

How to Sell at Full-Price All the Time.

Ten Tips To Help You Master Merchandising Excellence

Full-Price Selling Is the Whole Game.

Merchandising excellence isn't about art or science, and it cannot be supplied by AI alone. Technology will absolutely impact *the merchant craft*, but without the basic principles, those investments fall short.

I've spent more than 20 years in the merchant seat, from Club Monaco to Ralph Lauren to a myriad of department and specialty stores, building the assortments and understanding the customers that made my merchant life work. I've lived around the world and bring that global perspective to everything I merchandise. I was the merchandising strategist at Accenture and now, as Principal of Retail Strategy Group, I've been dubbed "The Chief Merchant." One thing is clear: I know how to build assortments that sell at full price.

Every brand wants to sell more at full price. But full-price selling isn't a pricing trick. It's the compounding result of dozens of upstream decisions in planning, buying, development, and execution. By the time a markdown hits the floor, the outcome was set months earlier. And that is why I created this document to help brands accomplish their full-price goals.

Here are my top ten tips, the ones I would use at any apparel brand to master merchandising excellence and maximize full-price sales.

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1

Know Your Buyer, Not Yourself

Many merchants don't actually know who shops their stores, or whether that customer has changed. I've met plenty who buy with themselves in mind, saying "I'd wear that!" That's a mistake. Merchandise for your customer, not you. Curate with a solution-led approach and solve their problem, whether that's the most flattering style or a modular piece that works across occasions.

2

Give the Collection a Common Thread

A clear connector helps the customer outfit and helps you merchandise. Take the season's print: put it on a blazer lining, a dress, a cuff trim, and a silk scarf, and those pieces merchandise together. Anchor them with core basics like denim and a seasonless knit. Now customers can go for an allover print or just a hint of one.

3

Every Collection Needs a Hero

A hero can be a core basic or a distinctive style that carries your brand DNA. It's what customers come back for, what new customers aspire to buy, and it's always in stock. Think the DVF wrap dress, the Levi's trucker jacket, the Ralph Lauren navy blazer with gold buttons. Build the assortment around it.

4

Do the Outfitting for Them

A collection of pieces that work together takes the work out of outfitting. Make those choices easy to find and show them on mannequins and in marketing. Sequence the rack: tops, then bottoms, then layers, so the customer builds an outfit one piece at a time. Done right, they style themselves.

5

Newness Earns the Next Visit

Newness is what brings customers back. Build variety across colors, silhouettes, styles, and prints, and refresh your heroes through color, fabric, or trim. Plan at least three drops a season: for Fall, that's new product in September, October, and November, or flow in new styles as earlier ones sell out. Refresh your windows on the same cadence, so the person walking past always has a reason to come in.

6

Build a Collection That Survives Its Bestsellers

As pieces sell out, the collection still has to look like it belongs in the store. The discipline behind that is your seasonless-to-fashion ratio: aim for 70:30. Seventy percent core styles that live all season without a markdown, thirty percent fashion that clears by season's end. Don't buy the first drop's fashion in depth; let it sell through into the next.

7

Never Run Out of a Basic

Replenishment and chase aren't just for heroes. Seasonless basics should always be in stock in your best-selling sizes, because customers expect it. A stockout here sends them to a competitor, especially on tees, buttondowns, denim, and everyday intimates. An automatic replenishment system and a close vendor relationship keep those sales from walking.

8

Price to the Market, Not Your Margin

Your pricing sets your market position and signals quality, so it has to make sense. Don't overcharge just to chase margin. Track pricing by category and comparable styles, and make comp shopping part of your process so you sit right against the competition. Your customer is always comparing. So should you. This holds whether you're DTC, wholesale, or both.

9

Make the Strategy Visible on the Floor

Build the assortment so you can already picture it in store. Merchandise it on a rack or a wall, or sketch the props that bring it to life. At Ralph Lauren, I presented my vision to the sales and visual teams long before product hit the floor. Have your teams style with that same intent. If it only lives in the buy plan, it isn't finished. The same process applies if you assort multiple brands.

10

Walk the Floor in Your Customer's Shoes

This is non-negotiable. Spend time with customers and walk the store as they do. Use what you see to sharpen your assortment, your outfitting, and your gaps. Watching what a customer picks up and puts back teaches you plenty. A returns spreadsheet tells you what came back, never why.

Let's Maximize the Full-Price Sales in Your Business.

At Retail Strategy Group, we drive dramatic results for our clients: more full-price sales, stronger margins, and less overdevelopment. If you're ready to turn these principles into results, reach out and let's talk.

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