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Children's eyewear:

From tots to teens

Shelf life: Frame display stands

Below are a few pointers gleaned from retailers and manufacturers across Europe on how to display eyewear successfully.

- 1 Carry out some market research to identify your target market as precisely as possible: think of display ideas that would most appeal to them. Ensure that your retail environment fits the demographic profile of your clientele.
- 2 Sunglasses are often an impulse purchase – display them openly in a prominent position in the store. Make sure customers are free to try on a variety of styles before buying.
- 3 Traditional, funky, art-deco, post-modern – whatever the style, the important thing is to create a unique commercial identity for your store. Pay attention to choosing displays that blend in well with your particular theme.
- 4 Flexibility is the key: your displays shouldn't be rigid and immobile because they're guaranteed to go out of fashion at some point. They must therefore be moveable, as well as adaptable enough to fit in with any future changes to the store's lay-out.
- 5 Be objective about the appearance of your store – if you were the customer, would you want to shop there? If not, how can you make it more inviting? Look to your favourite fashion boutique for inspiration, how have they got it right? Think of passing trade too – make sure your in-store displays are visible from the street.
- 6 Don't forget lighting as part of the overall presentation. Even if the frame display is stunning harsh lights will spoil the effect. Go for spotlights that illuminate the product but are still soft and welcoming.



Above: frame presentation units built into wall shelving (Style Art und Design)

meet the tastes of the target consumer group. "Opticians should use market analysis to discover the profile of the customers they want to target. Before you start you have to understand the demographic make-up of the customer you want in your store."

In addition, Mr. Ganai recommends store design be well-structured, making it easy for customers to get their bearings in the optician's world. Last but not least, he believes the design should have a degree of flexibility, making it possible to change the store's appearance, allowing it to adapt to new retail trends and different forms of product display.

GOOD DISPLAYS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Across Europe, opticians are increasingly reaping the benefits of investing in suitable display units. In the UK, Essex-based independent Goldsmith Webb has found that achieving a look that appeals to their clientele certainly helps to boost sales.

"Before the redesign we played it safe," says partner Daryl Goldsmith. "Now we are a bit more trendy and upmarket." After the first month, he started to see the impact. "We have started to attract our target market, those who are design-aware and are looking for quality," he says. Redesigns are an investment, and Mr. Goldsmith appreciates that they do not last for ever so he will look to introduce minor changes in five years, major ones in seven to eight.

Unlike many of his competitors, Mr. Goldsmith's attitude is a realistic one, says Ron Brown, Managing Director of UK-based The Style Design Company. He notes: "An optician will spend £30,000 on a car which he spends half an hour a day in and won't consider spending anything like that on his practice, where he spends most of his time."

Meanwhile, in Germany, Annele Sloma, an optician in Lillbecke had definite ideas in mind when she kitted out her store. "I wanted a store completely different from anything other opticians offer," she says. "My eyewear is hidden, the furniture is unusual and interesting. It's light and warm – the sort of place it's nice to visit." The 'hidden' eyewear gives her the advantage of attending to every customer personally. "I want to sit down and discuss what each individual customer needs and show them various alternatives. This isn't a self-service place."

The minimal aspect of presentation keeps things simple and gives clients a good overview. Large consulting tables were installed, where two customers can be attended to at the same time. "I find that customers will often assist each other, giving advice. It's a service experience unlike anything they will find elsewhere."

The flexibility of her store is its strength, she admits. "I can take any object in the store and put it in the window

display. Almost everything is movable. The lab is out of sight upstairs."

OBJECTIVE APPROACH TO DESIGN

Manufacturers of optical display units are well placed to give eyewear retailers advice on how their use can improve business. Taking an objective look at their retail environment is the hardest task facing opticians, according to The Style Design Company's Ron Brown. "I advise them to go and stand outside their practice and say: 'Would I want to go and shop in there?'" he says. "Their trouble is that they often look at it through the eyes of the owner, whereas they need to seek as many outside opinions as possible."

His company is in the business of providing individual design solutions, rather than selling a range of practice furniture which could be totally unsuitable. He offers a choice of around six standard designs, which vary quite considerably, but will also design from scratch. His method of working is first to visit the optician, then discuss his and his patients' needs, survey the site and propose a solution.

Opticians can also use display units effectively to attract passing trade. At Fairfield Displays and Lighting, Marketing Manager Netta Sjodin points to one of the company's latest products, called 'In the Frame'. It consists of a wooden frame in different finishes, suspended by cables, which can be hung in the window with light shelving on which the frames sit.

"The main aim is to attract customers' attention to the merchandise, and that is why we have designed the suspended systems, because they are so slim that your eye goes straight to the product," says Ms Sjodin. "Once you have the customer in the store, half the battle is won. Then you have to create a comfortable atmosphere for them to walk around in and try on frames."

There is a need for ample storage space, she says, but not so much that it infringes on the customer's capacity to roam the store easily and, of course, good lighting is vital. "We try and think of the optician's customers as our customers and what we can do to aid the buying process," she says.

PRESENTATION IS A VALUABLE TOOL

Optical retailers should not underestimate the power of design. Display units are a vital part of that design which, used properly, can prove to be an invaluable sales tool. Not only can they help attract passing trade, but once inside the store an interesting display can stimulate the consumer's interest in purchasing. Opticians should pay attention to developing their own personalised style and finding units that suit their taste, fit the character of their store and appeal to their target clientele.

Dans l'univers de la vente de détail, la façon dont les marchandises sont présentées est presque aussi importante que les produits eux-mêmes. Les boutiques de mode l'ont compris depuis longtemps et les grands magasins dépensent une petite fortune pour se faire une beauté et présenter leurs produits sous leur meilleur jour. Les magasins d'optique accusent depuis toujours un certain retard sur ce point, mais ils rattrapent peu à peu la tendance des autres secteurs de détail. Une vaste gamme de présentoirs très nouveaux et accrocheurs sont à présent disponibles. Ils sont spécialement conçus pour répondre aux besoins des détaillants d'optique et les fabricants sont là pour dispenser d'utiles conseils sur la façon d'en tirer le meilleur parti.

FAIRE FACE À LA CONCURRENCE

Wigard Tegge, directeur de la société néerlandaise Top Vision, spécialisée dans les présentoirs pour montures, souligne qu'un présentoir adapté peut permettre aux opticiens de bouger avec leur temps. "Les opticiens prennent conscience qu'ils ne s'occupent plus uniquement de santé oculaire, mais qu'ils sont également des commerçants, ce qui signifie qu'ils sont en concurrence avec d'autres magasins du centre ville. Lorsqu'il s'agit de vendre des lunettes de soleil, par exemple, les magasins d'optique se heurtent à la forte concurrence des boutiques de mode, entre autres."

Pour que le client achète un produit, il doit d'abord le voir, explique M. Tegge, qui fonde la stratégie de son entreprise sur ce présupposé. Le dispositif de verrouillage à distance des présentoirs permet de disposer les montures dans un endroit stratégique du magasin sans craindre le vol. Les avantages en sont évidents, affirme M. Tegge, "les montures n'ont pas besoin d'être présentées dans une vitrine, les clients sont ainsi libres de réfléchir, de les toucher et de faire leur choix. Puis, en appuyant simplement sur un bouton, le vendeur peut débloquer discrètement la monture. Ces dispositifs facilitent la vente en faisant disparaître la