

Spring forward!

Spring—it's both a great season and a great word. A verb and a noun, it rhymes with many things, like fling, ring, sing, zing! As visual merchandisers, the spring season provides opportunity for change and a fresh perspective. The previous holiday season is behind us, and there is still just a bit of time before holiday 2013 planning and production is in full gear.

Spring is a great time of year for a new approach and a willingness to try something unexpected. This is something that might not ordinarily be possible due to limited time or complex design-approval processes (e.g. holiday planning). Furthermore, a healthy business depends on change. Fashion and style are a complete expression of constant change. It's important for any business support person or team—including visual merchandising—to be able to identify how conducting “business as usual” has changed and improved that business since a year ago.

The very definition of spring parallels well with what a visual merchandiser's typical role is all about. Derived from the Middle English “springan” (to jump) and perhaps from the Greek “*sperchesthai*” (to hasten), the word “spring” has a meaning that is both reflective of the season and also of what we all do in a typical day, including:

- *To be resilient or elastic*
- *To grow*
- *To come into being*
- *To make a leap or a series of leaps*
- *To stretch out in height*
- *To cause to operate suddenly*
- *To bend by force*
- *To produce suddenly*
- *To release or cause to be released from confinement*

If the holiday season is based on the comfort zone of time-honored traditions and gift giving, then spring is the perfect time of year for change and growth.

So often, we get bogged down with limited time, reduced budgets and constant pressure to justify the costs associated with good visual merchandising. And then we still have to be creative on top! It's a challenge to keep ahead of the curve, to be as organized and flexible as possible. Trying to identify how you can be operating differently this spring than last, then, is a lot to ask. Or is it?



In what way are your efforts (and those of your team if you are so fortunate to have one) being done differently this year? Before you know it, the holiday madness will return, and you will wonder: “Where did the year go, and why didn't I get a chance to try doing [insert missed opportunity here]?”

Don't panic. Keeping a fresh perspective through design, production or planning does not have to be an enormous undertaking. Rather, start small and let the idea grow—like a seed in spring. It can be a small change that only an individual is aware of, maybe something internal. Or it can be something on a greater scale that may involve a cast of thousands.

Maybe it's you who needs the change. Perhaps you can be better organized, more adventurous, take an actual lunch break to help ensure a more productive afternoon, allow time for market research—or even connect on a broader level within the retail and visual merchandising industry (there are a lot of us out here, you know). Attend a tradeshow, teach a class or join a local retail design organization. You might learn something.

Or maybe it's your work that needs the change. Perhaps it is initiating a departmental organizational shift, working with new software, incorporating new equipment or designing an installation that pushes the “brand identity” envelope a bit further than what is familiar. Ask yourself: in what way can you be an instrument of forward-moving change?

What is most important is to keep a fresh eye and an open mind. It is a crucial role of visual merchandising to be the instrument of change and a promoter of new ideas and processes that help keep a business growing, changing and always moving forward. In style, of course. **DDI**

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