

Merchandising Tips

1. Don't forget the basics: Keep the floor filled with inventory and the stain center shelves filled at all times! Keep your store CLEAN! Tidy up the store every day, shutting drawers, organizing accessories. If you have aisles, keep them straight. When you wash the windows, don't forget to wash the sign. *There was a recent article in Bottom Line magazine that said customers believe that coffee stains on airline seat trays and covers mean poor engine maintenance.* It's the same with your store. A clean orderly store and full inventory give customers the positive feeling you want them to have.
2. Put furniture out on the front porch in fair weather, especially rocking chairs. If you are using the same unfinished furniture over and over again, top coat the furniture with a clear water base (so it doesn't amber) such as **GF's High Performance Polyurethane**.
3. Remember the cardinal rule! *Buyer's buy what they can see, not what is going to be.* If you don't display many finished pieces, exhibit at least one finished item of furniture with every grouping of unfinished furniture. This will pique customer interest and allow them to visualize what the end result might look like.
4. If you display mostly unfinished furniture (some stores finish a majority of their floor stock), then paint the walls a darker color to set off the light unfinished wood. If your store is dark, increase the lighting!
5. Children's areas can be created using a minimum of floor space while displaying furniture at the same time. Set out small tables with puzzles. One of our stores keeps a large stuffed buffalo for children to play on. (These and other stuffed animals are available from Country Critters 316-364-8623) Some of our other customers keep animal crackers on hand and run videotapes on a small television.
6. Accessorize your store with merchandising 'props' such as large stuffed animals, quilts for quilt racks, lamps, TV props" (Available from Box Props, 800-222-2604, www.boxprops.com), used televisions and computers, historic design candles, primitive candles, framed prints, placemats, chandeliers, pottery, braided rugs, placemats and table runners, books on bookshelves, bedding, pitcher and bowl sets, etc. Don't forget, accessories must be moved frequently or they will leave shadow marks on the wood!
7. Seek out local vendors for accessories that can be arranged in your stores on consignment, such as silk flowers from a local florist, or crafts from local craftsmen.
8. Make your show room floor appeal to the widest possible market. Create vignettes with different themes, such as the lodge look, country, shaker, antique, high colonial or modern
9. Put prop boards featuring the different specialty finishes (faux, crackle, distressed, etc.) around the store with directions on back. Hand out copies of specialty finish instructions to your customers. (Step-by-step instructions for all the specialty finishes are available in this manual – please feel free to copy them for distribution).

10. Some final thoughts on merchandising; remember that you are selling furniture! Go slowly, buying only a few accessories at first. Be aware of the mood of your market, not your personal taste! One of my favorite stores is accessorized by Dave Weller of Marstans in Chaddsford PA. He has beautifully staged his store with tasteful pieces that draw attention to the furniture without competing for the eye's focus. He is so in tune with his market, you can imagine those pieces of furniture in your living room with the accessories he has chosen. This technique is called future pacing, getting the consumer to think of the future with the product or service that you are selling. Remember, design for the market, otherwise you will end up marketing your design!

Courtesy of Fran Pieper of Pieper's Unfinished is a list of places to shop for accessories. Thanks Fran!
(List updated 9/02)

- Atlanta Gift Show/Merchandise Mart 800-ATL-MART
www.americasmart.com
- Boston Gift Show 800- 272-SHOW
www.bostongiftshow.com
- Chicago Gift Show 800-677-MART
www.merchandisemart.com
- Dallas Super Market/National Gift 800-DAL-MKTS
www.glmshows.com
- Denver Gift Show 800-289--6278
www.denvermart.com
- Kansas City Gift Show 800-950-MART
www.kcgiftmart.com
- California Gift Show 800-272-7469
www.californiagiftshow.com
- Merchandise Mart/Chicago Gift Show 800-933-2451
www.merchandisemart.com
- Minneapolis Gift Show 800-626-1298
www.mpls-giftmart.com
- New York International Gift Show 800-272-SHOW
www.nyigf.com
- Oasis Gift Show (Phoenix) 800-424-9519
www.oasis.org
- San Francisco International Gift Fair 800-346-1212
www.sfigf.com
- Seattle Gift Show 800-284-2630
www.seattlegift.com