



A PLAN FOR SUCCESS

MAKING THE RIGHT BUY

PEARL IZUMI

This editorial feature is sponsored by Pearl Izumi with Mercedes Ross.

THE PLAN

Last month we asked you to look at your space and be clear and realistic about the space you have for apparel. Additionally we suggested you get a clear picture of who your consumer is. By analyzing your bike sales, talking to your employees and actually

watching the consumers walking through the door, you should at this point have a clear picture of your customer.

The first rule of thumb is buy for your space. And then break the product categories down to Women's and Men's. And within the gender categories, you might have Road and Mountain.

Because brands create sales, start with strong brands that best serve your customer. Do you have too many lines to show in the clothing space that you have? What are the strengths of each line? Are the brands familiar to your customer? A Pearl Izumi customer will generally stick to Pearl product just as a Louis Garneau consumer will seek you out for that brand. Be aware of what brands drive sales in your particular market.

It is better to have fewer brands so pick lines that are going to supply your consumer with a well-rounded offering. After you evaluate the lines that you want to carry plan to offer a good selection from each. This makes it much easier to

coordinate colors and technologies within a brand rather than across brands. Then, buy deep so all sizes are available for the interested shopper.

Remember, just like with inner tubes there are some products that you should never run out of: think shorts, gloves and socks, and always offer these in a good, better, best selection.

When positioning the brands consider choices at each price point. One line might have a reputation as mid to high-end. Another might offer good value from opening price points to mid while another can offer a selection across all three. Offering a consistent brand across all price points makes it easier for a customer to move up in a line they are already comfortable with but it is still important that there is a clear brand choice to each customer. Remember, you don't need six different brands of \$40 shorts – or at \$200!

BUYING FOR YOUR WOMEN'S AREA

Buying your women's apparel has some additional challenges. Not only do you need to offer good, better, best, but color stories play a critical role in selling women's clothing. Women also tend to buy in "outfits" so create add-on sales with gloves and socks that match the color story.

Understand the space that you have to work with and buy accordingly. If you have a wall space of eight feet for women, it can carry three different color stories. Floor fixtures can carry an additional color story or a technical story. Be sure to consider how you will merchandise the product with the outfit it is intended to match. Jerseys, jackets and shorts with a color accent should be bought and displayed together to generate that "buy more" thought process. If gloves or socks have the same teal color as shorts and jerseys, place a sampling of them with the products they match.

It can't be emphasized enough; color stories create add-on sales in the women's market.

PLACING THE ORDER

Finally, carefully consider your shipments as you are buying for the next season. Make sure you split your shipments up so that the clothing section looks fresh with new product throughout the season and you are telling a new color story to women halfway through the season. Take that first shipment two weeks earlier than you believe you should – your customers are considering their apparel purchase earlier than you think!



Cut out clothing pictures from your suppliers' catalogs. Pin them to a cork board categorized by gender, price point and clothing type. Move them around until you find a mix that works!

BY THE NUMBERS

Before you can plan your buy, figure out how many pegs, hangers or fixtures you have for each product category. Count 'em up and fill 'em in here:

	SHORTS	JERSEYS	TIGHTS	OUTERWEAR	GLOVES	SOCKS
PEGS						
HANGERS						
FIXTURES						

Get Ready

Follow these simple steps to make the most of your upcoming apparel presentations:

- 1 Determine the number of hooks and spaces available for apparel (fill in the By the Numbers chart)
- 2 Assess your space. Is it too crowded? Are the floor fixtures overstocked? Have you created an anchor wall for your clothing?
- 3 Set-up a schedule of appropriate ship dates and run those by your rep.
- 4 Set a goal for 2010: Apparel will be 10% of your sales, and you'll get three or more inventory turns for the year. How much do you need to stock to achieve your goal?

What You'll See Next

Getting the apparel out of the box and onto the floor: Effective techniques in Visual Merchandising.

Quick 'N' Easy

(Do This Today)

- Buy a cork board, push pins, etc so you can lay out your plan
- If you don't have one already, create an anchor wall for your clothing section
- Take an inventory of your fixtures you have, i.e. waterfalls, straight outs, hang rail bars and shelves, floor fixtures. What shape are they in?
- Look at your hangers. Do the heads all swivel? Are the hangers all the same?