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Designs & Displays



Checkout Charm

The cash wrap plays an indispensable role in setting your store apart from your competitors. Get it to work hard for you.

BY CHARLOTTE BARNARD

Like every aspect of visual merchandising, your cash wrap helps establish your brand. “It can be what customers remember most,” says Linda Cahan, an Oregon retail design consultant and creator of *Visual Merchandising 101: The Basics of Excellent Presentation*. “It’s one of the first places they see when they walk in, and one of the last when they leave. As the place where you take customers’ money, it’s a natural focal point.” Look at it from the perspective of both customer and employee to evaluate how attractive and helpful it is. It’s an aspect of the retail environment you can control without great expense, as Pointe Dance Boutique discovered.

Housed in a strip mall in Midlothian, VA, a suburb of Richmond, Pointe Dance Boutique serves children, teens and adults in a range of genres that includes ballet, jazz, tap, Irish step and hip hop. Co-owners Marti Morgan and Catherine Woodson, who worked together for 15 years in corporate jobs, opened the store in January 2007.

When the two friends found the location, it was an empty retail space. They knew they wanted a boutique atmosphere and sought a sleek and upscale cash wrap with an under-counter organization system tailored to their work needs. That included a place for the computer, shelves for tissue, ribbons and bags, catalogs and a few tools. They decided to locate it in the back next to the dressing room, about 40 feet from the front door. This would allow them to keep an eye on the entire store and assist a client as she tried on something. And it would help to move traffic. “Customers have to walk the length of the store to get to the cash wrap,” says Woodson. Once the two had decided on a cash wrap location, everything fell into place, and they began to design it.

AN ORGANIZED WORK STATION

The cash wrap that they ended up with turned out to be a bar from *Builder* magazine circa 1970. Morgan’s father had constructed one for his own home, and she admired its simple lines and utility, so the women decided to copy it.

Handy family members helped them tweak the under-counter layout. The women drew up a list of items they wanted to stow below. There are niches for everything from vendor catalogs to a holding area for bagged purchases. A couple of small hooks handle items on-hold or ready to be wrapped up. “As customers select merchandise, we will relieve them of it and bring it back here,” says Woodson.

The structure was built from plywood two-by-fours that were covered with painted beadboard and then topped with a single piece of Silestone, a solid-surfacing material purchased from Lowe’s and customized to fit. “The countertop, at \$1,200, was the most expensive part,” says Morgan.

Knowing that the cash wrap would be in use throughout the day, Woodson and Morgan planned for multiple functions. On the right is the POS system. The rest of the counter is devoted to attractively arranged impulse-purchase displays.

The three-sided configuration lets customers



Shelves and vertical dividers help to maintain order.

Photos courtesy of Pointe Dance Boutique

comfortably look over the point-of-purchase merchandise as they line up during busy times. “People tend to come back here to hang out and talk,” says Morgan. “It really is a focal point of the store.” The partners keep a couple of bar stools there, too, for moments when they are not on their feet.


LOGO CENTRAL

The store’s logo hangs proudly on the wall above the cash wrap. Instantly visible from the front door, it helps establish the desk as the focal point and reinforces the store brand. “We worked with a graphic designer to create our logo because we wanted to make sure people recognized it,” says Woodson. It’s on all visuals for the store, including the website, and the recognition factor is reinforced every time someone stands at the cash wrap.

Having worked with the cash wrap for four and a half years, they remain satisfied with their choice. If they had to do anything differently, they confess



they would not have installed lighting overhead. Says Morgan, “The lights get hot, and they are unnecessary.” However, they like the small lamp on the counter, which casts a cozy glow.

If your cash desk communicates order, if it’s inviting with enticing displays, if it’s easy to see and easy to work at, your customers will enter and leave with a positive impression of your business and be motivated to return again and again. 

AskLeslie

POP Pointers

Your customers need to stop at the cash wrap every time they buy something. That makes it the perfect location for displaying products that trigger impulse purchases. People waiting in line will also appreciate having fun, pretty things to look at. Try these three tactics for effective point-of-purchase displays. Each helps make small merchandise appear attractive, inviting and accessible, while also letting you keep an eye on it.

1. Jewelry and personal accessories are big sellers and easy add-ons for most stores, so you want to show them at their best. Use high-quality display fixtures to enhance the perceived value of your smallest items (www.afldisplay.com).

2. Multilevel displays maximize precious counter space. Consider something as simple as glass building blocks set on end, or two blocks on end topped with a clear acrylic shelf cut to size to create a miniature glass table on the cash wrap counter. Glass blocks appear to float, making your product the focal point.

As an alternative, shop IKEA or The Home Depot to find rectangular frosted glass table lamps that build a beautiful, lit floating shelf or miniature table when topped with a sheet of glass. The lamps house a chandelier bulb, so they don’t overheat. If you are concerned, you can add clear furniture tabs to the rim between the lamp and glass top to leave room for air to circulate.

3. Little details make a difference, so pay close attention to them. Avoid a jumble of items on the counter—especially small items like hair



This clear acrylic shelf unit at Jazz Rags, The Woodlands, TX, helps many small pieces to stand out on a counter.

accessories, lip balm and cosmetics. Constantly monitor the cash wrap counter to keep the look clean and pulled-together. Use a variety of shallow glass vases with wide openings, each holding a different product. The collection will be orderly and elegant and, again, it will enhance the perceived value of the merchandise. Using glass instead of cardboard boxes, or even wicker baskets, will speak volumes for your product and your store image.



Have a question for Leslie?

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