

Visuals Sell

By Nanette Miner

Eighty-percent of Americans are visually oriented. What does that mean exactly? It means that most of us will react more strongly to an appeal we can see rather than an offer that is just told to us.

Take tooth whiteners as an example. We could read a pamphlet about them, or be told about them by a salesperson, but unless that factual information is accompanied by a visual of someone showing us their sparkling teeth, and perhaps even demonstrating how easy the product is to use, we probably will not be exciting enough to try the product.

When you go to a tradeshow you'll notice that the booths that do the most business have much more visual appeal than the booths that just have their merchandise displayed. The same concept applies to your business and the ways in which you can make it appealing to customers.

There's no doubt about it, we are in a visual business. Our customers come to the salon to achieve a difference in their visual appearance. Knowing this, think about what types of visuals can be used to promote your business to new and existing customers.

What can be used for visual appeal?

The holidays are obvious easy-marks for appropriate visuals – glass balls, snowmen, hearts, bunnies, daffodils, red, white and blue decorations, cornucopia, etc. – you know exactly what holidays I am referring to when I list items like these. This list covers at least five or six easy visual opportunities for your marketing efforts.

Some not-so-obvious visual opportunities are:

Celebrating summer using shells, brightly colored drinking glasses, and perhaps having lemonade available at a small in-store stand.

Creating a cruise theme in the winter season using fake palm trees, paper mache smokestacks, canvas deck chairs, and having the staff wear Hawaiian print smocks.

Celebrating the bridal season by decorating your salon with paper wedding bells, putting a gowned mannequin in the front window and perhaps even mailing elegant invitations to your clients announcing a special event.

Videos, photos, and demonstrations are also visually appealing. You don't have to have a theme or event in mind to take advantage of visual appeal. If you've just purchased a new video of the latest styles, don't keep it in the backroom for just the staff – send it out front where customers can be intrigued and inspired as well. You can purchase headshot posters to decorate your walls, or better yet, take your own photos and blow them up for the walls. Be sure to attribute the

style to the stylist that created it. This will not only market the salon as being cutting edge, but it will help to market the stylist and her abilities as well.

You can also make up your own themes or events. How about a 50's roll-back that includes the staff wearing poodle skirts or white t-shirts and leather jackets? Consider celebrating the Oscars by having fishbowls for each of the major categories (best actor/actress, best film, etc.) and asking your clients to vote for who they think the winner will be by dropping slips of paper or raffle tickets into the bowl. The day after the Oscars are announced you *too* can announce the winners from your salon by choosing one lucky customer from each bowl.

How can visuals be used?

Having appropriate visuals is only half the battle. *Using* them in a way that makes the customer take notice and become intrigued is the more important concept.

Plastic drinking glasses can be used to hold up glass shelves displaying product. The color of the glasses can change with the season or you can use clear glasses and put colored marbles or sand inside them.

To show the way to the pedicure area you might apply bare-feet decals to the floor of the salon.

No matter what the occasion or the season, you can't beat the appeal of balloons. They are especially effective in attracting attention outside of your salon.

Hang things from the ceiling or drape colored scarves over the mirror at each station. One salon owner fastened a round bathroom towel holder to the middle of his salon ceiling and then crisscrossed brightly colored taffeta fabric from each corner of the salon, through the ring in the center of the ceiling. It was a striking visual and also helped to fill the empty space in the salon caused by the high ceilings.

How can I become visually inspired?

It's difficult to come up with inspiration sometimes. I find my creativity is sparked when I visit the toy store, the dollar store, the crafts store or a party store. Each of these stores has colorful, themed, decorative and everyday items that you can apply in a new way to keep your salon visually intriguing month after month.

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