

To sign or not to sign
is **NOT** the question!

Make your store signs sell

by Doug Knorr



Turn It Around

Douglas Knorr, known as a "retail marketing activist," is president of Knorr Marketing (www.knorrmarketing.com), a full-service marketing and advertising agency specializing in the home furnishings industry. The agency provides strategic planning, creative production, public relations, sales promotions, website development and media buying services. Headquartered in Traverse City, Mich., the firm serves clients throughout the United States.

One of the areas of marketing neglected by most home furnishings stores is in-store signage.

Although the banners, posters, table-toppers, video clips and hang tags from manufacturers have a place in your store, this is not what I'm talking about.

Nor am I talking about the directional signs or maps that may be needed to navigate a store.

Instead, I'm talking about a kind of signage that should be synergistic with your unique store branding and advertising messages.

Attitudes and impressions about you, your store and your merchandise are being validated or created by your customers the moment they view your street sign and drive into your parking lot.

Only old world
craftsmanship used
by companies like
Monosses Henry will
assure you that your
purchase from Henry
Simon will last for
generations.



Style!

In-store signage that clearly communicates your store's brand promise reinforces your quality, style and value message at a critical point: when the customer is prepared to make a buying decision.

Your store's façade and the displays and signage in your windows all create an impression, good or bad. If they're out of sync with your advertising, mailers, product quality and staff efforts, you're contradicting your own message. That costs you money in more ways than one.

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**They come in —
why don't
they buy?**

According to the Point-of-Purchase Advertising Institute

(POPAI), "70 percent of customer-purchase decisions are made inside the store."

In addition, furniture industry research has found that more than 80 percent of customers walking into your store came with the intent to buy!

So, why don't 80 percent of your customers make a purchase? Perhaps one of the reasons is that when the customer visits your store, seeking to make a buying decision, there is no communication system that creates an emotional connection or clearly states a value message that gives her the confidence to make a purchase.

As I visit and consult with home furnishings stores around the country, I am continually amazed at how many lack a well executed in-store signage program.

I believe the reason so many home furnishings stores lack a brand-building signage program is because they have never developed their unique brand promise.

They remain powerless to communicate any unique message to the customer visiting their store and fall into a sea of sameness: Nice furniture, nice people, no point of differentiation.

Your store's point of differentiation — what makes you different from all the others? — provides the foundation for an in-store signage program that will successfully help the customer: 1) understand they are in the right store



The graphic is a vertical rectangle with a light green background. On the left, there is a small icon of a green armchair. To its right, the text "RoomChoices™" is written in a large, bold, green font, with the tagline "Your way. Right away." in a smaller green font below it. Further down, there are three bullet points, each preceded by a small colored square (red, blue, and green respectively). The text of the bullet points is in red. On the right side of the graphic, the word "TEMA" is written vertically in large, bold, red letters. At the bottom of the graphic, there is a teal-colored horizontal bar with the text "Unique. Refreshing. Smart." in white.

RoomChoices™
Your way. Right away.

- Thousands of items on display or shop from our online catalog
- Unique items for every room designed to suit your style
- Guaranteed delivery in 6 weeks or less!

TEMA

Unique. Refreshing. Smart.

Slogan under Room Choices™ is not just catchy, it's a promise that appeals to customers. Three bullet points each add a bit more factual support to the slogan's promise. "Smart" is right!

and 2) feel confident about making the decision to purchase.

Develop your everyday signage message and look

What are the basic ingredients for a successful in-store signage program for your store? First, begin with the message. Take some time to determine:

What is the ONE most important message you want

to convey to customers when they walk into your store?

This message must be something that is meaningful to consumers and is something you do better than any of the competition in your market. It must be what separates you from the competition. Once you define one, you can define a second message that's also unique. (Don't, however, be tempted to create a catch-all message that says you have highest quality, best service, widest selection, lowest prices, etc. That takes

Bedding is bedding, right? Not when you focus totally on the benefit: eight hours of sleep. That's the dream customers want fulfilled. Photos of attractive people in the store's demographic segments help customers put themselves in the picture.

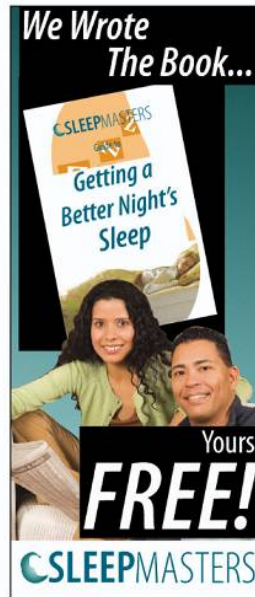
you back to not defining your point of differentiation. That takes you back to a me-too member of the herd.)

For example, is your store's strength built on the largest selection or the lowest prices? Or maybe everything you have is ready for immediate delivery, or your in-store designers make choosing furniture worry free and fun.

Once you define your store's promise to the consumer, find a creative way to reinforce that message throughout your store. You may not have to start from scratch. If you believe your theme, visuals, colors and fonts in your advertising messages successfully reflect your image, by all means use these elements on your signage to build a consistent brand image.

The right visuals on your store signage are very important. You must consider the core of your demographic and how they live. Then, you can integrate visuals into your signage with which the shopper will identify.

Next, consider the medium you will use to convey your message. Will static, printed signs be sufficient? Or are there parts of your store that deserve video or digital signs?



Consider how the signs will fit into the interior decoration of your store. Be sure they enhance your store environment and do not detract from it, unless distraction is your purpose.

Finally, consider how the signs will fit into the interior decoration of your store. Be sure they enhance your store environment and do not detract from it — unless distraction is your purpose.

Above all, make certain your staff understands how to communicate and provide your brand promise at every point of customer contact.

Developing in-store signage for special events

Events are a lot of work, and sure, event signage adds to that effort. However, before you decide it takes too much effort or investment, consider this:

When you are advertising a bigger-than-life event, how do you think a customer responds when she walks into your store and it looks like business as usual?

For major events, we are

seeing that the use of banners, sales tags and even sales buttons really do go a long way to creating excitement and adding integrity to the sales promotion.


Balloons are relatively low cost and always add a lot of energy to the sales floor. Whether you use your store's logo colors, fashion colors, or the colors associated with a specific holiday, you will be surprised how balloons affect your entire staff. Everyone loves to throw a party, and the mood communicates to customers!

Later this year, we will discuss the unique value and the creative use of digital in-store signage and how quickly it is changing the face of retail marketing.


However, if you want to "turn it around in 2009," don't neglect in-store signage. No question about it. It is a great tool to reinforce your brand promise as well as create excitement for those larger-than-life sales events!



In 1896 Henry Simon Boeke opened his first furniture store in rural Iowa. His vision and commitment were simple. "Provide a better quality piece of furniture...for a better price!"



Henry Simon Boeke



Simply Refreshing!

"The owner
overheard customers
repeating to friends
the messages
they saw throughout
the store."

Do customers really notice signage?

This past year, Doug Knorr had the opportunity to build a branding campaign for a home furnishings store located in the Midwest. Says Knorr, "This store was unique in its market, selling only high-end, handcrafted, American-made furniture. We focused on that.

"Developing a Marketing Communications Plan allowed us to define several messages that embodied the unique offerings of that store. We developed a creative, in-store static signage program that clearly communicated this store's difference from other stores.

"When we recently visited this client, they shared how interesting it was for them to overhear customers repeating to their family and friends the messages that they saw throughout the store as they went through the buying process," Knorr says. 

There's never been a better time to call us than times like these.

For nearly a century, retailers have depended on the Lynch Sales Company to be there through thick and thin, helping them reduce inventory while improving cash flow and profits. And today is no different. Regardless of economic climate, you can depend on our 95 years of stability, because we have helped our retail clients weather every economic storm since 1914.

In fact, we originated the entire concept of promotional sales to generate cash, expand or change location, remodel stores, or update their inventory – all designed to make successful stores even more successful, regardless of market conditions.



Circa 1930 Lynch Sales Company Event

Isn't this the perfect time for a Lynch Sale event? OUR clients are doing substantial business even during these harsh economic times. Call today for an outline of our copyrighted SALE PLANS. Find out how a Lynch Sale can help your business weather the current storm and prepare for the future.

UNCOMPROMISING INTEGRITY. UNPARALLELED RESULTS.



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