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indie bookstore entrepreneur

IDEAS, INSPIRATION, BEST PRACTICES

winter 2012

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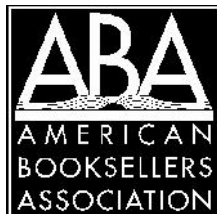
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New to the bookstore business?

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**March 19-23, 2012
Amelia Island, FL**

As the new year unfolds, we can anticipate even more uncertainty and change ... in the book industry, in the world.

Will physical books remain alive in our communities? Yes, because there are still so many who want a bookstore to visit, connect, and find books to enrich their lives. ***It's up to us*** to find ways to cater to and enrich the reading lifestyle in our communities.

Let's explore the opportunities for making valuable connections in a changing world.

books beyond commodity.

With hand-held gadgets, constant internet connectivity, and electronic price and availability checks, books can easily be seen as just another SKU. How do we keep a few steps ahead?

Creativity and an indie spirit are still our greatest assets.

Little known gems get the spotlight.

When the warehouse club picks one of your favorites, go back to the shelves and find something else to put in prime spaces.

Small groupings are good. Single title displays (in multiple quantities) are too.

Change is essential, so constantly refresh displays in key places.

Get personal.





Learn. Plan. Do.

Quick Links

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Staff training video immediately improves store visual merchandising

Bookstore Merchandising Made Easy 2.0



To preview video, click on image below.



Put ideas to use to inspire the sale:

*** The most valuable**



Sign your name to your shelf-talkers and ensure that no section is without shelf-talkers on every case.

Personal service happens in a variety of ways. Face-to-face interaction is just one. Your personal hand-written or printed recommendations work every hour the store is open.

Mix it up.

Little surprises make shopping fun. When people discover things they never knew existed, it reinforces the value of shopping at a bricks-and-mortar store.

Think broadly about catering to the reading lifestyle to extend your non-book selection ... and *mix your merchandise throughout the store.*



enrich the shopping experience.

are you more focused on the product or the customer?

How your merchandise is presented in the store will answer this question.

Might we be treating books as a commodity by using traditional groupings and section signs?



Imagine if our sections were planned around the customer rather than the topic. We cater to kids and parents, but hardly any other market segment is represented in most bookstores.

Now that more baby boomers are retiring, there is huge potential for that target market. This is a time in life many people look forward to, plan for, and enjoy when it arrives. What would you put in a section called "The Good Years" or "Life After Work"?

- Travel and relocation guides
- Wellness for seniors, aging gracefully, staying fit, healthy, and pain-free
- Stretching your money, planning your estate
- Using skills for philanthropic work
- Healthy relationships with grown children and

retail real estate: the
"Front of Store"

* Tables & focal point
displays

* Sections throughout
the store

* Shelf-talkers

* Impulse areas like
the cash wrap &
service areas

BUY NOW

grandchildren

- Writing your own memoir, tracing family history
- Leisure fun and DIY projects ...

... plus other items that appeal to these same customers.

Which other sections could you transform? How can you better serve creative types like artists, writers, and crafters? Could you reinvent "Parenting" to "Family Matters"? How would the Young Adult section change if you incorporated non-fiction subjects to fully address the needs of this age group?

**transform the shopping experience
with a focus on people first.**

unmistakably indie.

If we want the bookstore experience to be comfortable and inviting, why not make the bookstore feel more like the comforts of home?

At [Rapunzel's Tower Gift Store in Grosse Ile, MI](#), the baby department is designed as a child's room. In a bookstore, furniture can be used for focal point display fixtures and seating creates the comfort of home.



Merchandising plush, toys, games, room decor, puppets, birthday cards, new baby announcements, and lots of books helps enhance the customer experience with quality and convenience. Notice how lighting makes a difference in setting the stage.



Adjacent to the cash wrap at [The Next Chapter in Northville, MI](#), a display of knitted mittens and gloves spotlights a local artisan's creativity. Each item is crafted from recycled sweaters. You won't find these elsewhere!

Every community has people who work from

home to create fun and interesting items. Offer to carry some of the best examples of your community's cottage industries and you'll create an experience with wonderful one-of-a-kind surprises. Check out [Etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com) to find thousands of examples of hand-crafted goods.

create comfort and find locally crafted items with interesting stories.

spinner dos & don'ts.

We dare you ... go count the number of spinner racks on the sales floor right now.

The biggest mistake we see in indie retail is that spinner racks occupy prime space with low price-point merchandise.

Often the most cheaply made, unattractive fixtures in the entire store, these spinners do not deserve the most valuable real estate. When they multiply throughout the store or are only partially full, they infringe on the integrity of your store's design, crowd the traffic path, block sight lines, and erode the pleasant atmosphere you work so hard to create.



Here's an example of an attractive wood and acrylic spinner (available from [Clear Solutions](#)) that makes the merchandise stand out and has a sturdy base in a neutral color. This fixture example shows beautiful journals at good price points and vendor terms, nicely positioned at the front of the store at [Head House Books in Philadelphia, PA](#), a delightful, small bookstore in the heart of a historic neighborhood.

Discard. Organize. Declutter.

Sometimes, you simply don't have appropriate space for a spinner or don't feel it meets your quality standards.

Here is the Early Readers section at [Mitzi's Main Street Books in Rapid City, SD](#). There wouldn't have been any room for a spinner unless we blocked the aisle, so we decided to use the shelf cards



(indicating reading levels) on one of the bookcase shelves instead. An acrylic shelf insert was used on the top shelf in this photo to face-out some new titles. The shelves look full, the eye-level shelf presents full covers, and the shelf cards look great and help customers find what they need. Best of all, there are no ugly wire racks on the sales floor!

be thoughtful about the use of precious prime space.

customer e-mails stir loyalty & sales.



Nancy Olson, owner of [Quail Ridge Books in Raleigh, NC](#) and former *Publishers Weekly* Bookstore of the Year award-winner, has a wonderfully personal e-mail that goes out periodically to customers. It's simple with plain text and bold headlines, but is packed with

compelling reasons to shop indie at Quail Ridge.

There are plenty of reasons to read Nancy's e-mails:

- Each e-mail begins with **personal notes** from Nancy: comments about authors and the titles she has read and enjoyed
- **Recommendations** from staff and customers as well are meaty and brief
- **Signed copies** are offered to those who couldn't make the event - "*while they last*" reminds customers to call now
- **Special services and offers** are spotlighted, like free domestic shipping for online orders and free gift wrapping
- Invitation to **upcoming events**
- Arrival of wonderful **new non-book items**
- Updates on **community efforts** like participating in the Angel Tree project remind customers why it's good to shop locally
- And **gratitude** is always part of the communication, thanking customers for shopping locally, helping with charitable efforts, being part of the bookstore's community

Quail Ridge's e-mails are an example of well-crafted, personal conversations that keep customers connected to the world of books through the bookstore.

regular communication with customers gives them reasons to keep reading and to buy from you.

Ideas, objective feedback and guidance, encouragement (always) and support ... we are here for you!

Do you have something on your mind or a project on your plate? Give us a call. Your first consultation is free and we're much more affordable than you might think.



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Warm regards,

Donna + Mark

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