

Design Lines.

A line has been drawn, and you may not be aware of it. It's the line between someone stopping in your business or driving/walking/biking right on by. It's the line between someone grabbing a larger margin item, or walking right on by. It's the line between people spending enough time in your business that they find other products or services, and people buzzing out the door ASAP. In essence, it's the line between profitability and loss. On one side of the line is good design, on the other side is what we push against. Check these area's to see what you can do to utilize some good design techniques to increase your sales.



Windows- Can you see in? What do your windows say about you? Are they clean, well organized and representative of the image you want to convey? If someone was not familiar with your company, and they walked by your window, would they instantly know what you do? Are your windows lit? Do you have a holiday plan for your windows? I am a big advocate of marketing and utilizing our local advertisers to get the word out about your business, BUT we do have a hierarchy when it comes to advertising. Your store front IS A FORM OF ADVERTISING that is ALWAYS with you. Window's covered in stuff, prevent people from seeing into your store. Windows that aren't lit (even at night after store hours) are an advertising opportunity lost. Even if you don't retail products, your windows give you the opportunity to share what YOU DO or what differentiates your business. You wouldn't buy a billboard ad and leave it blank, or worse yet, just slop some paint up and call it good... Take advantage of a constant resource in your store front. Need ideas, that is what we are here for! Contact Emporia Main Street and we can give you some very inexpensive (sometimes free) ways to improve your windows.

7 Seconds- You have seven seconds to make an impression on a customer. That's it. It's not a lot of time. What impression do you WANT to make? When you look at your target market, what are their expectations? Are their expectations reinforced with their experiences gained in that first seven seconds from the time they walk by your building front to their entrance into your business? It doesn't matter if people are driving into your parking lot or walking by on the sidewalk, "seven seconds" is the great equalizer that all businesses have to contend with. What are your customers seeing, hearing, smelling (in some cases tasting) or feeling within seven seconds? Do your internal colors match the feeling you want to convey? Is the area clean and inviting? Are your displays attractive? Do you have clear sight lines that allow people to greet customers? Gaining an advantage in the first seven seconds can make a huge difference in sales. You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

The Dominant Wall- I mentioned this last week, but it could stand some repetition... Walk into your front door. Count to yourself "one thousand one, one thousand two", now look to your right (you might be naturally doing that anyway). Your identified sight line is your dominant display, and the wall behind it is your dominant wall. Do you have a message that you want to convey? Higher margin products that you want to move? A product category that you want to saturate? People are mostly right handed and they have a tendency to look to their right when moving into an area. When you realize this tendency exists, you can easily change your merchandising to take advantage of peoples natural tendencies.

The constant display- A clean, organized business is the preference of most people. They want things arranged logically, utilizing displays that meet their expectations. What are your customer's buying? Where are those items located in proximity to one another? Is your current set up ideal from the customer's perspective? A little attention paid to your internal data can make a big difference in sales. Restocking, changing displays, reorders and general cleaning are important parts of your 4th quarter floor plan.

Is your necessary information easy and accurate? First "necessary information" are things like menus, store policies, advertising special signs and other information that customers access. Nothing is more frustrating than finding an item on a menu only to find out "we don't carry that anymore", or not knowing about a special until after a sale is made. Yes, some of this comes down to customer service training, but accurate information means occasionally taking an inventory of your signs and information to make sure everything is accurate, attractive, professional and timely.

What are your holiday plans? The end of the calendar year is a busy time for a lot of businesses, both retail and non-retail. What are your plans to utilize design in order to maximize your customer's experience and your sales? What special thing (or things) are you going to do to set yourself apart? Customers have a lot of business choices; what can you do that goes above and beyond to create a wow factor?

It's easy to get complacent about design, because we see our businesses every day. Over time, that familiarity can lead to stagnation. Projects get pushed to the side and then forgotten. If you need a fresh set of eyes or even some physical hands on help, Main Street can assist you. If you take the time to focus on design, I'm sure you'll see that small steps lead to BIG impacts.

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