

This is the fourth in a four-part series of articles on visual merchandising  
For more information visit [www.naturalproductsonline.co.uk](http://www.naturalproductsonline.co.uk) or [www.viridian-nutrition.com](http://www.viridian-nutrition.com)

# This month: Reinforcing your values...visually



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Rachel Dawes concludes her four-part series on the 'hows' and whys' of visual merchandising with a review of ways you can use visual techniques to reinforce your store's values. Find out more about Rachel's approach to visual merchandising at [www.whitepaperdisplay.com](http://www.whitepaperdisplay.com). And come and meet her at Natural & Organic Products Europe at Olympia on 11-12 April 2010.

THE WORLD is changing. Our awareness about our environment and the world we live in is ever increasing. I know you are well aware of this, after all it is you who are working directly in the field of natural products and you are witnessing the growth first hand. However, as it is estimated only 20% of people have ever walked into a natural health food shop, there are many would-be customers still waiting to be converted. To capitalise on this opportunity means sending out the right kind of messages...visually.

As we know, shoppers are becoming more environmentally and ethically conscious, as well as body conscious. Sometimes their interest is spurred by an article they have read, sometimes it might be a conversation had with a friend. The important thing is that you are able to continue that conversation with them when they come through your door.

The implementation of engaging and appealing merchandising and window displays will directly support the wealth of product and subject knowledge your customers already get from you and your staff.

For many customers the process of becoming a natural products consumer is a gradual one. Few people are going to exchange all their familiar mainstream brands for natural and organic alternatives in one fell swoop — it'll be product by product. Some will need to be gently drawn into an 'alternative' shopping environment that they might be apprehensive about. Implementing great window design and strong visual merchandising can help break down barriers and help the transition from mainstream consumer into loyal and returning health store customer.

Over the past three months I have briefly discussed a number of the many different facets of visual merchandising necessary to launch and support a successful campaign and brand. This month's concluding article combines these pointers into two seven step guides. Seven steps to successful VM and the seven deadly sins of VM (see box).

## Working with trends

With the focus remaining on new customers and bringing natural and organic to the mainstream, knowing what's 'hot' has got to be key. Be alert

## Window of opportunity — win a trip to New York!

**Natural Products and Viridian Nutrition are challenging you to create a winning window display at this year's Natural & Organic Products Europe. So, if you're up for the challenge here's what to do:**

**Using a semi-decent camera, take a photograph of your current (or recent) window display, and email it to us together with up to 50 words on why you think your window deserves to win a New York break for two.**

**Don't forget to include the full details of you, your shop, your address and your phone number, and make sure the photo is of reasonable quality and emailed in high resolution. Attach your shop logo to the email, and send it to [jbrandon@divcom.co.uk](mailto:jbrandon@divcom.co.uk).**

**It's as easy as that. And remember,**



**the winner will be heading to New York for a fabulous weekend for two courtesy of Viridian Nutrition!**

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**“With the focus remaining on new customers and bringing natural and organic to the mainstream, knowing what's 'hot' has got to be key. Be alert to the current buzz-words — we are living in a decade dedicated to fashion and trends.”**

to the current buzz-words — we are living in a decade dedicated to fashion and trends. Individual food groups, not just 'on-trend' diet plans are now on the radar of more and more consumers. Your regular customers will know their edamame bean from their elbow, but for many their introduction will be hearing that Victoria Beckham has been snacking on them. So being aware of what is 'on trend' and in fashion is one way to make sure your store can benefit directly from celebrity endorsements.

So, to summarise the information discussed over the course of these four visual merchandising feature issues.

■ **Be confident about who your customer is, what your brand is about and the location you are in.**

■ **Learn what differing visual**

**techniques there are and how best to apply them to your products, shop fit and floor layouts.**

■ **Understand how to objectively critique your displays and ideas.**

■ **Get creative, look for inspiration and ideas whilst remembering the golden rule that sometimes less is more!**

■ **Have a focus and a clear message.**

■ **Plan ahead and review.**

■ **And finally, always remember to maximise your sales — great product needs great VM!**

Good luck and see you at the show.

## The seven steps to successful visual merchandising

- **Understand** — your brand, customer and location.
- **Planning** — product placement, floor layouts, window displays.
- **Calendar** — what is going on locally, seasonally, worldwide?
- **Clarity** — what is your message/campaign?
- **Techniques** — know the VM techniques appropriate to the product/message.
- **Consistency** — the window and sales floor should reflect each other, working as one.
- **Standards** — high standards of display sets the bar for expectations of the shopping experience and the product.

## The seven deadly sins of visual merchandising

- **Slipping standards** — don't let standards slip, maintain daily if possible.
- **Formulaic techniques** — understand what techniques to use and when. Don't over complicate or stick to a 'formula'.
- **Spot lights** — make sure these are the last thing you do on review and after adjustments.
- **Mixed messages** — keep your messages clear and strong.
- **Poor signage** — replace worn signs. Ensure positioning is correct and straight. Stick to printed where possible.
- **Framing** — let it have room to breathe. The essence of the message should be captured in a glance.
- **Placement and position** — the more precise your display, the more impact.