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RETAIL SIGNAGE

How important is it to your store, and how can you implement best practices in its applications?



A recent survey commissioned by a **Fortune 500 company** in conjunction with Ketchum Global Research & Analytics revealed that:

- Almost eight of 10 consumers said they had entered a store or business they had never visited before based simply on its signs
- Nearly 75 percent indicated that they informed others about a business just because of its signage
- About 70 percent of shoppers believe that a store's signage reflects the quality of its products or services
- Approximately seven of 10 consumers said they had purchased a product or service because a sign caught their eye

Given the importance of signage—your silent sales force, according to some—you'll want to consider these guidelines when employing retail signs:

- **Outdoor Signage:** Make sure it's clean, well maintained and readily visible to motorists and pedestrians. Communicate messages on sales, specials or new inventory that create positive expectations for entering—but remove time-sensitive messages once an event has passed. Also examine it regularly for burned out lighting, departed tenants, overgrown shrubbery or other factors that could detract from its appearance, accuracy or visibility.
- **Departmental Signs:** If your store is a large one with multiple product lines or service centers, hanging big departmental signs with good contrast high above the sales floor allows your customers to see where their desired items are at a glance. Of course, you'll also want to be sure to clearly identify the location of your checkout registers!
- **Directional Signs:** Adhere to Americans with Disabilities Act regulations by employing ADA-compliant signs for identifying restrooms, elevators, stairwells and exits. Wayfinding signage is also an opportunity to brand as well as inform. Smart retailers incorporate their logos, corporate colors and typefaces into custom, brand-building executions as opposed to generic, off-the-shelf solutions.
- **Tags:** They may be small but they're signs, too. Use big, bold tags so that shoppers can easily see the descriptions, prices and sizes of your products. If you sell items that come with their own tags such as clothing, don't be reluctant to add your own to make the information clearer and the purchase offer more compelling!

Here are some more specific tips:

- **Readability:** Signage lettering should be large enough to read from the vantage point of your prospects, whether directly in front of your store, across the parking lot or several blocks down the road. Many municipalities, malls and shopping centers have restrictions to which you'll need to adhere, but a good rule of thumb is one inch of lettering height for every 10 feet of viewing distance. *Want your sign to be readable at 30 feet?* You'll need lettering that's three inches tall.

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- **Handwriting:** For many retailers, the money saved on do-it-yourself, handwritten signs is far outweighed by the negative impression they make. Often, the amateurish look is compounded by illegible lettering and misspelled words. *One exception to handwritten signage?* Whiteboards or chalkboards that display the day's specials can lend a personal touch and degree of immediacy to your messages. Just be sure the worker with the best handwriting is given the lettering task, and proofread your signboards carefully to prevent errors!
- **Negative Messages:** Go easy on any warning signs you may be tempted to post. Too many signs stating, "Shoplifters will be prosecuted!" can be off-putting to your customers. Don't give them the notion that they are a source of problems.



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