

Part 1: 1-1 Windows-on-the-Aisle

The first one-third of the department is the primary selling area of the store. As the entrance to the store must be exciting and inviting to the target consumer, the window area of the store front, if applicable, or the aisle area of the department must make a statement or entice the customer to come into the department. This area is denoted as *windows-on-the-aisle* to correspond to previous times in retail when stores on main streets in all cities across the U.S. had beautiful window displays. These illustrative works of art or theatrical and dramatic displays were created in order to attract the attention of the target consumer and to acquaint the customer with the merchandise mix, brands, and product classifications available in the store!

Windows-on-the-Aisle is the *number one area* in the department, since it is the prime selling area. As much as 50 % of the department's sales volume may be realized in this area. It should make one strong fashion statement and/or present only one major trend and color story. *Color* is the *number one element* that the consumer sees before any other characteristic of the store or merchandise. In fact, color is the number one selling attribute of any merchandise. Thus, in this area, the color scheme (i.e., color story) of the merchandise presentation must be established.

With regard to merchandise presentation and display, the color scheme is based on the fashion trends and/or the colorways of the available merchandise to be presented in the store. Usually, the visual merchandiser selects at least two (2) colors and a neutral in order to assure that the merchandise presentation and displays "pop" and add excitement to the store or department environment. The visual merchandiser implements and maintains this merchandise color scheme throughout the store or department, beginning at windows-on-the-aisle and ending with the vista walls.

For example, if the spring fashion color palette is based on the nautical theme of red, blue, and white, the windows-on-the-aisle presentation and displays might emphasize red and blue with a touch of white. The core or "Bread-and-Butter" section might be merchandised in blue and white and accented with a touch of red, while the vista walls might feature an updated version of the theme in navy, white and coral or marine blue, gold and white.

If the store or department is narrow at the front, one strong statement must be made in the presentation at the windows-on-the-aisle. The newest arrivals, seasonal merchandise, or fashion merchandise depicting the latest trend emphasis must be presented to showcase the major classifications of merchandise housed in the store or department. Ideal fixtures for merchandising in this area are T-Stands and 2-Way fixtures. With the 2-Way, the merchandiser presents different versions and/or combinations of the same product classification or shows different ways to wear the total look.

In some specialty stores where the signature or feature tables are utilized on the windows-on-the-aisle, the visual merchandiser, as previously stated, may present folded products. Special product designs and outstanding color schemes are effective on this fixture. Also, if the item, such as a cotton tee shirt, is designed with graphics, the product can be folded to enhance the graphic presentation in order to spark customer interest. Displayers are used on the table in order to display special items that create impulse or multiple sales.

If 3-Way and 4-Way fixtures are used by the mass merchant at the windows-on-the-aisle, the most recent arrivals, coordinated groupings, related separates or special promotions should be featured to create interest and add-on sales. At the end of each arm on the fixture, a different version of the

product classifications can be displayed with the presentation of the total look. This technique encourages the customer to try more pieces of the coordinated grouping or related separates and hopefully creates additional sales.

Some specific guidelines for arranging fixtures and merchandising product on the windows-on-the-aisle are as follows:

- All fixtures should be low in height and arranged in order to create a logical traffic path for the consumer.
- All fixtures should face outward towards the aisle and create traffic paths that entice the consumer to come into the department.
- Merchandise should be in limited amounts on the fixtures, with one hanger per hook or knob on the T-Stands and 2-Ways; never overcrowd the fixture.
- The same type of hanger should be utilized for hanging all items on one particular fixture.
- Always present a total look with all products or ensembles accessorized in order to create multiple sales.
- Merchandise should be arranged according to color, classification, fabrications and silhouette type.
- Merchandise should make one strong statement and/or present one major trend and color story.

Further, there are specific guidelines with regard to color, product classification, and specific silhouettes for merchandising in any of the three areas of the 3 x 3 Merchandise Presentation. Merchandise presentation by color:

- begins with product classifications merchandised by *color* from *light to dark tints and shades* of a color and from *neutral to warm to cool colors*
- proceeds to product classifications organized or arranged from *left to right* on a fixture or hanging bar
- culminates with sizing within each color and classification from *small to large* sizes
- features product classifications separated based on silhouette types, fabrications, sleeve and hem lengths and end use or occasion of wearing.

Likewise, there are cardinal rules for displaying merchandise that apply to all displays in the three sections of the merchandise presentation. They are as follows:

- for easy selection, locate displays adjacent to the merchandise classifications being presented or displayed
- for a positive presentation, never display one leftover item of a product classification and always insure that there is back-up merchandise for product classifications featured in the display
- for assurance of a multiple sale and creation of an aesthetic presentation, never mix different sizes of apparel in a display; usually smaller sizes of an item make for a better presentation.