

LAUREL'S LEADS

A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words

Picture this: Hits to your website are up, your Facebook followers have nearly doubled and traffic is streaming into your store. There's a lot you can do to achieve these results, but you may be overlooking one of the best tools—photographs. Retailers of all genres use high-quality photographs of their store to enhance marketing. A sophisticated but simple slideshow on your home page, or a photo album of new product arrivals posted to Facebook, will engage your contacts and turn them into customers. The right photos can even land you editorial coverage in local publications. Show them who you are and what you've got—from your products to your person. Here are my ideas for photographing your store.

- ➔ **Take on-the-spot images** with your digital camera or smartphone regularly. When a customer comes out of the dressing room and twirls around in a tutu, snap it. With the customer's written permission you can put it on your store's wall, use it to dress up your Facebook wall, post it on your website and blog, send it out in your newsletter or add it to a tweet. Likewise, when you bring in new merchandise, shoot it and show it.
- ➔ **If you've got an iPhone**, for fun, and to glam up your shots, download the free Instagram app. It offers filters that transform the look and feel of your pictures, so you can give them an up-to-the-minute, old-fashioned or edgy finish.
- ➔ **Here's my Christmas tip for you:** The buzz word this season is "exclusive." Have fun in your store, and do something that others aren't: Bring in a photographer to take pictures of customers as they attend in-store events and shop for holiday gifts. The photo will be the perfect accompaniment to the present.
- ➔ **Also, every so often post a new picture of yourself** on Facebook, because people want to know who they're dealing with. Essentially, they're asking, "Are you like me?" It doesn't matter if you're 25 or 65, you will find your constituency by showing yourself. These pictures should be (or at least appear to be) spontaneous.
- ➔ **To get maximum value from your photos**, make sure to work with a professional who knows about displaying products perfectly, and who'll show the best view of the real you and your store. It's an investment, but this is vital for publicity purposes. You need high-quality, high-resolution pictures to make it into the media.

If you want to convince shoppers that your store is worth visiting, or that you are someone they can do business with, save a thousand words and share what sets your store apart—by showing it. Smile!

Laurel Tielis is the founder of Laurel Tielis and Associates, a retail consulting firm. She has over 15 years of retail experience, most recently serving as a marketing and public relations consultant for small businesses.



Got a marketing question for Laurel?

E-mail ldowd@dancemedia.com