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Get Noticed: 5 Steps to Effective Storefront Signs

Your storefront is often the first impression that new customers have of your business. What does the exterior of your store tell people passing by about the business inside? Is your signage reflecting the high quality goods and services that you provide for your customers?

Investing in effective signs can become one of the most important marketing tools your business uses to attract new customers. And quality signs continue to work long after they are paid for.

Here are 5 simple steps to signs that attract customers:

Step 1: Get signage that is readable.

Although it seems obvious that signs are meant to be read, sometimes what people see are only blotches of color – not the letters or pictures that were so obvious on the paper sketch. Graphics can enhance a sign, but if too much of the space is filled with pictures that do not convey the nature of the business behind the sign, the space is wasted.

Communicating from a distance can be a formidable task. The subject of the business, not the name of the business, should be the largest lettering on the sign. For example, if the business is a fly fishing retailer named “LeRoy’s Fly Shop,” “Fly Shop” should stand out more than “LeRoy’s.” The logic here is simple, customers are looking for a fly shop; once they arrive and are pleased with the selection and service that LeRoy provides, they will return and tell their fly fishing friends that LeRoy’s is the place to go for all their fly fishing needs.

But first they have to find the store. If the biggest letters on the sign spell out “LeRoy’s” the store could be filled with hardware or widgets, and potential customers might never know the store they’re looking for is right on their route.

Step 2: Signs should complement the building they’re advertising.

Every building has character. Some have architectural character that need signs that blend and become part of the beautiful building. Others have the kind of character that the signage needs to hide or spruce up. But signs can improve the look of every building if they are properly designed.



If the business is housed in a log cabin structure, the signage should complement that type of architecture. Internally lit electric signs are incongruous with all the wood of a log building.

If the fly shop is in a strip mall block building, the signage should combat that image by using a natural material such as stained wood to stand out and convey the outdoors image of fly fishing. Providing lighting can make a natural wood sign as well noticed as a plastic electric sign.

An experienced sign maker will be able to design a sign that will enhance the building it advertises or hide the faults of a building that needs help.

Step 3: Attract your customers.

The fly fishing retail and service store needs to attract the people who will buy the goods and services provided – fly fishermen! The signs must capture the flair and promise of the fly fishing business.

Design is the crucial element here. Fly fishers are, in their way, an elite bunch. Signage needs to be designed that will attract customers to the fly fishing store.

The third step to effective storefront signs is to have a sign designed that will capture the essence of the business and attract more customers.

Step 4: Go for durability – Always use signage materials that last.

A sign is an investment—an investment that will serve its purpose for years if it is constructed of high quality, durable materials. Exterior signs are constructed of some basic materials: plastic products of various types, steel or aluminum, medium

density overlay (MDO) plywood, and solid wood such as redwood or cedar.

The letter and graphics of the signs are either vinyl or hand painted. Vinyl comes in different grades and thicknesses, and the highest quality has a product life of eight years. Hand-painted signs are lettered with special lettering enamels that last for years.

Vinyl letters are designed and cut out by computer software which can limit the design options. Because professionally hand-lettered signs can be designed to break convention with the computer limitation, special effects are possible.

Step 5: Negative Space – Sometimes it’s what is not there that counts.

If the sign code allows an 8-foot-wide by 4-foot-high sign – should every square inch of that 32 square feet be filled with letters and graphics? There are sign makers that will fill up the board, but will that accomplish the first step discussed here?

The negative space between words is also paramount to the effectiveness of the sign. Exterior signs have a lot to deal with – traffic, speed, competition with other signs, lighting – it’s important not to make the sign conflict with itself by putting too much information within its borders.

There are so many variables in business. A well designed and crafted sign can enhance your business location and bring more customers while creating a sense of pride in your establishment. 🐟

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