

Paint & Decorating RETAILER

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Building the Perfect Showroom



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MONTHLY WALLCOVERINGS UPDATE

PRESENTED BY THE WALLCOVERINGS ASSOCIATION (WA)

How Two Successful Retailers Blended Decorators and Wallpaper to Boost Their Bottom Lines

Some products sell themselves. Some products require a little TLC. Employing interior designers or design consultants in your retail store is a surefire way to ignite wallpaper sales. Hear how two retailers have used design teams to increase their revenue.

Douglas & Son Inc. – Kalamazoo, Mich.

A locally owned corporation staffed by a team of design consultants, Douglas & Son Inc. is a paint, wallpaper and window treatment center for consumers, painters, designers and renovation contractors.

On employing design consultants: “My staff is my biggest asset! The design consultants are the reason people drive from three states to buy from us,” said President Rodger Storteboom. “Our design staff adds to the quality and ambiance of our store. People who have an eye for creativity and solid customer service have made the difference in our success. Painting contractors and designers alike have thanked me for having a professional staff to support their projects.”

On how retail design staff interacts with customers: “People come in and need our help with matching their tastes to the myriad of papers available. As a

design consultant, I talk to people to get a sense of their style and preferences and go from there. Some people don’t exactly know what they want, so I give them some different books to point out the looks they like. Once we have a starting point, I’m off and running. With so many wallpaper selections to choose from, I sell all day long and give each customer a completely unique look,” said Sally Reynolds, Design Consultant.

On how retail design staff interacts with outside interior designers: “Some designers use us as a partner by calling in their design specifications so they can buzz in, look at bookmarked pages and quickly go through with ‘yes-no’ decisions on the papers. Other designers will give us specifications and send their clients into the store to work with us. Either way, we focus on helping them buy papers that make them happy,” said Reynolds.

On the outlook of wallpaper: “We absolutely love wallpaper here,” said Storteboom. “We have always believed in the category, and I knew that during the lulls of wallpaper sales that I had to keep firm. Today our wallpaper department is profitable and growing as a fully staffed department of the store.” “And,” added Reynolds, “we are busy every single second!”

Phillips Design — Concord, Mass.

Phillips Design employs a retail staff as well as four road designers to make the process of blending interior design with paints, fabrics and wallcoverings accessible to all its customers.

On interior design accessibility: “Most of the clients our road designers work with have walked through the store. Customers start the project them-

selves, and then often it evolves into a design project because people realize they don’t want to do it themselves. We’ve found people are willing to pay for the benefit of a designer if it’s accessible to them. Plus, having a design staff allows us to not only sell more products but to better service our customers,” said Retail Showroom Manager Jane Crowley.

On designing with wallpaper: “The quality of today’s designs keeps getting better and better. Sometimes when we suggest wallpaper, our customers initially say ‘I don’t want that,’ but when they look at the designs they are amazed,” said Crowley. According to Designer Leslie Maxwell, “Wallcoverings are an incredible tool for a designer. They can serve as a major player in tying a room together and add a depth that you just can’t get with other surfaces.”

On the designers’ impact on customer service: “What’s great is that incredible number of the word-of-mouth referrals I get from previous customers. Our customers rave about working with a designer and continue to give out our name to their friends and family. What better customer service metric is there?” stated Maxwell. ■

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