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By Bethany Stough



Five Keys to a Great Showroom

Invest in tools that upsell window performance

For window and door dealers, the showroom—its location, layout, design and usefulness—is key to every sale. And, central to any great showroom is its appeal to the customer. During the Window & Door Dealer Days Keynote Panel Discussion, Oct. 19-20, held during GlassBuild America 2016, four Window & Door Dealer of the Year award winners shared their best practices for creating a showroom that makes the sale.

This article offers five key takeaways from the discussion on how to create a dream showroom. (*Editor's Note: Thanks to Cori Brown, Franklin Window & Door; Rick Locke, Windows, Doors & More; Scott Thurber, Associated Building Supply Inc.; and Jeff Wilcox, Glass Concepts, for serving as the panelists. Thanks to all Window & Door Dealer Days attendees for participating in the discussion.*)

1. Pursue a Specific Market

Window and door dealer panelists credit much of their success to opening show-

rooms in a specific marketplace:

Cori Brown, owner and president of Franklin Window & Door, franklinwindowanddoor.com, moved her boutique showroom from small-town Franklin, Indiana to Carmel, Indiana, to directly hit its target market for high-end products. Brown has orchestrated every aspect of what the customer experiences throughout the showroom as soon as they walk in the door—down to offering a specific type of water—to cater to the target client.

Associated Building Supply, associatedbuildingsupply.com, has 10 showrooms across California, all in affluent neighborhoods. The dealer furthers its high-end branding with appointment-only showrooms and by hiring salespeople who work well with an affluent clientele.

“Knowing who you want to target and scheduling an appointment with them curbs the selling time,” says Scott Thurber, vice president of Associated Building Supply. “We’ve been successful with having showrooms in target

Above: It's crucial for dealers to use the available space to its full potential, all with the sale in mind, according to Window & Door Dealer Days panelists. (Image courtesy of Franklin Window & Door, franklinwindowanddoor.com.)

markets. We honestly would not be as successful without this plan.”

2. Maximize the Layout

Once located in an ideal marketplace, it's crucial for dealers to use the available space to its full potential, all with the sale in mind:

Associated Building Supply does not include any vendor logos throughout its showrooms; instead, the only visible logo is the company's own. This way, salespeople can guide the customer to the product that fits their needs, rather than the client automatically gravitating toward a recognized brand name.

“We build our brand with our visible logos. This eliminates clutter and confu-

sion, and results in a very clean look that our customers enjoy,” says Thurber.

Windows, Doors & More, window-showroom.com, located in Seattle, organizes its showroom by price point, with the high-end products up front. “The vinyl is in the back, so our customers will have to walk through better products to get to a low-end product,” says Rick Locke, president. “It’s very well-organized.”

Windows, Doors & More begins the customer’s well-organized walkthrough right at the front desk. The store manager conducts pre-qualification with each customer, matching each customer with a specific sales person to cater to their needs, which, says Locke, has increased sales.

After moving from an historic, naturally boutique-styled showroom to a flex space, Franklin Window & Door poured its showroom design attention into the aesthetics. “We focused on everything the customer experiences from as soon as they come in the door,” says Brown. “We had to consider everything, including lighting. All of the overhead fluorescent lighting is turned off, and we installed our own lighting to fit the aesthetic we want.”

3. Spotlight the Products

The products are the most important part of any showroom, and showcasing a wide variety of up-to-date products is a must to increase sales, according to the dealer panelists:

To move product in and out easily, Glass Concepts, glassconcepts.net, uses displays mounted to skid lifts. Associated Building Supply and Windows, Doors & More use all full-sized displays with products as tall and wide as they come to show full operation.

“Products should be installed and well lit,” says Locke. In the Windows, Doors & More showroom, customers can see a variety of glass samples and a good mix of products. Everything is lighted so the customer can see what the product might look like in their home.



Panelists at Window & Door Dealer Days share their thoughts on showroom design. (Image by Robb Cohen Photography & Video LLC, robbphotos.com.)

4. Integrate Technology

All four of the dealer panelists use technology in their showrooms—for their sales team, for their product displays, or both:

At Glass Concepts, customers can take a virtual tour of the installed products via the showroom’s “design wall,” a 15 foot by 10 foot piece of StarGlas 60—a high-tech projection system—installed with a rear HD projector.

Windows, Doors & More’s sales personnel can connect to the internet with each customer to peruse the customer’s interests. “They look at what the customer wants, together. The customer can guide them to Pinterest or Houzz, show us their style inspiration,” says Locke. “This provides a common ground between us and our customers.”

Sales staff members then use the showroom’s 80-inch screen to display the inspiration. “By using technology, we let the customers drive the sales experience. Really get them engaged in the process.”

5. Partner with the Community

Ultimately, window and door dealers won’t be successful without getting people in the door. The dealer panelists suggested using the showroom space beyond regular business hours to do just that:

Glass Concepts has been able to use its StarGlas screen for community events, enabling them to utilize the space in creative ways and attract the community to the business. “It’s relevant to the needs of the time,” says Wilcox.

Windows, Doors & More opens up its showroom to host networking and association events. “Getting people in is key,” says Locke. “Build relationships with individuals; offer something new to get them interested.”

The panelists also suggested connecting with local American Institute of Architects chapters to build clientele. “Become friends with the local [AIA] director,” says Locke. He says offering continuing education credits to architects and incentivizing them to build a partnership will go a long way. “Show them how to use your partnership as a tool. It’s mutually beneficial.”

Central to all the expertise shared during the panel discussion was to stay current and keep moving forward. “The industry is moving fast,” says Thurber. “You must be in constant evolution with products and strategies. In two years, what you’re doing is obsolete, so keep moving.” □