

Space Saver

Capezio fought for floor space with this state-of-the-art shelving system.

BY LIBBY DOWD

When Capezio was designing its new 1,600-square-foot flagship store near New York City's Lincoln Center, they needed to find a way to store multiple pairs of shoes on the sales floor without taking up too much valuable retail space. According to Jennifer Sandoval, vice president of retail, footwear accounts for 50 percent of the brand's sales, and it is primarily housed in stockrooms located adjacent to the floor display. "The challenge was to make the shoe department easy to serve customers, since the stockroom is located in the basement," she says.

Metzger/Metzger Associates, a New York-based architectural firm, solved the company's space dilemma by contracting Silver Line Office Systems to create a customized movable shelving system similar to those used in medical and law offices. The custom shelves consist of two movable units, 24 inches deep, and two fixed units on either end, 12 inches deep. The entire unit takes up only 38 square feet and holds up to 200 shoeboxes. "It's a great tool to have, and it's aesthetically pleasing," says Lori Hodrinsky, a certified interior designer who worked on the project.

"The movable shoe shelves can house the higher turning items, as well as shoes that require a lot of sizes to find the perfect fit, such as ballet and pointe shoes," adds Sandoval. "It is important for the sales associates to be able to serve the clientele with as much efficiency as possible in the fast-paced New York City environment."

IMAGE EFFECT

Effective storage wasn't all the retailer was looking for with the installation of the shelving unit—it had to



Courtesy of Capezio/Ballet Makers Inc.

look good, too. Hodrinsky points out that a unit like this has the potential to look like an industrial eyesore, and she admits that she was shocked when the company first requested it.

It was Sandoval's idea to add a custom image from photographer Dane Shitagi to the front of the unit. "The sliding shoe shelves became a work of art with Shitagi's photograph, making the space also a lifestyle image," she says.

EXTRA INCENTIVE

Sandoval intentionally placed the department in front of the store's large bay window, so that passing traffic can see the busy shoe department. Additionally, the department is located at the end of the store's horseshoe-shaped floor plan, making it the last place a customer will reach. "Footwear is what the destination customer in a dance store primarily comes for," says Sandoval. "We want them to walk through the entire store to get to the department, and then be seen by all of New York City in the window." ■

Penny Saving Solutions

If there is no room in your budget this year to create a custom design, visual merchandising expert Leslie Groves of interior elements is in favor of sprucing up your existing storage solution. "By increasing the storage space on the sales floor without taking away from sales or displays, more space is freed up in the already overstuffed stockroom," she says. "I always say that you can't sell what you can't see, and the more you are able to have on your sales floor, the better."

Groves suggests closing off low shelves with uniform doors to create cabinets. "Many stores use shelving units to display, not realizing that the bottom shelf or lower two feet of display space is dead space, and it decreases the perceived value of the product on display," she says.

You can also build benches and ottomans for your customers to use while trying shoes on. Not only will they make fitting a more comfortable process, but you can

create storage underneath them with pull-out trays or shelves.

Don't forget to take advantage of the dead space along your lower walls. "Most stores have wall space that displays from 30 inches up, and the lower areas are being lost and misused," says Groves. "Build or buy lower storage units that can be painted to match the walls. They will fade away, while still offering storage for the merchandise that is being displayed above or close by."

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3 1/4" x 13 3/4"