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# Best ideas from our Retail Stars

BY THOMAS LESTER

EACH YEAR, HOME ACCENTS TODAY recognizes 50 of the best and brightest independent retailers in the United States.

Our Retail Stars do a lot of things well, from selling home accessories (naturally!) to being good corporate citizens in their respective communities to having amazing social media and in-store presences. We thought we'd take a look at some of the best practices from some of our 2018 Stars for ideas that you might be able to incorporate in your place of business. Here are a few selected highlights:

**Be Made** organized its store into a series of "departments," according to owner Susan Jordan. She said the departments allow the store to carry more and different types of products. "The store is still displayed as though every piece is a beautiful decoration, but you find yourself wandering through bedding, a bath bar, gift books, home décor, etc.," she said.

Staying with store design, **Urban Styles Furniture** takes cues from market showrooms to recreate that experience for its customers.

**OAK Nashville** added a signature line of candles to its assortment, which owners say helped establish its brand and keep both customers and wholesale accounts coming back for more. **Hausful** also has its own line of candles and also promotes itself to selected demographics, including architects, designers, tastemakers and other groups of interest.

Social media and technological strategies are key for many of our Stars. For instance, **Golden & Pine** relies on Instagram posts and stories to drive traffic. **Leon & Lulu's** Mary Liz Curtin says she pays attention to reports generated by the POS system to keep top sellers in stock while jettisoning slow-selling merchandise. **Moe's Home Collection's** iPad program allows staff to have real-time access to inventory, images and product details so they can give guests quotes right off the app, eliminating the need to leave the customer to check on a computer.

**Urban Loft** creates a sense of urgency through deals of the day. Owner Lori Carollo says the discount items change daily and are a great way to keep customers engaged. **Living & Giving** has also mastered FOMO (fear of missing out) through its pop-up shop,



Foundry42's Cooper Boone (right) welcomed "Chopped" TV show's winning chef Dafna Mizrahi into the store for a special cooking demonstration.

which is only open four days a month and offered curated, themed merchandise.

While technology is the fastest way to reach out to customers, many prefer the old-fashioned, hand-written letter. **Mallory-Fields** sends a postcard to customers with a personal thank you, making those shoppers feel like they're getting the "VIP treatment."

The **Schaefer House's** Susie Schaefer Hinds has been behind a promotion called "Room Rescue by Susie" in which customers post or send photos of a room that needs "rescuing." If the room is chosen, its owner receives a free in-home consultation and a discount on items purchased for the room.

For maximizing exposure, few ideas work better than in-store events. **Foundry42** has had contestants from Food Network's "Chopped" in for cooking demonstrations and more. **Red Door Home** creates themed social events, including a Christmas open house, an annual anniversary sale and a spring open house. Each event includes door prizes, special offers and/or gifts with purchases. **M Collection** also creates an in-store destination with master classes (candle making, meditation, etc.), live music, tastings and other fun happenings. **Garber's Interior Design** offers after-hours private shopping parties for selected groups and clients. **Enjolé Interiors** hosts seasonal events and invites artists to set up in its gallery, as well as national designers and product specialists.

Having a social conscience is always a big hit at the retail level. **Hub Modern & Gift** designates certain evenings for shopping and cocktails with a portion of proceeds going to a selected charity. **Share** also offers chari-

table shopping nights where an organization can invite its audience to the shop for cocktails and appetizers while they shop, with a percentage of sales going back to that group. Catherine Crandall, owner of **Abode Fine Living**, is involved in a number of dog and animal rescue groups and has hosted numerous events in her store to benefit those organizations.

That sense of community is also present at **Michele Varian's SoHo** shop in New York. "When the SoHo neighborhood retail rents began going up and my neighboring small independent retailers began being forced out, I began hosting them as 'Guest Shops' in order to preserve the alternate retail experience in the neighborhood," she says. This venture turned into a new online platform, [guesst.co](http://guesst.co), which has developed into a marketplace.

Many retailers offer employee incentives. Take the example of **Gypsy Lane Home**, which involves all of its employees in the design process. **IBB Design Fine Furnishings** offers a five-day vacation (with airfare and luxury lodging included) to its team designers who sell \$1 million of commissioned product during a calendar year. Others create customer incentives, like **Winfield House Home Furnishings**, which created a loyalty program that rewards customers for purchases and encourages return visits.

**The Village Shoppe** of Yakima, Wash. allows its customers to take merchandise on approval. Store officials say they allow clients to take any item for three days with no money down, and that having the item at home with the freedom to live with it for half a week takes a lot of the pressure off. ■