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Welcome!

Welcome to the first edition of “**Designed To Sell**”.

Each month, we'll discuss key concepts, strategies and techniques used in the skilful art of retail store design. Beginning with the basics, you'll get an equal mix of practical, 'how to' steps and answers and the underlying theory behind them. Sound interesting? Then read on!

When conducted properly, the professional design process considers everything from the client's corporate objectives, its approach to retailing and the 'spirit' of the brand, all the way through to shopping patterns, unique product displays, best use of available space and the art of 'getting it done'. For this reason, we'll explore a variety of topics under three main categories: **Retailing**, **Store Design** and **Construction**. With each passing issue, you'll gain a greater understanding of these critical areas and how they are connected. Most importantly, you'll see how they come together to help grow your business and ensure your success!

Whether you're developing a new retail concept or struggling with some particular aspect of your existing store design or product displays, this practical and informative (and free!) newsletter is for you. Please pass it on to your colleagues and associates. They can sign up quickly and easily by following the subscription instructions at the bottom of this page.

If you have any questions or comments about this exciting area of retail, or you'd like to suggest a topic for future issues, or even if you need a hand with a project you're tackling, shoot us an email at info@rlwdesign.ca, or call us at 905-845-2255. We'd love to hear from you!

Retailing

The Basics

Let's begin at the beginning ... Store Design 101. Everything about your store should stem from and properly reflect your retailing concept. Clearly this means not only your merchandise and the things that are said and done by your staff, but the physical environment itself and how it supports and enhances your brand. So it's appropriate that we start with this topic.

When developing your retail concept, there are three critical things you must thoroughly understand. This may seem almost too basic, but if you don't really know this stuff, almost every decision you make may be the wrong one. And we don't want that, do we?

1. Understand your customer.

Sounds like a no-brainer, but you might be surprised how many businesses never really 'catch on' because they don't address the true wants and needs of their target customers. Even mature, well-established companies often fall out of favour and have

to pack it in because they have taken their eye off this very important ball.

Remember, different customers require different products, environments and levels of service. Would you approach a Chevrolet buyer the same way as someone who was shopping for a Jaguar? Stay focused on your customers every day and give them what they want. This is a very reciprocal relationship!

2. Understand your product.

Another obvious statement, but are you really presenting your product's appeal and benefits in the way that most clearly meets the customer's needs? Is your store layout and selling process really geared to the type and level of merchandise you carry? Before you say "Yes", you might want to take another look!

3. Understand your location.

This applies not only to the demographics of your local area, but also to the type of facility where you carry on business. A mall location must be designed and built very differently than a street front address. Know your location and prepare accordingly!

These are the building blocks from which your retail concept and strategy must be developed. Without a clear understanding of each one, you have no hope of creating the best possible store design. So do yourself a favour and commit to thorough research and due diligence before you start designing!

Do you need to know more about this right away? E-mail us at info@rlwdesign.ca or give us a call at 905-845-2255 and we'll lend a hand!

Store Design

Be True To Your Brand!

Here's Rule #1 of Store Design: Don't even begin until you've done all of your homework and put together a 'rock-solid' retail concept. Why? Because every decision you make must be somehow connected to this concept. That's right, **every decision**.

Would you put a huge, flashing neon sign on an upscale boutique? How about hand made mahogany fixtures in a big box factory outlet? Bare fluorescent lighting in a high-end jewelry store? Not likely. Even the most junior retailer recognizes that these design touches aren't appropriate for the intended use of the facility. In other words, these decisions don't reflect or support the customer's aspirations and expectations, so they definitely aren't in sync with the retail concept.

If you expect to successfully articulate your concept, it must be clearly defined and easily understood. What is your concept? How are you currently expressing it?

There are thousands of subtle alternatives to consider for each design decision. In many cases, making the right choices is really about deciding what **not** to do. Conceptually appropriate selections in every aspect of the design process will help ensure that you create the ideal environment for attracting your specific target market.

So when you're thinking about the best design and layout of your store, remember ... know your concept and stick to it. Be true to the spirit of your brand. Be authentic in every detail. If you're committed and diligent in this area, customers will recognize your efforts and share your 'retail vision'. If you pay less attention to this process, you may end up with something that happens all too frequently out there ... a confused customer who has no idea why she should bother spending her valuable time and money in your store!

Construction

Get Those Plans Ready!

You already know what we're going to say here, don't you? Well, you're right ... here it comes. **Rule #1** of Store Construction: Don't build *anything* until you've got a complete and well-prepared set of plans and specifications that are based on ... wait for it ... your retail concept!

See how the whole process flows? Sounds a little simplistic, but again, we've all heard the horror stories and seen installations that suffered from insufficient preparation. When this happens, your first impression with the customer, your market position and your public face are all **wrong!** You are without direction and left to rely on the foot traffic of 'accidental customers' -- those who don't care where they shop ... those who buy based on the lowest price. Without a doubt, it's far more profitable to get your game face on from day one!

Once you've got a good set of plans in your hands, it's time to start talking to several competent and reputable contractors. Contractor bids will provide you with a more realistic idea of the overall value of your project. You should also get a cost breakdown of the construction work involved.

It's very important to get this information early in the process so you can make design/material/cost adjustments long before you run into a snag. Take advantage of this preliminary feedback to make sure you end up with the store you had in mind. Don't wait until a problem develops on the work site. It can be much more expensive to correct at that point!

Want to know more about the design or construction processes? Give us a call at **905-845-2255** or visit our website at www.rlwdesign.ca . We'd be happy to help!

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