Halloween Tips for 2012 from Front-End Overhaul

- **Scary News! Halloween is on a Wednesday** (October 31)! A Halloween that is celebrated in the middle of the week typically sees less door to door trick-or-treating. The fact that there is school the next day means trick-or-treaters may be out a bit earlier and will be returning much sooner. What does all this mean? If you are in an area where door-to-door trick-or-treating is strong then plan on less activity. If you are in an area where most of the children go to private parties or school events then you will not be as strongly affected. Check with local schools and see what (if any) kinds of parties the schools will be sponsoring. Large local sponsored parties will affect the number of door-to-door trick-or-treaters. Plan accordingly!

- **Are you training your customers to not pay full price for candy?** You are if you discount your candy before the holiday arrives. Reduce overstock by taking better notes and constantly adjust your quantities. Discounting candy before Halloween drastically damages or erases your profit and skews your sales figures.

- Bring out last year’s non-candy carryover inventory and give it a good inspection. Decide today whether the product can go out at full price or is in need of an immediate discount. Remember, it **costs approximately 15% in labor** every time that you have to pack up and carryover a product.

- **Review your photos and notes** from last year. Take steps to correct any buying or merchandising errors that you may have had. (You did take notes, didn’t you?) Is it time to cut back on pet customs?

- When buying candy consider **cutting back on flavors** and increasing the quantities of proven sellers. Example: More Reese’s Peanut Butter Cups and fewer or no mint patties. **All candy is not created equal!** Resist buying equal amounts of all flavors.

- Offer different price points in your candy selection. Example: snack size bars, large bags of mini Tootsie Rolls to candy corn. Don’t forget to **feature regular size candy bars** for those customers who feel generous and / or expect a small number of trick or treaters.

- Make sure to place your candy, costumes, make-up and safety items in a **well-traveled and highly visible aisle**. Start the aisle with a **powerful end-cap** that is full and well signed. Whenever possible slant at least the two bottom shelves of your candy display. Breakup the color scheme of your candy set. **Do not display all bags of candy of the same color side by side.** When sales have forced the shelves to look empty move **candy up** leaving the bottom shelves open for cross merchandising stuffed animals. (It’s about the only thing they are good for.)

- Separate your Halloween selection into distinctive categories. **Identify your opportunities!** Halloween sales can be found in candy, decorations, costumes, make-up, party supplies, candles and safety accessories.

- Keep **shopping baskets** near the Halloween aisle!
Create a big and colorful sign(s) reminding customers when Halloween is! Along with the date you can add, “Do you have enough candy?”

Here are a few end-cap suggestions: safety headquarters with flashlights, batteries, glow in the dark sticks, glow necklaces, reflective tape and reflective candy containers. Try an end-cap of make-up, hair spray, cotton balls and cosmetic remover. Feature orange and black poster board, crepe paper, glow pens, markers, glue and glitter. Use an end for featuring pumpkin carving and decorating accessories.

Make your cash register SCREAM Halloween. Everything near or on the front checkout counter for the week before Halloween should promote your Halloween sales. Don’t forget to cross merchandise single serve Halloween candy in line with your everyday candy selection.

If you have the room, place an end-cap of candy within sight of the pharmacy counter!

Be prepared to feature a nice selection of sugar-free candy. Both Hershey and Stover have good selections of this type of candy.

Take a good inventory of your everyday cosmetics. This is a perfect time to feature those outdated colors of nail polish and eye shadow in your Halloween department. (Great place for old sunglasses!)

Take a serious look at your Halloween greeting card selection. Are you selling these cards? Are they worth the labor and effort? Is there something you can do to enhance the sales of these cards?

You can encourage employees to dress for Halloween but make sure you give guidelines so as not to frighten some of your younger customers. Sometimes a pharmacist dressed in costume does not bode well for the professional atmosphere.

For security reasons do not cover any doors with decorations. Keep a close eye on customers that choose to visit the store wearing a mask. Test all of your lights to see if they are in good working order. Keep the parking area and entrances well lit.

Prepare the front-end of the store for a busy Friday but don’t forget that the pharmacist may need extra help also!

Feature a clip strip or counter display of inexpensive toothbrushes near your candy department.

Halloween also is the same time for outdoor cleanup. Feature work gloves and leaf bags.

Oh, and give anyone who comes to your door wearing red high-top sneakers twice as much candy. Preferably Hershey’s with Almonds or Snickers, I’m sure they are not fussy.

Good luck and happy selling! Gabe Trahan  NCPA Front End Overhaul
Send your Halloween merchandising photos to gabe.trahan@ncpanet.org

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