

“Maximising Your Sales Potential”: notes for SW Fed Website

In June Peter Holloway of Retail Thinking held training sessions called “Maximising Your Sales Potential” for museums in the south west at Teign Heritage Centre and Poole Museum. The days focussed on active selling skills and visual merchandising and display in a museum shop context.

Peter offers the following tips and advice from the training days.

We focussed on two of the most important areas for successful retailing. There are many others of course, such as sourcing and buying in the stock, but even if a museum shop has the best merchandise in the world it will never maximise its sales if the stock isn't sold effectively by staff or visually merchandised in a professional way. A few points to consider:

Active Selling (but not the hard sell!)

- It's vital to approach customers and engage with them, sharing our knowledge of the items we stock. If we do this well and read the signals which indicate our approach will be welcomed this will hardly seem like selling!
- Give information and advice about merchandise. Be natural. “Tell it, rather than sell it!”
- Possess first class product knowledge and make sure every retail team member does too.
- Ask customers questions to ascertain what they really need, not what we think they need!
- If you have a guide book then every visitor should be offered one as a matter of course.

Visual Merchandising and Display

- Aim to make a great first impression – the first display of merchandise customers see will set the standard for the whole shop.
- Define merchandise categories and ranges clearly; discipline and order will help the customer makes sense of the offer and “shop the shop”!
- Present the stock with confidence. Half hearted quantities and displays of stock don't inspire or create impact or excitement. If in doubt look at the high street professionals, and for that matter cultural shops such as Tate, and the British Museum.
- Exceptions to this are very high price items which need to look really special and require a more minimalist look.
- Think, when putting stock out in the shop, whether you want customers to pick it up, handle it and buy it, or whether a more creative effect is required, as in a shop window. A common mistake it to be creative and artistic with merchandise throughout the shop.
- Use descriptive tickets to support selected items, use them to convey key selling features not just the price.

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