

When you Love Shopping Centers, it Shows

Dedicated to Our Communities,
Our Tenants and Our Customers

Retail Smart Guys is a retail consulting firm that works with many independent retailers, across 16 different countries. As part of developing strategies for retailers across the globe, their unique vantage point allows them to gain insights and in depth retail industry information, from a great variety of sources.

They have decided to share this information more openly. We thought it important to pass along to you!



Retail Smart Guys believe, "If this year has taught us anything, if navigating our way through this horrible virus has garnered us any perspective, it's this: one of our most important values must be "generosity of spirit" – the willingness to help, to give, and to support other businesses and business owners, in every way we can. Emails like this are just one way we will contribute."

WHAT'S SELLING:

FASHION

We continue to see several trends in merchandise sales. Certainly the trend towards more casual clothing has continued, and we think it will continue, especially as concerns about a spike in the virus this fall are in the news. We started to see a little pickup in denim, but that falls into 2 major categories – price point denim, and great branded merchandise. We won't discuss specific brands here, only because that discussion would certainly vary depending upon your customer, price point, location, etc., but if you'd like to know more, please reach out.

MASKS

As long as social distancing and wearing masks are part of our daily routine, masks are going to continue to sell, and they are becoming a fashion accessory. Many retailers have found great suppliers and are offering all kinds of masks as fashion accessories, in tie dye prints, camouflage, and more. It's an opportunity that we don't think you should miss.

PET AND FEED

In the pet food stores, we are still seeing a surge in pet accessories (bowls, collars, pee pads, etc) since June. During the height of the COVID 19 pandemic, there has been a surge in dog adoptions. New pet parents need all of the things to love and care for the new member of the family. Also, we are continuing to see strong sales in raw dog food.

SELLING TECHNIQUES THAT ARE WORKING

As hard to believe as this may be, many of our clients are beating last year! I am continually amazed by the level of creativity and passion that these stores are exhibiting, and it is resonating with their customers. Some highlights:

- Now more than ever, is the time to show that you are a local favorite. We suggest lots of videos that show you (yes, you) in the store, with great product, and demonstrating that your store is safe, friendly, and fun, and that you have wonderful products. Your store needs to be that "ray of sunshine" in the midst of difficult times, where customers can safely come and shop and have fun.
- Appointment selling has been very, very good for many retailers. Set 30 minute appointment windows, and invite your customers to shop the store. You'll find that those that make appointments typically spend more than if they just wandered in. It's a great way to connect, to add on, and to keep the revenue coming.
- Selling now appears to be a mix of online and in store/curbside sales, and the mix is different for every retailer, depending upon the products you sell and the neighborhood you are in. We still recommend that you get involved in e-commerce if you have not already done so, but there are ways to "stick your toe in the water" before spending the money on a full e-commerce site with all the bells and whistles. If you are unsure, reach out to us.

OUR VISION FOR HOLIDAY AND SPRING

We think that sales this Holiday will be strong. We think that most consumers are going to want to celebrate this Holiday season, especially after the difficulties that 2020 have brought all of us. So we foresee that spending there will be strong. We are being a bit more conservative for Spring, so we're forecasting that very tightly, but also planning sharper inventories and faster turns for all retailers, to ensure that there is good cash flow. That, we think, is the key to retail survival right now, and we hope you are doing the same. If you need help with that, please write back. This is the core of what we do, and we honestly believe it is the core of what you must do, especially now!

IT'S NOT THE TIME FOR BIG DISCOUNTS

Obviously, now is not the time for the big "door buster" sale. Even if you could attract a crowd for that, local regulations and restrictions on the number of people that can enter the store will limit your selling ability. Sure, you might create an event where people line up outside your door, and that might be viable depending on your customer and your location, but as we watch people giving big discounts, we see that this is not generating big sales.

A BETTER IDEA: In this difficult time, one of the strategies that we see working very well is this. Instead of offering some big discount, tell your customers that you will use a portion of the revenue from each sale to give back to local people in need. For example, for every pair of denim you buy, we'll give a pair to a homeless person. Or, for every \$50 you spend, we'll create a care package for front line workers. Things like that, that offer support, charity, and help to those in need, seem to be having very strong effects, and those effects are likely to continue long past this pandemic. You can create great store loyalty by doing things like this.

BLACK FRIDAY IDEAS

This year's Black Friday is tricky, again because it might be difficult for some stores to attract crowds without becoming super spreader events. We are actively collecting up ideas for what people will do for this year's Black Friday and we will share those with all of you. (By the way, did you see that Walmart is planning to do 3 Black Friday events? That's how they're going to try to preserve those sales and not do it all in one weekend). Here are a few ideas that are popping up already:

- Have limited tickets for Black Friday with 30 minute time blocks.
- Spread the Black Friday event over a few days, maybe 3 days before Friday and then Friday itself.
- Offer discounts for pre-buying Black Friday merchandise. Perhaps you can limit that to just some products, such as jewelry, sweaters, and jackets.
- In the days before Black Friday, have off hour restricted access events. Sell tickets, start with your best customers and make the deal worth the trip.
- Bring the most common "gift-receivers" to life in visual merchandising presentations (with products from several departments that span a wide price range). Shoppers can quickly relate to the presentation that matches their loved one's style/tendencies, and easily pick from the products you've already selected that are guaranteed to please.
- Go to where your customers are by using social selling with video (be sure to turn on captions!) with either in-app purchasing in Facebook or Instagram or join Comment Sold.
- The ultimate time to connect with clients is about 2 weeks before Black Friday, so plan your social media campaigns and email campaigns with that focus in mind. You can then offer discounts to

return for Black Friday deals, and again in December. What you want is more trips to your store, and this strategy creates a top of mind approach.

- Some retailers have decided to completely ignore the date, and offer structured discounts throughout the month.

These are some of the ideas we've heard about so far. We'll send more as we get them!

PLANNING

Now, more than ever, you need a very reliable sales forecast, combined with an inventory plan that sharpens your buys. It's the difference between "good" retailing and "great" retailing. And, you have to focus on targeting those year-end inventories, so that you don't get stuck with inventories you cannot sell in Spring. We strongly, strongly, strongly encourage you to do that, and we are happy to help you get started. Reach out to us.

IN CONCLUSION

All of us at Retail Smart Guys are highly focused on your success, and we're prepared to do whatever it takes to make sure you have everything you need to be successful in the last few months of this year, and next year too. We hope that this information is something that you can use. If you have questions about any of it, or comments, please write to Dan Jablons at dan@retailsmartguys.com.

For more information from Retail Smart Guys, visit their website at retailsmartguys.com.



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