



‘TIS THE SEASON...

TO PLAN AHEAD AND BE CREATIVE FOR HOLIDAY ORDERS

Savvy retailers know January is the time to scout and buy for the next holiday season to accommodate production lead times. But even the most reasonable standard procedures have been turned upside down recently. So, what should buyers realistically expect to see in the seasonal showrooms during Market? And what's the best way to plan for in-store displays that will sell?



BE INSPIRED

Exploring showrooms is an invaluable way to see what's new as well as discover creative ways to merchandise product. Brad Schmidt is an acclaimed floral designer as well as a key player in product development for multiple companies including Select Artificials. "I'm doing at least seven looks for Select and they're all new," he says. "I'm using some old and some new product being mixed but it's all a fresh new look with new trends. Everyone has some carry-over looks that are traditional, and we're always working with the newest idea whether it's all-white or gold or silver washes."

At RAZ Imports, they're presenting a mix as well. "We will be resetting our showroom earlier than normal to offer a beautiful online showroom shopping experience in tandem with January Markets," says Cameron Bowersox, director of Product Development. "In addition, we plan to show many new and inspiring displays that showcase our new and carry-forward items merchandised together."

BE CREATIVE

Sometimes it's not all brand-new product but a new approach that results in a stunning merchandise presentation. "We're taking things that we haven't shown before on a Christmas tree and bringing those things in so it will be new to people when they take a look at different color combinations," says Terry Backer of Winward International. She says they are using a lot of traditional looks such a bold, colorful "Merry & Bright" look and the natural tones of a "Winter Wonderland" motif.

Retailers can use the same techniques to merchandise their holiday products. "You put all your new stuff up front but then you build up with your stock such as taking a basic gold display tree and adding rich velvet ribbon. You can catch a person's eye with the newest products then win them over with standard stock," says Schmidt. >



RAZ Imports

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“This is a goal at RAZ Imports every year but now more than ever for our showroom displays, both in person and online, as well as our catalog to feature merchandising and sales ideas for making carry-forward items look new and fresh paired with brand new introductions,” says Bowersox.

Adding an unexpected element to a traditional holiday display can make all the difference in eliciting a sale. “We strongly represent the floral part of our line and incorporate that with the trees to make them unique and different,” says Backer. “We’ve learned that anything you put on a tree will usually sell if it looks great and offers a new twist.”

More than ever, product development teams are working to ensure stock merchandise and new looks work together. “Buyers can expect to see the same diverse assortment from RAZ as they do every year,” says Bowersox. “Our development team continues to make it a priority to keep our current top sellers top-of-mind while designing new products with the goal of buyers having beautiful new items to buy that will pair seamlessly into their current assortments.”

Schmidt expects to see a lot of denim blues, deep blue and a lot of mixed metals. “I feel like most looks will be more traditional to be able to mix and match,” he says. “There will always be some pretty wild color combinations and it is so gorgeous, but I know a lot of people will stay more safe. You’ll always have that red and green tree or that red, white and flocked tree but you can try a different base to change the look.”

At RAZ, the team is most excited about their Holiday Spice theme which serves as a transitional design idea between Harvest and Holiday as well as their Peppermint Parlor theme which is an ode to all things Mrs. Claus with sugared finishes and a soft color palette.

BE PROACTIVE

It’s no secret that production and delivery streams were interrupted by the pandemic. Every company has found a way to work around the delays to be ready for Market. “Our team started new product development earlier than normal for the January 2021 introduction season and worked hard on ideas for fresh takes on top sellers and RAZ classics,” says Bowersox. “In addition, our teams have kept in very close contact with our vendor partners and have increased communication via email and photo sharing due to travel restrictions.”

Schmidt says he put together Christmas mood boards in June. “I spent almost a month on holiday mood boards and spring mood boards and sent to development who then worked with all their factories,” he says. “Eighty percent of the factories are up and running and shipping and ready for business.”

For Winward, they focused on décor that can be incorporated into a seasonal mix. “We have containers of new decor and all kinds and stems that were done before this thing hit,” says Backer. “So, there is new product that we’re using to reimagine all our looks.”

Retailers will need to keep in mind that there could still be some delays and to plan accordingly. “While all brands are seeing the effects of delays from overseas, we continue to tell our customers that the sooner they can place their orders the better, and adjustments to orders can always be made later in the year before items ship,” says Bowersox.

But, the best news is that consumers will be ready to celebrate and want to bring extra holiday spirit into their homes. “It’s a family holiday; people want joy in their house,” says Schmidt. “And that’s why I really believe the retailers are going to be in a good position to buy some extra, which is a positive for everyone.” ■

For More Information:
RAZ Imports, razimports.com; Select Artificials, selectartificials.com; and
Winward International, winwardsilks.com