

# Guide to Selling Accessories

Find out how lighting showrooms are reinventing themselves with the addition of decorative accessories. *by Nancy Robinson*

To glimpse the future of the lighting showroom business, take a look at today's leaders. You'll find most have one thing in common: They have made the critical business decision to diversify into home accessories.

A few of the most impressive examples of this trend include Capitol Lighting in New Jersey, Farrey's Lighting & Bath in Miami, Hermitage Lighting in Nashville, TN, Georgia Lighting in Atlanta and Madelyn Lane's Hewitt & Hitchcock in St. Louis. Each of these exceptional showrooms employs accessories—including accent furniture—to tap into a significant source of additional business. Just as important, these categories have enabled them to attain an unprecedented level of aesthetic richness and sophisticated visual merchandising.

"From my experience, almost all larger and more successful lighting showrooms are carrying a much more diversified mix than they were 10 years ago," says industry educator Joe Rey-Barreau, AIA,

IES, CSI, who has been watching this trend with great interest. "As in any other type of industry, market needs and conditions are constantly changing. Some showrooms, such as small boutique stores that sell very unusual lighting, will survive without home accessories. It's the large showrooms that need to expand in order to provide their customers with more reasons to visit the store."

Lighting expert and consultant Lynne Yurosko in Boca Raton, FL, agrees. She says it behooves today's lighting retailers to continually reinvent themselves to keep their stores fresh and customers interested. Simply put, the addition of accessories gives buyers a reason to come back again and again, even when they aren't in the market for lighting.

The retail customer isn't the only one shopping in lighting showrooms for accessories.



The category is also a magnet for designers, many of whom now depend on better local lighting showrooms as a key resource for accessories.

"In Florida, we do business with a lot of designers," explains Herman Lebersfeld, President of Capitol Lighting, which operates nine stores in New Jersey and Florida, and for whom accessories and accent furniture account for 30 percent of sales. "They love the accessories. They come in to get all that tabletop stuff, even when they aren't looking for lighting."

The same is true at Georgia Lighting, Atlanta's venerable five-store chain. In fact,

▲ Having accessories on display enhances Capitol Lighting's business with the design trade.

► Antique furniture, prints and paintings, mirrors, and a varied selection of tabletop accessories are a significant source of sales at Georgia Lighting.

Georgia Lighting actually operates a 4,000-square-foot showroom within the Atlanta Decorative Arts Center. Although designers shop at all of its retail stores, the ADAC location specifically caters to the trade.

But because many folks—designers and retail buyers alike—still don't associate



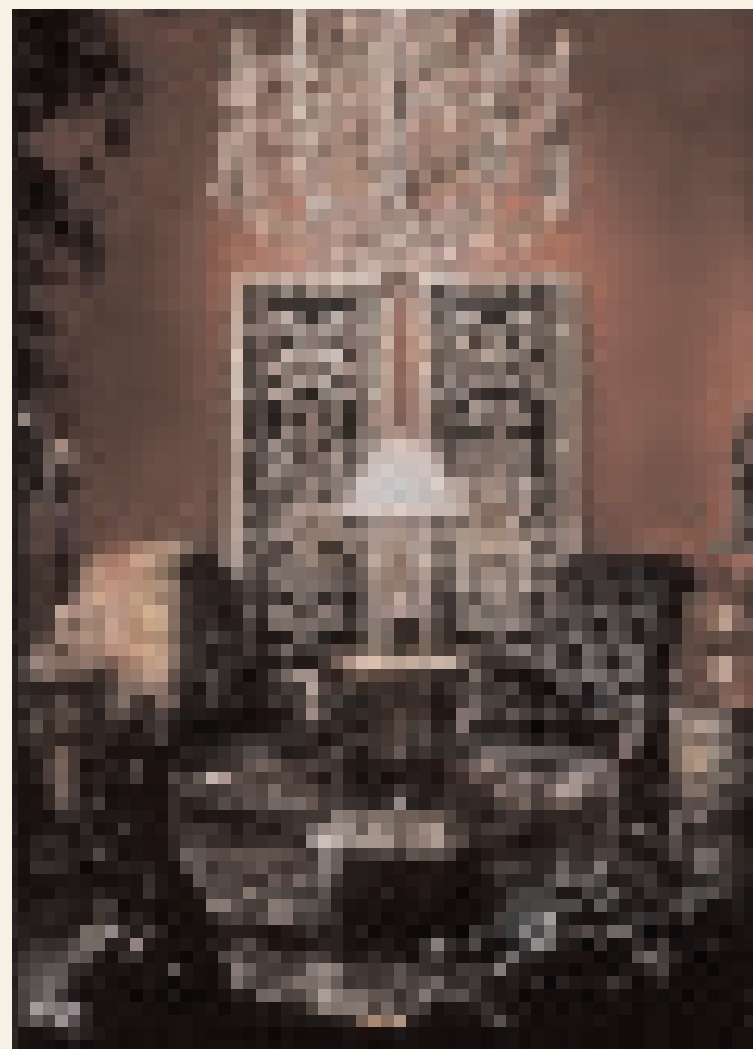
# Guide to Selling Accessories

lighting showrooms with non-lighting products, Georgia Lighting launched an aggressive advertising program designed to draw attention to its diverse product lineup. At the bottom of each ad is a series of small icons (chandelier, recessed lighting, blueprints, faucet, accent chair, ceiling fan, door hardware and lamp) that quickly conveys the range of offerings.

"In the showroom business today, you have to sell more than just fixtures," says Susie Adams, Georgia Lighting's Manager of



Farrey's Lighting & Bath began selling accessories more than a decade ago with extremely rewarding results.



Leading accessory lines at Farrey's include Maitland Smith, John-Richard and Speer Collectibles.

## ACCESSORIES A TO Z



**A — Accent Furniture**  
One of the lighting showroom's strongest design allies, accent furniture not only serves as an outstanding tool for merchandising lamps and accessories, it usually proves to be an important source of sales itself.

**B — Bookends**  
Bracket your lamp sales by including a pair of bookends. Whether your customer likes the Classicism of a pair of regal lions, the playfulness of English pugs or something altogether modern, she's sure to find a set to keep her library organized in style.



**C — Candles**  
Just like soothing background music and pleasant smells, candlelight is the finishing touch to a beautifully decorated home. Today's candles tend to be so decorative that many set them out as a permanent decorative accessory rather than burn them.

**D — Doorknocker**  
A piece of jewelry for an entry, the right decorative doorknocker can make an impressive first impression. The door hardware category also represents a perfect complement to a showroom's outdoor lighting fixtures.

**E — Epergne**  
From the French word for "saving," an epergne is an ornate, tiered centerpiece consisting of a metal frame bearing dishes, vases, candleholders or a combination. It is a staple decorative item for a dining table.

**F — Fragrances**  
The right home fragrance can enhance a beautiful home by striking just the right olfactory note. Merchandised in a convenient spot on or near the checkout counter, home fragrance sprays prove to be profitable impulse purchases.

# Guide to Selling Accessories

Merchandising and Advertising. "There are more players in the field, so we are trying to branch out and go after other business."

Such efforts have paid off handsomely for Georgia Lighting as well as many other showrooms. Consider Farrey's Lighting & Bath, a 90-year-old company whose two Florida stores generate staggering annual sales of \$39 million.

"We got into the furniture and accessory business 11 years ago because we wanted to expand into another division to generate dollars," explains Bob Paulsen, Director of Furniture Galleries. "The business boomed from the start and it continues to boom today."



Hermitage Lighting Gallery in Nashville, TN, has once again been nominated for an ARTS Award for its prowess with accents.



With an investment of some \$2 million in the category, accessories have become a very important business for Farrey's.

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG CIRCLE 217



**G — Garden**  
Surely one of the hottest-selling categories during the last few years, garden-inspired accessories continue to grow remarkable sales for retailers of all types. Versatile planters are a particular favorite.

**H — Hutch**  
We've got a hunch that a hutch might be perfect for rounding up and displaying all of those smaller accessories you've bought.

**I — Iron**  
Are you getting your daily dose of iron? Not only does the material tie in with plenty of popular lighting looks, it is also a decorating staple. Try a small piece of accent furniture or table accessories in iron.



DESIGNS BY BREE CIRCLE 223

**J — Jardiniere**  
These ornamental indoor planters became popular during the reign of France's King Louis XVI. Although jardiniere were originally designed to hold cut flowers or potted plants, many homeowners now opt for maintenance-free permanent botanicals—another great category.

**K — Kitchen Accents**  
The design quality of decorative accessories for this room has increased thanks to the explosion in high-end kitchens. Food- and beverage-themed wall decor—especially oversized canvas transfer wine labels and French advertising posters—are popular options.

**L — Leather**  
Just as leather adds a new dimension to a clothing store's offerings, it also increases the interest quotient wherever home furnishings are sold. Why not show a leather-covered ottoman or even a leather-covered mirror frame?

**M — Mirrors**  
Mirrors have long been star performers in lighting stores for the way they fill the vertical plane while conveying the sculptural elegance of a strong frame. They also dazzle for their ability to catch and reflect light.



DAUPHINE CIRCLE 218

# Approaching Accessories

Successful stores offer their top five tips for maximizing accessories sales.

## 1. Hire the right buyer.

Although there are lighting fixture buyers who could undoubtedly do a fine job selecting accessories, the most successful stores tend to put a separate buyer in charge of the category. Capitol Lighting employs an accessory buyer, a lamp buyer and a fixture buyer as well as a visual merchandiser to put it all together. At Connecticut Lighting, the owner and Vice President handle fixture purchases, while another buyer is in charge of lamps and accessories, assisted by a visual merchandiser.

"They are different businesses," explains Neil Fleisher, Vice President and General Manager at Connecticut Lighting. "There is a different talent required for buying fixtures and lamps and accessories."

Educator Joe Rey-Barreau says it takes an "intangible quality" of understanding design principles to buy accessories effectively. He also says this buyer must have a sense of what looks good and what will sell in a specific market.

"It's not much different from buying lighting," Rey-Barreau says. "Although it does require a greater awareness and understanding of the design possibilities."

## 2. Make a sufficient investment.

Don't put 20 or 30 accessories out on the sales floor and expect to be pleased with the results. "You have to have more than that in the mix," Fleisher says. "You need to put 120 pieces on the floor, and hopefully you will sell 60 to 80 of them."

Fleisher warns that not everything you purchase will sell. If at first you don't succeed, he suggests marking down the poorer sellers to make room for newer merchandise.

"If you want to make accessories a profitable business, you have to keep turning them over and bringing in new things," Fleisher says.

### N — Nesting Tables

Three salable tables in the square footage of one—what a deal. Take your pick from a broad range of materials—wood, metal, wicker, etc.—as well as a broad spectrum of styles, from hand-painted chinoiserie to neat little Neoclassical nests.

### O — Ottomans

They're perfect for providing extra seating, an impromptu table or just a spot to keep magazines and a cozy throw. Perhaps even more important to a lighting showroom, upholstered ottomans add color, pattern and softness.



FRENCH MARKET COLLECTION CIRCLE 219

### P — Pillows

Pillows are not only an easy update that can change the whole mood of a room; many of them are nothing short of works of art. Covered with the most exceptional decorator-friendly fabrics and trims, these tactile textiles sell well at all price points.

### Q — Quilt Racks

Why should your customers store their beautiful old quilts in a closet when there are so many charming quilt racks available? At the foot of a bed, they're also a handy repository for decorative daytime covers.

### R — Rugs

Make the most of your merchandising by thinking in terms of layers, with area rugs providing the essential foundation for any vignette. With so much to see above, shoppers will appreciate the interest underfoot.



NOURISON CIRCLE 220

## 3. Set reasonable sales goals.

At Capitol Lighting, accessories generate a substantial 20 percent of annual sales volume, with accent furniture and portable lamps contributing an additional 10 and 30 percent respectively. The balance of the stores' business comes from fixture sales.

Connecticut Lighting's Fleisher believes an accessory sales goal of 10 percent of total sales is reasonable. "Your accessory business should become a healthy percentage of total volume," he says. "So if a store is doing \$1 million a year in lighting, they should be doing about \$100,000 in accessories. That would be a decent volume for a lighting store."

## 4. Make outstanding displays a priority.

The magic of accessories is that they add a level of visual complexity often missing from fixture-focused lighting showrooms. Because of this complexity, however, most showrooms desperately need someone who really knows how to effectively combine all of the elements.

"I've worked with five or six lighting stores, and I've found there's a disconnect as to the end use of accessories," explains Connie Post, CEO of the Connie Post Companies, a retail design and strategic brands firm. "Usually it is very difficult for the average customer to figure out how things all work together. Retailers aren't presenting a clear merchandising story to their customers that makes them want to buy."

Connecticut Lighting has invested in the services of a display expert. "We are fortunate that we have a really good visual merchandiser who came from the furniture industry," Fleisher says. "She puts the showroom together unlike anyone I have ever seen. She has a knack for working a lot of things into a small area and making them all look good."

## 5. Think in terms of layers and cubic feet.

Perhaps the biggest change that lighting showrooms need to make is in the way they think of available merchandising space. Many showroom owners and buyers need to take their emphasis off the ceiling.

"You have your ceiling so filled with lighting and the floor is sparse or empty," Fleisher says. "You can fill it up with products that make the store look a whole lot better and a lot warmer."

According to Rey-Barreau, the key is to create strong, layered vignettes that show a wide variety of complementary products.

"A good display should have at least 10 layers of products, with each layer considered a separate product category," Rey-Barreau suggests.

These categories include area rugs, accent furniture (chests, tables, chairs and small upholstered pieces), wall decor, lamps and tabletop accessories. Cap off displays with a coordinating chandelier or a cloud of stylistically related fixtures.

### S — Silver

Once upon a time, polished brass accessories reigned supreme. The category has lost some of its luster now that consumers have taken such a shine to silver. Any metal gets a fashion upgrade when displayed in this cool hue.

### T — Tabletop

In some circles, tabletop refers to dining table settings, but this term encompasses a vast range of accessories—including decorative plates, bowls and a plethora of miscellaneous items presented on a surface.



MONTAAGE CIRCLE 221

### U — Upholstered Accents

Upholstery in a lighting store? Dazzle your most discerning customers with outstanding small upholstered pieces. Your store will reflect the most current trends in the marketplace by offering the latest fabrics.

### V — Vases

From silverplate and porcelain to chunky blown glass and fine cut crystal, there's a vase for every decorative style. The vessels also offer an excuse to bring in fragrant cut flowers or permanent florals for a dash of color.

### W — Wall Decor

Original works of art on canvas, along with canvas transfers and Giclee prints, have become staples in the decorative art market. Wall decor comes in almost all price points and themes.



ARIEL CIRCLE 222

### X — X Chair

An ancient folding chair dating back to Egypt, Rome and the Middle Ages, the X chair looks just like its name implies. As in Scrabble, you get extra points for incorporating this one.

### Y — Yard Accents

Benches, porcelain garden seats, ornamental wrought iron and cast aluminum furnishings look as good inside the house as out. Spotlight these salable pieces in your landscape lighting lab and make a soft pitch part of your demonstration.

### Z — Ziggurat

Art Deco anyone? Present your customers with this nostalgic style by featuring pyramidal style accessories with those tell-tale castellated edges, called a ziggurat. They'll be so impressed you know the term.