

# *Find the Hidden Display Space in Your Store*

by **Stephanie Bond**

As the heavy fall and holiday release schedule approaches, you're probably saying to yourself, "My store is already crammed full of merchandise—where am I going to put everything?" This article is for you, too, if you've ever passed on titles you want to support simply because you don't have the shelf space. Here are a few tips to help you utilize every inch of your store to stimulate sales:

**Clean it up!** First, perform a few housekeeping chores—if you've been putting off returns, tackle them now to free up valuable space in your stock room. Scour the shelves for damaged merchandise and send it out the door, too. Also, get rid of old posters, sagging dumps, curled shelf talkers, and yellowed signs.

**Clear it out!** Pull dated merchandise and mark it down to make room for new stock. To move the most merchandise, offer bundling discounts, such as 'buy two, get one free.' Use a flashing light and big signs to create excitement around your bargain table. Remind customers as they arrive to check out the great deals.

**Take a fresh look.** Walk outside your store, then re-enter with 'new eyes.' Look at every square inch of your store critically—note the traffic pattern you've created for your customers. Where can you add more shelves and tables? Another spinner rack? Can you separate free-standing shelving units to create more endcap space?

**Look down.** Use your expansive and valuable flat floor space to advertise new titles or special purchase programs by using sheets of clear adhesive to laminate posters, book covers, and signs directly onto the floor. Consider putting down neon colored 'footprints' to lead your customers to different areas of the store—pink for romance, yellow for children's, blue for business, et cetera.

**Look up.** Are you utilizing your valuable air space? Consider suspending posters from the ceiling versus hanging on walls. Create mobiles to advertise certain areas of the store (a mobile of romance covers would attract a lot of attention). Hanging wire baskets are an eye-catching way to display titles and take advantage of 'dead' air.

**Build up.** Don't be afraid to create higher shelving units—instead of shelving titles high, however, you might want to save the higher space for other types of merchandise that don't require such close scrutiny, such as lap desks, stuffed animals, et cetera. Or place non-impulse selections, such as reference or travel books, on higher shelves. Be sure to provide sturdy stools for customers to step up and help themselves.

**(continued)**

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**It's what's outside that counts.** Are you taking advantage of sidewalk space to merchandise material? Invest in rolling display carts to make it easy to transport sale merchandise in and out of the store as weather allows.

**How much is that doggie in the window?** Window displays can be the best tool to lure a customer through your door, but do you utilize the inside area of your window shelf to appeal to customers browsing in the front of the store? Setting floor dumps on the edge of the window shelf that faces inside the store is a great use of otherwise dead space. Need to be able to get into the window display? Rolling carts of merchandise will utilize the space yet provide enough mobility to give you access to the window display.

**The human real estate factor.** Do you realize that you and your employees are walking, talking real estate? Carry recommended reads in your apron pockets. Wear buttons advertising new titles. Wear T-shirts featuring book covers.

**Create traffic patterns.** Control your high traffic areas and manage the checkout process by creating paths for your customers with floor stacks, or 'barges' of books. Lining footpaths through the store with stacks of sturdy books or dump displays will not only make the shopping experience more efficient for you and your customers, but also will provides the customers with browsing opportunities while they wait.

**Restrooms, this way.** You spend a lot of your time directing customers to the restrooms or the water fountain. So why not advertise to them once they reach their destination? Dress up dreary bathrooms with posters, book covers, and put excerpts of new titles within reaching distance.

**Corner new display space.** Are you ignoring the corners of your store? Take a cue from kitchen cabinet makers and invest in corner shelving to make the most of this lost space. Spinner racks are great corner display devices, too.

**Consider customer eye level.** Floor dumps will be more effective if they're elevated to eye level. A slow-moving title will sell better at eye level. And don't forget the eye level of your younger customers—arrange your children's titles and related merchandise accordingly.

**Check me out.** Utilize your precious counter space to stimulate impulse sales. Display one or two 'recommended reads' with reviews from your employees at the counter. Don't clutter the

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space with freebies—keep those items behind the counter and drop them in the customer’s bag yourself—this is your best space to sell, sell, sell while the customer has her wallet open! Are you utilizing the front wall of the counter to display merchandise? Consider elevating your checkout counter for even more display space.

Scrutinize your retail footage with a critical eye to unveil hidden display space. Because everyone knows that an unboxed title is an unsold title. ~**SBond**