

# Manager's Helper

## The Selling Power Of Touch

By Kenny Pratt

Retail shopping expert Paco Underhill explains in his book, *Why We Buy*, that people buy only what they notice and only what they think they understand. You may believe your retail merchandise is simple and can't be missed, but your customers show you with their actions that improvements can be made.

Replay the last few rental transactions in your mind. Often, there are people who come in, rent a storage space, and leave without realizing the extent of the merchandise you have for sale. They glance right past items such as the dish pack box because it looks confusing.

One way to help your customers both notice and understand what you are selling is to help your shoppers actually touch the boxes and other packing supplies. If they touch the merchandise, you'll sell more. You'll sell more because interacting with the product will make them aware of it and consider it. It is difficult to hold something and not notice it. Feeling the merchandise and turning it over in one's hands also helps people understand the product on a deeper level.

There is also another secret reason for getting the product into your customer's hands. Research conducted in 2009 by Joann Peck and Suzanne Shu, presented in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, showed that physically touching a product increases its perceived value. In their research, the duo discovered that consumers who touch the merchandise are willing to pay more than those who don't. Not only did the value increase, but the act of touching and holding the product led to a greater sense of ownership.

So how do you get people to touch what you have to sell? The simple answer is to make it easy. You make touching the merchandise easy by making it accessible, by setting the example, and by making gentle invitations. Make your products accessible by putting them on display and within reach.

For example, place a disc lock that is out of the packaging out on the desk for your customers to pick up, hold, and examine. Let them feel the weight of it in their hands and consider up close the thickness of the metal. Set the example by picking up the mattress cover you are suggesting and opening the packaging. Then, allow the customer hold it and feel the thickness of the plastic inside. If you sell clean newsprint, open it and let them feel the paper inside. Invite them to run their finger across it and notice that it doesn't smudge like a regular newspaper would. You'll make more progress by inviting customers to touch what you have to sell. Without your invitation, they may think the display is meant only for looking, not touching.

For example, if your customer is packing a kitchen, ask them to feel the walls of the special double-walled dish barrel box. Take a moment and explain that it is extra thick to endure the weight of the glassware. If you sell a "dish pack," have some dishes on hand and invite them to feel how securely they are packed because of the partitions in the box and because they were packed with the included foam inserts.

You can help your customers overcome some of the barriers to buying your merchandise by making it accessible, demonstrating that it is okay to touch, and inviting them to interact with what you sell. Encouraging customers to touch and hold the merchandise will also help you tap into a deep psychological effect that causes people to value more the things that they've held.

When you help your customers touch and hold the merchandise, you might find that they are related to King Midas—everything they touch turns to gold for you! 📌

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