

# ***Curb Appeal: How to Get Customers Through Your Front Door***

by Stephanie Bond

In the real estate industry, it's known as 'curb appeal'—how pleasing does the property look before you walk inside? And more important, what about it makes you *want* to walk inside? No matter what type of store you have—a mall location, a free-standing store, or a shopping center site—you can do many things to increase the curb appeal of your storefront. Keeping in mind that your chain/mall/shopping center might have standards or ordinances that you must adhere to, see how many of the following ideas you can adapt to get customers through your front door.

- If you have a parking lot, start there—make sure it's clear of debris and is in good repair. Is it possible to reserve the spots that are closest to your store for your customers?
- Have you been putting off having your windows professionally lettered or updated? Call a graphic artist today for a consulting session. Too expensive? Maybe you can barter merchandise you get at a discount in return for the work. Or you might band together with neighboring storeowners for a group discount.
- Choose lettering for your windows/door that is simple and easy to read. Upper and lower case letters are easier to read than all caps. Block letters are easier to read than script. Skip gothic fonts altogether. Black/yellow/white is the color combination that can be seen from the greatest distance.
- The eye goes to color. If your storefront is tiny or in an obscure location, 'enlarge' your visual presence by painting the exterior and/or roof in an eye-catching color combo.
- If you can't change the exterior color, consider covering your windows from the inside with bright-colored wrapping paper (solid colors work best) for a big visual impact. You'll still have the white reverse side to use as a backdrop for posters, etc. on the inside.
- Pictures/objects speak louder than words. Do you have a logo to go with your store name—a book, or maybe the silhouette of a person reading? Talk to a local vocational school about erecting a large wooden or metal version of your logo on your store roof.
- Make sure your windows are sparkling clean, and change your exhibits often so the materials don't yellow. Avoid cluttering the window displays—concentrate on a few items you're really trying to push.

**(continued)**

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- To ensure people know about your store in time to slow down and pull in, erect professional-looking signs a mile, half-mile, etc., from your location in either direction.
- If you're in a mall or shopping center, swap in-store advertising with other retailers such as coffee shops or stationery stores to increase foot traffic.
- Take a look at your door—does it need to be painted, or the hardware replaced? Is it so heavy that it's awkward to open?
- Speaking of open—is it feasible to leave your doors open to walking traffic? Open doors are much more inviting, especially if great music or aromas are floating outside.
- A welcome mat serves double-duty as a greeting and helping to keep your floors clean. Try a fun one, like a smiley face.
- Use balloons, streamers, strands of lights, anything to attract a customer's eye and convince them they're missing out on something if they don't come inside.
- Give away a freebie just for coming in the door such as a piece of candy, a cup of hot chocolate, a card-sized calendar, or a refrigerator magnet.
- If you have a mall or shopping center location, consider positioning a greeter out front to pass out fliers and/or invite customers to come inside. Even at minimum wage, the person is bound to generate more business than they'll cost. For a fresh twist, have them dress up like a famous literary figure.
- Use sidewalk sales to stop browsers, but keep the tables neat!
- Use fabric to dress up your windows or your door—it makes a store seem more 'homey,' more comfortable.
- Offer a 'frequent visitor' program for customers to earn free merchandise or discounts just for coming in to get a card stamped or punched. ~\$Bond