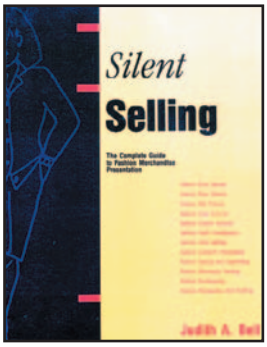
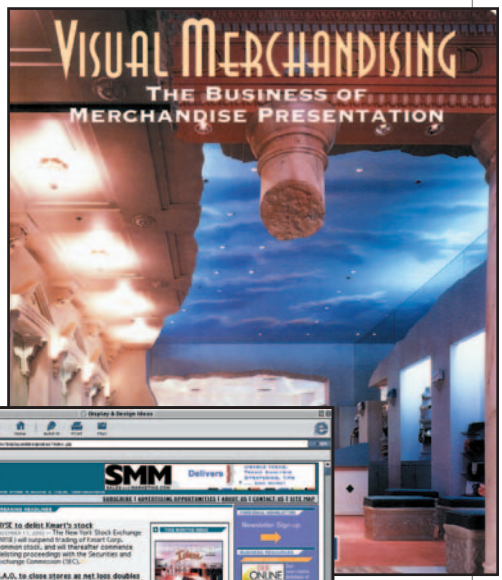
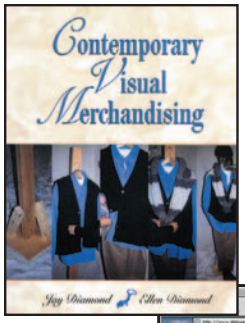
the idea factory







Effective merchandising resources to SPARK your creative juices.

By Sharon Leicham

Have you ever looked around your store and wished you could do something to make it look better? Are you looking for ways to promote that new line of treadmills? Want to know what colors will make your customers feel more comfortable?

All retailers need fresh merchandising and display ideas to keep their stores updated and competitive, but most don't know where to find them. Books or magazines specific to merchandising fitness products unfortunately just don't exist. But that doesn't mean there aren't resources with ideas you can adapt to your special needs.

We've compiled a list of some the best websites, magazines, books and experts that you can reference.

BEST WEBSITES

www.visualstore.com
Visual Merchandising & Store Design (VM&SD) magazine's website features photos of new retail stores (a good way to get ideas) and provides places to find the best in mannequins, fixtures, lighting and props. And, if you're in the market for retail merchandising books, this website has a link to ST Publications, its affiliated bookstore.

www.ddimagazine.com
The best feature of this website, produced by Display & Design Ideas magazine, is its Buyer's Guide listing resources on where to find merchandising materials in 17 different categories ranging from ceilings and fixtures to lighting, signage/graphics and wall coverings. The site also offers a selection of the store review articles that have appeared in the magazine.

www.merchandisingHUB.com
I have created a new website that is a how-to resource for ideas, information and sources specifically targeted at independent specialty retailers. It features down-to-earth and accessible merchandising and display ideas, basic merchandising techniques, window display ideas and archived articles on subjects ranging from "Color Magic" and "Counter Intelligence" to information about men's and women's shopping styles.

www.retailindustry.about.com
Retail Industry is a clearinghouse for websites with information on everything from retail statistics and trends to marketing and display. When you enter the site, you'll see a box on the upper right-hand side that contains a listing called "How to Find Retail Information." That link will take you to an alphabetical listing of Internet information sites.

www.retailernews.com
The Retailer News Online Discussion Board on this site is a great place to get answers to your merchandising questions. Click on "Retailer Forum," submit a question and, when someone responds, you'll be notified. It's also interesting to browse the questions asked by other retailers.

BEST BOOKS

1,001 Ideas to Create Retail Excitement
By Edgar A. Falk (Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ)
If ever there was one book that deserves a place on your bookshelf, this is it. It includes chapters on display and merchandising, marketing, sales techniques and suggestions, in-store promotions, and much more. It's filled with easy-to-implement ideas you can use immediately.

Visual Merchandising: The Business of Merchandise Presentation
By Robert Colborne (Delmar, Albany, NY)
This book covers the basics of visual merchandising including store design, display composition, color, props, mannequins and lighting. It's a reference book you'll want to share with your staff. The format includes lots of photographs, and the text is easy to read.

Contemporary Visual Merchandising
By Jay and Ellen Diamond (Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ)
As the name suggests, this book looks at contemporary merchandising techniques

and presents case studies to educate the reader. It's simple to understand and a great teaching tool.

BEST MAGS

Display & Design Ideas
This tabloid-sized, free magazine gets better with every issue. It's loaded with full-color photos of new stores and display products and is the best place to find sources for merchandising materials. For subscription information, go to www.ddimagazine.com.

VM&SD (Visual Merchandising & Store Design)
VM&SD takes a sophisticated look at retail in the United States. Its store articles are accompanied by colorful photos and its product reviews always give good ideas even though it tends to focus on high-end stores. Regardless, ideas are everywhere and a subscription to this magazine will prove a good resource. To inquire about the magazine and subscriptions, go to www.visualstore.com.

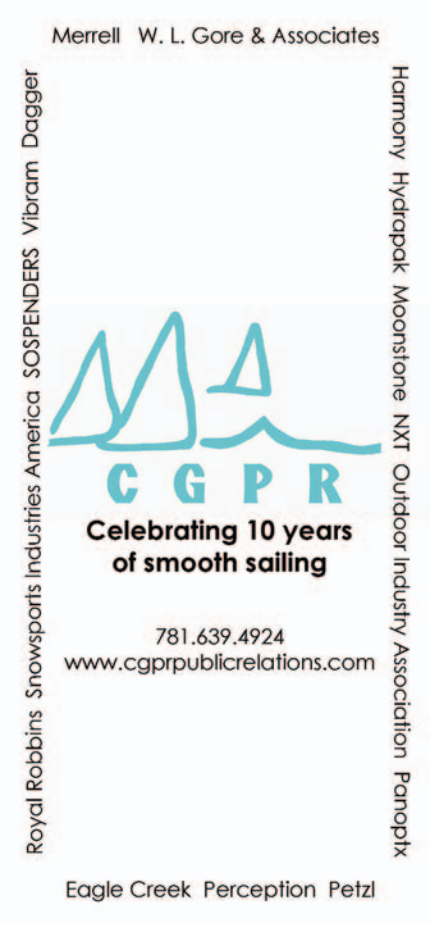
BEST TRADE SHOW

GlobalShop
The biggest visual merchandising show in the United States, GlobalShop is held once a year. The next show will be March 22-24, 2004, at the Venetian Expo Center in Las Vegas, Nev. It's actually five shows under one roof (so you get your money's worth): Visual Merchandising, Store Fixturing, P.O.P., Store Design & Operations, and The Digital Store. If you go, don't skip the seminar series—it's excellent. You can get more information online at www.globalshop.org.

BEST EXPERTS

Retail Resource Group
P.O. Box 7266
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607
Contact: Brian Dyches, 949-363-5955
info@retailresourcegroup.com
RRG has proven business and design tactics for the retail community to increase sales, develop brand image and impact customers. The firm works with large and small communities, retailers and manufacturers to analyze, direct and execute the best retail practices.

Route One
1507 Sanchez St.
San Francisco, CA 94131
Contact: Tery R. Young, 415-939-8724
tery@routeonedesign.com
Robert J. Shapiro, 415-647-4234
robert@routeonedesign.com
Route One, a new firm, provides consulting and contract services that include store and fixture design, visual merchandising and presentation, in-store signage and graphics design, and strategic sourcing.

Visual Marketing Services
Minneapolis, MN
Contact: Ralph Winkelmeyer 612-789-0148
rwwink@aol.com
Services include on-site consults, merchandising training, fixture design and resourcing, and new store concepting.

With the above list in hand, you'll be able to find help whenever you need it. To maintain a successful business, retailers should update their stores, and there's no better way to do it than through effective merchandising. If you take the time to access the merchandising resources in magazines, books and websites, you'll find it's easy to make the small improvements in your store that will increase its appeal and grow sales.