2008
Miami Beach Convention Center

WSA
July 28th - 30th 2008
Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas



1-800-367-9220



XOXO

FOOTWEAR