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“Only when habits of order are formed can we advance to really interesting fields of action.”

—WILLIAM JAMES

*As a sales representative, how can I connect with new retail clients?*

— *A Need for Leads*

**Judy:** Retailers are so engaged in their day-to-day meetings and projects that it often is challenging for

them to schedule time with sales reps. That's why industry events and markets provide an essential venue for inviting new business. When you meet retailers personally, your mission is to find a way to pique their interest and leave a positive and memorable impression.

In the marketplace, you will be competing for the attention of potential clients with hundreds of other designers and manufacturers. Think of your booth or showroom as a mini retail store. How can you use the same approach that retailers employ to engage shoppers in their store space? Visiting leading retailers, and even walking through markets for non-retail design products, can provide inspiration. Just as retailers have a visual merchandising team to build presentations that will attract shoppers, it will benefit your company to hire a freelance visual merchandiser to set your floor.

Begin by designing a large graphic to call out new products. Neuroscience has shown that our brains are hard-wired to move us toward something new. It's a hunter-gatherer instinct.

I remember one sales team who had a curtained area at the back of their booth where they kept their most innovative new products out-of-sight except for a few select clients. How can anyone walk away from that intriguing approach?

Next, think about how you can present your products as if they were in a retail environment. For example, if you are selling apparel fixtures or mannequins, dress a few of them with well-coordinated apparel items, and position them throughout the space to draw retailers in. Fill the arms of fixtures in the same way they would be stocked in a retail store, with multiple items. Sign a few fixtures with lifestyle graphics, preferably with images of smiling friends and families enjoying life. Neuroscience tells us that seeing a smiling face has all kinds of positive benefits for our well being. Why not take the advantage of the opportunity to brighten your potential clients' day? Finally, think about how unexpected props, like a bowl of a dozen oranges, placed on counter-tops or mannequin bases throughout the space would turn heads. And if you repeat the color orange in T-shirts and other apparel items on your mannequins and fixtures, all the better. Know that the bolder you are, the more buzz your booth will create. Retailers commonly ask other colleagues for recommendations of must-see booths

as they connect on the show floor or meet up at educational conference sessions. You want to be certain your booth is on their list.

To stay fresh in your clients' minds, postcard-size takeaways with glossy color photographs of your newest products are worth the expense. Most retailers resist collecting heavy catalogues, but are apt to take a well-designed postcard or two with them. When market attendees are back in their offices, they can easily show colleagues your newest products or clip the postcards onto storyboards for specific projects.

When you have connected with a group of various retailers, bringing some of them together for dinner in a trendy new restaurant will give them the opportunity to get to know each other in a creative setting. While I was at Target, one manufacturer routinely invited a variety of retailers to dinner during markets or industry events in the United States and in Düsseldorf, Germany, during EuroShop. I became acquainted with executives from Disney, Kohl's, Neiman Marcus, Henri Bendel and several others. The friendships that began more than 25 years ago continue today and we all give gratitude to the sales team who so wisely gathered us together. If you think in terms of *creating relationships* rather than selling, you can be assured that your efforts will be reflected in your sales results.



*I have been overwhelmed with projects lately at the office and have had a few near slip-ups. Any advice on how to get back on track?*

– *Near-Miss Mess*

**Judy:** What works best for me is to stick to routines that I have in place, particularly in the morning. I begin every day with a one-mile walk outdoors, followed by preparing a genuinely delicious breakfast that I eagerly look forward to, and then get ready for work. The continuity of this simple 90-minute routine provides time to think about what's ahead for the day and set realistic goals.

To help you build your own routine, there is a new book, "My Morning Routine – How Successful People Start Every Day Inspired," by Benjamin Spall and Michael Xander. The authors combine their own advice with diaries of 64 prominent individuals. Spall and Xander believe that the choices we make throughout our day depend on the intentions we set in the morning. They also write about what they call "decision fatigue," a reduced ability to make decisions: "...snacks and candy are almost universally found at the checkout line; grocery stores have wised up to the fact that after making dozens of small decisions over what brand of canned chili or breakfast cereal to buy, your willpower will be significantly reduced by the time you come to the checkout, and you'll be much more likely to throw a chocolate bar in your basket as you wait in line."

A chapter of the book, titled "Different

Environments: Keeping Up Your Routine When You're Away From Home," calls out the importance of developing a simple plan that won't require much adaptation when you are on the road.

Another book, "Daily Rituals – How Artists Work" by Mason Currey, is filled with the routines of writers, composers, painters, choreographers, filmmakers and others throughout the ages. The book covers both how these individuals create and how they avoid creating. Photographs of their private studios offer an interesting look at the relation of environment to creativity. Sometimes the accounts are amusing: "Descartes believed that idleness was essential to good mental work, and he made sure not to over-exert himself," and sometimes they point to an emphasis on routine, as in the case of William James' note to himself in 1870: "...that only when habits of order are formed can we advance to really interesting fields of action."

These two little books are gems in the art of creating routines with both a serious and a light-hearted attitude. It should be remembered that just as with the adage "rules are made to be broken," from time to time, a departure from a set breakfast regimen by indulging in a sumptuous brunch is mandatory. dr

JUDY BELL IS THE FOUNDER OF ENERGETIC RETAIL (ENERGETIC-RETAIL.COM) AND AUTHOR OF "SILENT SELLING." SHE HELD AN INSPIRATIONAL ROLE FOR 22 YEARS AT TARGET CORP. AND NOW SHARES HER INSIGHTS ON NAVIGATING THE CREATIVE WORKPLACE WITH DESIGN:RETAIL.



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