WINDOWS
OF OPPORTUNITY

Top Considerations When Planning a Window Graphic Display

Melissa Santos, Director of Marketing for Rose Displays, Ltd. shares her perspective on what it takes to design award-winning Window Displays.

It's been said that windows are your store's billboard to the world. Windows are among the first things shoppers see when they walk or drive by your store, so they are the ideal place to capture shoppers' attention. With a well-designed graphics program, they can truly live up to their promise as windows of opportunity to help you bring customers into your store and drive sales.

Store windows are like billboards in another way, and that's where the challenge with window graphics begins. As with actual billboards, you have only about three seconds to make sure shoppers grasp the essential "message" about the store. That's a very short time to effectively communicate your brand, showcase your merchandise to entice the shopper, and convey the most important information in a way that's compelling and relevant to your target audience. Everything must be planned in such a way that you best utilize those few seconds to get the job done.

In addition, creating a window display program comes with a unique set of logistical issues. Visual display professionals must contend with a variety of concerns starting with the limited amount of space in the window box or window area in which one can hang the displays and change-out graphics. Adding to that is the difficulty of designing a program appropriate for varying ceiling heights in individual stores, and dealing with thermal issues that affect the type of signware™ that you should use.

Rose Displays, a leader in signware solutions for more than 30 years, offers the following tips to help you create the greatest "window of opportunity" for your stores.

Start by identifying your goals.

As with all plans, the first step is to be sure you are clear about your objectives for the program. There's great truth to the maxim that if you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there. The same applies to creating a roadmap for your window graphics program.

The first question to answer is, "What do I want this program to do?" Are you looking to create a window graphics program whose primary purpose is to establish or reinforce your brand? Will it rely more on visual images than copy? This type of program may not demand the same frequency of graphics change-outs as a program that involves notices of special offers or sales. It may, however, suggest a program that incorporates specific aspects that reinforce your brand

identity. Signware with custom colors or distinctive finishes can enhance the look of your graphic displays.

Is your goal to create a seasonal theme or promote special sales and promotional offers? If so, you may need to plan for more changes in the graphics, so you will want to plan for signware that features ease of use as the top consideration.

Do you want to create dimensional displays, or will your program be hung in a single plane? If you choose a more dimensional design, you will need to determine the best hanging options for this space or select floor stands that work well in this environment.

This step also involves understanding your target audiences and their expectations about their shopping experience. Who are you trying to reach? Are they Baby Boomers, Gen X, Gen Y or even Gen Z? What are their expectations about your store, and what do you want to convey – a trendy or edgy image or one that's more classic? This also plays into the type of graphics you'll choose and what your window program needs to communicate.

Keep in mind that effective store windows can help circumvent issues with exterior signage ordinances or restrictions of signage on historic buildings. As we explain below, great window displays, such as illuminated frames, can create tremendous impact in cases where exterior

signage is not an option. So having the right plan in place can help you achieve multiple goals.

Determine how you will hang your graphics.

There are many choices, from hanging them from the ceiling (the most common method) to mounting them on a wall in the window area.

If you want to mount graphics from a wall, choose a product that offers customizable pole length and ease of installation. For example, Rose Displays' Off-the-Wall™ Brackets are designed specifically for this purpose, and they can be cut in any lengths from 3" – 12".

If you choose to hang graphics from the ceiling, you'll need to determine what kind of ceilings are in your stores. Are they open, hard, grid or faux? Ceilings with three or four parallel tracks offer the potential to create a feeling of depth and dimensionality in the display. Products like Rose Displays' Butterfly™ Track allow for great versatility in sign placement. This system is designed with easy-to-use hangers, and lets you effortlessly move your graphics left-to-right or front-to-back. Moveable tracks allow for sign display flexibility, so this type of hanging option is ideal for keeping window boxes fresh.

If you are using standard grid ceilings, consider that there are some weight constraints with the graphics. Also be sure to use a hanging system that will keep the graphics level.

Create a plan that offers work-arounds for varying ceiling heights.

Dealing with varying ceiling heights is a challenge for visual display professionals. The configuration of stores throughout a chain can differ widely, and it is difficult to track down the specs for each store. However, sending a variety of solutions to each store wastes dollars and materials.

If you are planning a roll-out, it is wise to work with a signware partner that offers products specifically designed to accommodate different ceiling heights and configurations, and who can help develop a kit that offers flexibility.

For example, Rose Displays' Adjustable Cable System features Spider™ Rings that allow you to adjust the cable length in 3" increments with a simple wrap around the ring. Each Ring can hold up to 10 wraps for 30" of adjustability.

Ziplines, which offer 60" of cable adjustable in 3" increments, also make it easy to change the height of your graphics. This system is easy to attach and reposition on standard grid ceilings and also works with Butterfly Tracks.

Ideally, your supplier will offer kitting, easy to follow instruction sheets, and post-sales support to make this process simple for store personnel.

Hang your graphics safely.

No where in the store is space tighter than in the window area. It's also the hardest location to change graphics. Because of the space constraints, it's all the more important that your store personnel are equipped with the right tools to safely install or change-out the graphics.

Adjustable poles can eliminate the need for a ladder and are an excellent choice. The right pole can also save time, thus increasing productivity at the store level. Rose Displays estimates the time savings by adding the number of interior signs you hang in a year and multiplying by 2.9 minutes. The company has introduced the Nikken™ hanger and pole that also eliminate the need for a ladder. With Nikken, signs are brought down to an accessible height using the pole, and they retract to the ceiling after the graphic is changed.

Consider thermal issues when selecting display options.

Whether the result of direct sunlight streaming through glass, or strong interior lighting that shines into the space, window areas are hot, so you need to be mindful of the heat that can build up inside the window display. This is exacerbated if you are dealing with a window box configuration.

The greatest impact is on the selection of the materials used in your holders and frames. Aluminum is a great choice for these areas. Not only is it an attractive and lightweight material, it's not susceptible to problems with increased temperatures in the window area. Conversely, plastic is not a good choice as it can warp in high heat conditions. And because black absorbs heat, black plastic frames or holders can be especially problematic.

Certain substrates and printing techniques may also be impacted by high heat. It's wise to check with your printer before rolling out your program.

Maximize the use of illuminated displays.

Lit displays are increasingly popular, and they can be extremely effective in literally shedding light on your store's message. However, their effectiveness is lost if they are kept turned on when ambient light is high, as is the case with inside mall locations.

One of the most impactful ways to use illuminated displays is to use them in an outside window and make sure they are "on" while it is dark. Strip malls are an ideal setting. Not only will the lit sign attract attention and inform potential shoppers about your offering even in off-hours, but they also reinforce your presence in a situation where you may not be able to put an exterior sign on your building.

If you are using an LED-lit frame, be aware that 6500 Kelvin will make your sign stand out better than 4100 Kelvin, which tends to shed a warmer light.

Beware of motion sensors.

Be sure to place your window graphics far enough away from air conditioning vents so that they don't swing and sway, and set off the alarm system after hours.

Consider implementing a test before rolling out the entire program.

A test will ensure that your solution is working, and also allow for any modifications that need to be made in design, graphics or signware components.

Understand that the best visual displays strike the right balance between aesthetic appeal, functionality of the display, and ease of use.

These three criteria attributes are the pillars of all great graphics programs. In the confines of the window environment, however, functionality and ease of use become especially important.

Your store windows offer one of the best opportunities to reach your current and prospective customers and attract them into your store. Here is a checklist for you to use when developing your next window graphics program. As you develop your window display, ask yourself the most important questions first to ensure maximum functionality. ●

Based in Salem, Massachusetts, Rose Displays, Ltd., has been a leading developer of retail signware since 1980. The company markets to a worldwide customer base that includes some of the best-known names in retail, foodservice and other major industries. As a value-added partner in crafting signware solutions, Rose Displays offers customized solutions for virtually all visual display merchandising needs, from floors to ceilings, walls, windows, or any place in between.

For information about Rose Displays products or services, call 1-800-631-9707 or visit the website at www.rosedisplays.com.