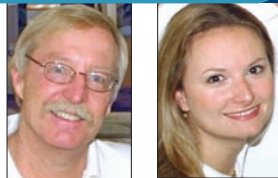


The von Lewinskis own
Charlottesville Aquatics
in Charlottesville, Va.



Is it time to give your store a face-lift?
Here's how to make your showroom
more inviting to customers.

Make Yourself at Home

When you finally make the decision to remodel your showroom or build your dream store, it can be a challenge. You want to properly design a space and maximize the display area allocated to products. But it can't jeopardize the comfort level of your customers.

Though our primary focus is pool building, we sell hot tubs, billiard tables and retail supplies from a modest 4,400-square-foot store.

We've learned that if customers can wander leisurely through the store, they are going to want to stick around longer. They will also return to do business with us. The feeling that people get when they walk into your store can enhance your opportunity to make the sale.

In our showroom, the goal was to take our customers out of the typical store environment and create unique settings that displayed our

products. That way, no one is overloaded with too much information or clutter at once. To achieve this goal, we paid close attention to the subtle details. Here's how we did it:

Setting the stage

Throughout the store, we installed slatwall with a warm, red oak finish. A large pathway of imported Italian tile guides the browser around the store in a circular fashion. The combination offers opportunities to create vignettes as focal points along the way.

We've placed our merchandise on earth-toned, low-pile carpet. Its multicolored weaves ties together all the interior tones, such as the wallpaper border, which is a bright, sunny sky that rings the showroom and frames the store. The effect helps bring viewers' gaze down to floor level, keeping them focused on the merchandise. The border also transitions our wall and ceiling space with a consistent theme.

Track lighting is used to spotlight and accentuate our merchandise. Fluorescent lighting beams from overhead, but it is softened by curved lenses that decrease the glare. Our southeast-facing storefront brings in lots of natural light.

In several locations, we installed light boxes that show images of people enjoying our hot tubs. A surround-sound speaker system accompanies the displays. You want your customers to have the full effect with an audio and visual experience. But be careful not to get too high-tech.

Hot displays

Because we specialize in specific product categories, each niche required individual treatment. For example, the hot tub display portion of our showroom features a 13-foot ceiling to open up the space.

In the center of this area, we installed an irregular partition wall, around which we highlight individual

spas. Each model we sell is on display. Our store also features a private test soak room, offering another opportunity to relax the customer.

Game face

When it came time to plan the game area, we wanted a homey, leisure-type atmosphere. That's why the ceilings in the billiards area are only 9 feet tall. The lower ceiling encloses the customer with a sense of security and privacy.

We keep about six table styles on the floor, each with a different color cloth. It looks like pool hall paradise, with the vignettes comprising sets of pub tables and chairs, floor and wall racks, bar mirrors and classic car photos.

Keep in mind, even small enhancements that make your customers' experience more effortless can pay big dividends. ■

The right track: As shown here, staggered slatwalls and a tile pathway lead the browser comfortably through the store's series of vignettes.

