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# GIFTS AND TABLEWARES

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# Now and Zen

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## LIGHTING UP



BY LINDA MCKENDRY,  
VMPc

## Sales

*Recently, a customer came into my decorating shop asking specifically for upholstery and drapery fabrics that combined pink and peach florals on dark green backgrounds. As she described a living room with warm, creamy walls and light colored floors on which these would end up as upholstered pieces, I nodded my assent and sent her home with a few well-chosen samples. Each week following she would exchange these samples for a new group that were slight variations on the same theme and each week she would again come back in and say, "They're too dark." Frustrated, I finally arranged to come out to her home and see for myself. She pointed to the fabrics carefully laying on the carpet in a bare room void of good lighting and said, "See! They're too dark." I quickly brought in a small portable floor lamp from my van that spilled light down onto the fabrics. The pink and peach flowers glowed and came alive as the dark backgrounds stood out smartly against the light colored flooring. It was magical. Even her face lit up!*

Because it was fabrics that I was selling along with the ideas about what to do with those fabrics, I knew from my VMP training that to light them right would attract more attention and therefore generate more traffic. In my retail shop simple displays with table lamps sent warm, focused light down onto fabric samples making them come alive and increase in perceived value. Colors were made more vibrant, textures more defined and highlights such as silky or metallic threads stood out. Every time I needed to make a change in the showroom it was just a matter of moving a table with the lamp or moving a floor lamp into the best spot. All it took was an extension cord, careful placement of fixtures and area rugs to cover the cords, and a few decorative hooks in the ceiling placed in strategic spots for the cords to swag overhead if necessary to carry the needed light to the center of the aisles or top of fixtures.

How does this lighting technique translate into a gift and tableware shop? During a shop makeover years ago, the Museum Shop in Jordan, Ontario purchased mini, decorative

lamps to place inside old, deep, dark armoires and cupboards which showcased the products for sale. Even though they purchased the lamps to highlight their products, the lights have become a hit and an item that they now sell. Not only do they brighten up the shop by getting rid of dingy corners and black holes, but they add tremendously to the store's overall sales. Yes, they sell the lamps. A hidden, out of the way corner behind a door that is usually ignored has become a focal point for a tableware display that all begins with a lamp that causes glassware to sparkle, attracting attention, and adding to increased traffic and sales.

Look around your shop and find out where you can place a lamp or two that will provide a wonderful light source exactly where you need it to enhance the features (color, pattern, and style) of your merchandise, and become a product for sales with a price tag that encourages a cash 'n carry transaction. Lights sell better when they are on and products sell better when they are lit well. Decorative lamps offer the retailer the best of both worlds. They provide a

portable source of lighting for products where you need it and when you need it without permanent installation by an electrician. There's more control over the type of bulb used (whether it be a spot, flood, tinted or tri-light) and the amount of wattage which can be softened or brightened as required by different types of merchandise and display situations.

For example, it may be in your best interest to place a floor lamp up on the top shelf of a gondola feature in order to bring a sufficient source of light onto a display at eye level but with enough height to build up the display, complete with signs that can be seen from a distance across your store. If the light creates a glare that shines in the customers eyes and makes them squint and makes it difficult for them to view your presentation comfortably, then you may want to soften the light by changing the type of bulb. I often travel with tri-light fixtures that have bullet shaped shades which direct three sources of light with the most control. I can use one with a spot bulb to focus light at a key feature of my display and softer flood bulbs in the other two to give an overall glow to the entire presentation while minimizing shadows. Some of these fixtures allow the lights to slide along a bar and tighten with a knob at the preferred height.

One of the best sources for lighting that is used more for display than as decorative accessory is office supply outlets. In fact, many lights typically designed for use by architects, engineers, and students are the least costly and have the most flexibility. When you're at the next trade show, take a close look at the unique and novel uses of standard lighting which enhances the various booths. It not only impacts where your eye goes, it alters how you feel about what you are seeing.

Remember, in making your lighting selection, purchase lamps that enhance the color, pattern, and style of your products. A printed floral shade shining light on a selection of Victorian lace and satin pillows sprinkled with enameled trinket boxes and porcelain figurines makes for a complete and coordinated display. Lamps not only enhance the merchandise but they help the shopper to visualize the product in a residential setting, which is why the lamp often becomes the very product sold out of a display.

If your merchandise is more general or you don't want the light to be seen as part of the display then choose a basic, nondescript

contemporary lamp in a plain finish with only function in mind and no decorative features.

A reminder about placing lamps in your windows, especially at night: one or two lamps in the window spilling light down onto a featured selection of products will be visible from a very great distance and even by fast flowing traffic. People walking by at night will be drawn to the light and respond to the warm, inviting feeling it creates. During the day strong lamps will illuminate products and reduce the 'black glass' effect that glare and strong sunlight produce on windows. □ [www.todaysdisplays.com](http://www.todaysdisplays.com)

## LAMP WORKS

### *How to display lamps to their best advantage*

The way lamps are displayed in a store can greatly enhance their appeal to customers.

The following tips offer some assistance in the fine art of display.

1. Make the display more interesting by grouping lamps of different heights in order to stress individual identities. Arrange lamps from smallest to largest. Use different levels to create interest.
2. Display table lamps, floor lamps and torchieres of the same design as a group.
3. Isolate different product categories such as country styles, modern or brass lamps.
4. Display lamps by color. If customers are decorating a room in a particular color scheme, they will be looking for lamps in a specific color.
5. Don't clutter or pack the floor, because customers can't see the merchandise. Make the display neat and orderly.
6. Display lamps so that people can pick them up, touch them and get an idea of how they will look in their homes.
7. Show the breadth of a line by displaying as many colors as possible, not just one or two.
8. Offer alternative shades for lamps to increase the consumer's choices.

#### **In a setting with furniture:**

1. Place lamp styles in settings that complement the furniture. Different lighting styles can be used in one vignette as long as they don't conflict with each other or the furniture.
2. Use lighting around furniture to create drama or a mood.
3. Place lamps only in settings where their size and scale fit properly. Don't put lamps on end tables unless the table height is right for the lamp.
4. Light as many lamps as possible to highlight the furniture and create a more effective display.

#### **In any display:**

1. Don't put bright bulbs in lamps. Low light makes them look better. Bright lights can overwhelm the style of the lamp.
2. Display lamps in pairs, because customers often buy two of a kind.
3. Attach to the lamp a description of the item, its features and benefits.
4. Remove the wrapping from shades for a more friendly look.

Source: Art Lamp, Toronto, ON.

(original ads replaced by illustrations appropriate for topic)



Lighting an inside corner with a table lamp provides just enough light to reveal details on the products.

A soft shade keeps glare from the shopper's eyes and spills light above and below.

Lighting an outside corner with a bullet floor lamp brings out all the colors, patterns, and features of the "poos"!

The portable lamp is safe from contact with shoppers because it is behind the display from the inside.