



**Kendal King  
Group**

Retail Marketing Solutions

# Today's retail business model is about bringing solutions to buyers to grow their categories.

*Your success depends on demonstrating how your products fit within a category and how you can help the buyer improve sales and the bottom line.*

From a design standpoint, buyers are visual merchandisers – they need to be shown as much as told about your products. And, don't just show them, support your presentation with some validation, research or insights. Buyers are stewards of the retailer's brand and they are accountable for delivering the right mix of products that will grow sales and keep customers happy.

Keep in mind that there's a difference between selling in and selling. You don't want a buyer to feel as though he or she has been "sold." The best vendor-buyer relationships are collaborations. You want them to buy; they want to expand their categories and enhance their store's bottom line.

While every situation is different, there are five basic rules to successfully selling in to most retailers:

## **1. Know Your Buyer**

Learn what you can about a buyer's background and preferences. Get to know him or her on a personal level. Develop a relationship. Can you both be advocates for your products and their goals? You can certainly be an advocate for the buyer when meeting with multiple layers of the marketing and merchandising organization. Know when the time is right for showing a finished look versus sketches that allow for the buyer to offer suggestions and critique for you to incorporate into future meeting presentations. And don't underestimate the quirkier nuances of buyer preferences. One might really like the color red, so it's in your best interest not to present a lot of blue. We know of one buyer who is a shoe fanatic, so we urge our customers to put their best foot forward with her.

## **2. Know the Objectives**

Start with understanding the goals and objectives for the category. Make the case for how your products support those goals or how you can help drive traffic or expand the category. Get to know the buyer's challenges and develop ways to solve them. Being willing to take on the toughest challenge and stick with it to find a solution, will gain confidence and build trust with the buyer that you are a valuable, problem-solving supplier.

## **3. Know the Retailer's Merchandising Strategy**

Tailor your merchandising strategy to fit within the retailer's environment and specifications. Don't try to design in-store programs that are one size fits all. Each retailer likes to promote that they have something unique for customers, so show them how your products fit into their stores or gives them something special to offer. And, at the very least, work with a design team well versed in the retailer's requirements. You don't want to meet with a club buyer and show him or her pallet dimensions for the competition. By the same token, you don't want to



*"It doesn't matter how great the product is or how much the research shows the consumer wants it; if the buyer does not buy it, it will never get on the shelf for the consumer to even have a chance to purchase it."*

**Drew Loboda**  
President

**Visionary  
Powerful Design  
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*continued...*



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show elaborate off-shelf promotions for a retailer that prefers inline programs. Make sure you are selling the right products at the right time, too. Know the retail selling schedule and play to that. It doesn't mean you can't show how a product would fit into another season, but lead with the solution to the problem facing your buyer today.

#### **4. Know How to Wow**

So, your presentation is ready to go; the numbers are all neatly packaged and prepared. Your consumer and brand research is complete. Your promotional plan and supporting budget are ready to go. But then the buyer asks, "So what does it look like?" This is really your time to shine, not panic. Retail is a visual experience and anytime you can go for the wow and present the "what if" concepts and scenarios, you've got a wow. Think outside the department: how could you make a bigger play for the category in a cross merchandising promotion? How can you really make a splash with an inline promotion? You may not get the "go ahead" with any of your ideas, but giving the buyer more than one option can go a long way to demonstrating your commitment to helping grow sales.

#### **5. Know How to Win**

The best way to "wow" a buyer is to make sure he or she knows your No. 1 goal is his or her satisfaction. Saying you want a "win-win" is cliché, but very true. The only way to make that happen is to make a partner of your buyers and show them how your products mean more revenue for both of you. And, keep in mind what a "win" means. If you don't get everything you want the first time out, you haven't "lost." A win can be placing more SKUs in stores, retaining or defending your status with the company or nabbing an off-the-shelf promotion. Business success is about continuity and establishing your brand with a buyer. It's about building a long term relationship with a buyer, not being a one-hit wonder.

*Kendal King Group is a retail marketing agency focused on expressing brands in-store. We are experts at interpreting and delivering the brand message through design, development and execution of promotion material at the critical in-store point-of-purchase. Offering over 20 years of experience in strategy, design and execution of retail displays and programs, Kendal King Group operates offices in Kansas City, MO; Bentonville, AR; Minneapolis, MN; and Guangzhou, China. For more information, please visit [www.kendalking.com](http://www.kendalking.com) or call 800.542.9882.*

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