

The Five Things to Address Before Your In-Store Event

Written by Jeanne Eury, NCRMA Director of Member Services

Events are a great way to bring people into your store for the first time, thank current customers, partner with other businesses, create media buzz, and so much more. Assuming you've done the proper planning and marketing beforehand, these are the last (but very important) things to address before your event.

1) Staff

Make sure you have enough staff on hand to greet everyone and engage in conversation with your guests. Unfortunately it is also important from a security standpoint to be properly staffed for an event.

Review key talking points with your staff so they are comfortable having conversations and know how to best maximize the time your guests are in the store. In-store events are perfect times to talk to customers about new inventory, new accessories, tips and tricks for wearing or using something they've purchased previously, or the launch of a new club or publication. Having a contest among the staff to see who can sell the most of a certain low-priced item is a fun way to make sure they are all working hard.

2) Merchandise

The "theme" or timing of your event will determine your merchandising choices. If you are having a holiday open-house, make sure to have those items most associated with the holidays displayed to their full advantage. Create packages or reasons to buy at the event. For instance, have "Gifts for Teenagers" in one obvious place or groups of scarves with gloves so it is easy to shop for specific needs. Consider holding a fashion show, hosting a band to play holiday music in the winter/beach music in the summer, etc. adds to the shopping mood. Take time to cross-merchandise to the max during a shopping open house, and don't neglect those small budget/impulse items around the check-out area.

3) Insurance and Liability

Take a look around your business and take care of any cords that could be tripping hazards, steps that aren't marked properly, and any other thing that makes your business look unkempt AND is a potential accident waiting to happen. If you plan to have complimentary champagne or wine for shoppers, call your insurance agent to determine if you need to add a brief event rider to your current policy. Make sure your return and exchange policies are clearly displayed by the register (and many businesses now have them on the receipt) to prevent any issues later.

4) Follow Up Plan

If you haven't collected contact information from your customers, this is the time to start. Email marketing is still the most cost-effective and preferred marketing venue for most customers, so make every effort to collect names and email addresses from every attendee. Let them know they will receive a follow-up email with a coupon or other special offer. If you would like to establish a VIP club or another new way to market to them, make sure to have a plan in place to collect and use whatever information you need to be successful.

5) Goals

There are reasons you chose to have an in-store event and it is vitally important that you put those reasons into goals and track them. If you want to increase sales on a certain night, if you want to grow your email list, if you want to introduce your business to the area, etc. make sure you translate these into quantitative goals. Merchandising and mood-setting, messaging for staff, the follow-up plan, etc. should all be built around your goal for the event.

Hosting events is one of the best ways for stores/businesses to market and advertise. Consider the following opportunities when looking to add events to your marketing strategy.

- Fundraisers
- New location launch party
- Holiday Open House
- Spring/Change of Season party
- Fashion show
- Birthday party