

Remodeling Retail

Does your showroom feature products that are new and fresh? Or do you have outdated products hanging from the ceiling and occupying space on your floor right now? Larry King, LS, president and owner of Capital Lighting in Columbus, Ohio, believes that up-to-date merchandising is critical to a showroom's success.

Fresh Focus

"Prior to the recession, a lot of our business was driven by the builders," says King who co-owns the showroom along with David Winks, LS. "As that business started to shrink, we refocused on our retail segment, and in 2007 we remodeled our showroom. We wanted to continue to have our showroom look fresh. Merchandising is critical. And we sometimes lose sight of that, especially those of us who were so tied to the builder market before."

King believes showrooms need to continually look at the products they have on display. "It's so important to keep that product fresh," he says. "For instance, you might have some dinosaurs hanging in your showroom, thinking you're going to sell them sooner or later. When we did our remodel in 2007, we discovered we had about 100 items that we had reduced several times to try to get rid of them. We took them down and donated them to Habitat for Humanity. True, we didn't recover our original investment but it was a tax write-off. And for those 100 pieces that we took down, we could now display products that were new and fresh."

Capital Lighting also diversified its product mix. "Before, we just concentrated on lighting and lighting accessories," King says. "We now offer framed art, mirrors, light furniture and accessories. We've broadened that mix so when a customer walks in the door looking for lighting, they see that we have other products."

Internet Innovation

Working with Lights America, Capital Lighting is expanding its website to include a shopping cart in the near future. "With FazTrack, Lights America, MyLightingShowroom.com and XOLights now available to us, you don't need to go outside the industry to get that help," King advises.

King believes the internet offers showrooms a way to connect to their local communities. "The 18-to-35-year-olds no longer get the newspaper," King says. "They're getting all their information from their laptop or their cell phone. If you don't have a presence on the web, how do they get ahold of you?"

"So much is being sold on the web today, and it continues to increase every six months," he says. "We've had customers come in to the store with a picture of a lighting fixture, and whether it was off our website or someone else's, it tells us that they are shopping on the internet prior to making a purchase. If we don't have a way for that customer to buy on our website, we're missing an opportunity."

Future Forward

What's next for Capital Lighting? The showroom is already planning another remodel, although it won't be as aggressive as the 2007 remodel.

"We're going to upgrade the bathrooms and change the tile in the hallway," King says. "We also are going to add a couple of walls in the showroom where we have grids hanging now. This way, the customer who does come in more often will walk in and see that it's new and fresh."

Capital Lighting will also add three kiosks with an internet connection to its showroom floor. "So if someone in the showroom is looking for a particular product, our salesperson can show them how to pull it up on our site," King says. "If they want to buy it online while they're in our store, they can. We may have the product in stock and they could take it home with them."

King believes for showrooms to be successful today they need to focus on fresh. "Sometimes it's hard to spend money for that remodel, but if you don't reinvest in your business it gets old," he says. "The consumer today is so aware of things that are not fresh. We try to be aware of what's changing out there, and we want to always keep it fresh."

(Right) Capital Lighting's showroom was remodeled in 2007 and includes display features that expand retail opportunities such as this unique approach to displaying table lamps.

