

Retail Minded

news, education & support for boutique businesses

a retail lifestyle publication

PREMIERE
ISSUE

Maximizing Showroom
Relationships

MONEY MATTERS

Investing the *Boutique* Way

HIRING INTERNS

PLUS!

Our 2012 Advisory Board, Green Retailing
and Living Well Beyond Store Walls

CONTENTS / JAN/FEB/MAR 2012

Photo: Courtesy of Geneva Chamber of Commerce



FEATURES

- 18 A City's Charm**
Take a look into the hometown of Retail Minded, a Chicago suburb that hardly feels suburban and keeps their downtown district free of national chain stores.
- 28 Hiring an Intern**
The first of four in a year-long look at interns, learn the best practices in finding, interviewing, and hiring interns.
- 30 Showroom Relationships**
Learn how retailers can benefit from showrooms and the reps that work within them to maximize store success.
- 34 Money Matters**
Managing your personal finances takes a lot of work, understanding and time. Our expert shares his thoughts on the best places to invest your dollars.

RETAIL MINDED

- 6 Editor's Note**
Learn How Retail Minded Magazine Came to Life
- 8 RM Team**
Get to Know Everyone Working at RM Magazine
- 10 Advisory Board**
Meet Our Esteemed 2012 Advisory Board
- 47 In the Next Issue**
Find Out What You Can Expect in Issue 2
- 48 Let's Talk**
We Want to Hear from You
- 49 [RM] Dictionary**
Gain Knowledge of Retail Terms

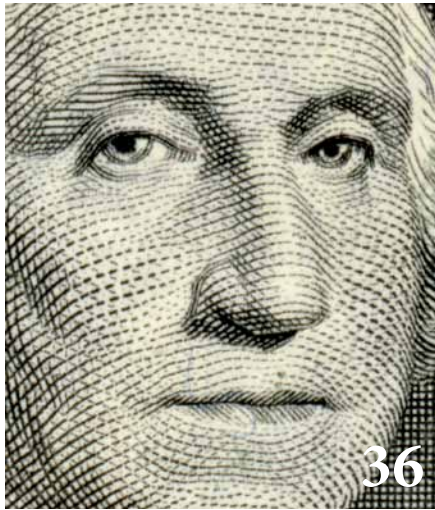
ON THE COVER



Circa - a quirky, cool home store with its own flair. Located on historic Third Street in Geneva.

Cover photograph by Robert Hillery

- 30 Maximizing Showroom Relationships
- 34 Money Matters
- 28 Hiring Interns
- 10 2012 Advisory Board
- 37 Green Retailing
- 38 Living Well



EDUCATION

- 13 **Get Social** / Incorporating Videos Into Social Media
- 16 **You Ask, We Answer** / Expert Advice on Real Life Retail Issues
- 36 **Money Matters** / Tax Tips to Help You Manage Your Business
- 43 **In Their Shoes** / Customers Share Their Shopping Pet Peeves



LIFESTYLE

- 12 **Tweet Talk** / Conversations from Our Twitter Followers
- 38 **Living Well** / Stress Busters You Can Do While in Your Store
- 44 **Bragging Boutiques** / Real Stores Deliver Their Inspiring Stories
- 50 **Balancing Act** / Tips on Doing It All



TRENDS

- 14 **Trend Spotting** / Our Picks for Trends to Follow
- 37 **Green Retailing** / Ways Your Business Can Be More Eco-Friendly
- 24 **The Edge** / How One Store Became Its Own Product
- 40 **Merchandising** / Affordable Solutions You Can Easily Apply

RM TEAM / editor's note



Ever since I was a little girl, I loved shopping for shoes. The funny thing was, however, that I didn't actually like the "shoe" part but rather I was obsessed with the displays, sales associates and customers that would linger over shoes for what seemed like hours. As life would turn out, I ended up working in wholesale for a handful of major footwear companies in the early part of my career. It's funny how life falls into place, isn't it?

Retail has always been in my blood, and it's with this lifelong passion that I founded *Retail Minded* in 2007 to support independent retailers in their respective dreams for retail success. Over this time, *Retail Minded* has supported both retailers and wholesalers in various sectors of the retail business, providing support through consultation, blogging, speaking engagements, private company trainings and more. A common thread that seemed to weave throughout my experiences was that the retail door never seemed to close behind anyone when they ended their work day. Instead, I have found that retail isn't just a job, but it's a lifestyle. With this in mind, *Retail Minded Magazine* came to life.

As much as it's nice to take a vacation or even get a three day weekend every now and again, the world of retail isn't always so kind. There are long hours, seven day work weeks, and no staff to spare – if any staff at all. Then again, working retail is often described as simply having fun. Doing what you love. Living your dream. Sure, you may get blisters from standing on your feet all day or suffer from carpal tunnel, but it's worth it, right? We think so. This is why we want to be there for you in every way we can. Through educating you on the must-know strategies of running a successful retail store to informing you on industry trends to finding time for a workout in the middle of customers and kids, *Retail Minded* wants to be your calm in the middle of the chaos of retail.

Of course, chaos always has company. And for us, that means the chaos of the busy lives led by our elite Advisory Board of retail leaders in a variety of retail sectors. From national retail speakers to a leading retail trade magazine editor to a fashion showroom owner and more, we can't wait for you to meet our esteemed group of Advisors who will help *us* help *you* be the best at your business (see page 10). Additionally, I am so honored to be working with my new *Retail Minded Magazine* team – four individuals (five including myself) that are talented, dedicated and retail-minded.

Our premiere issue is the first of four this year, highlighting our home base city, featuring educational articles and providing lifestyle support in a variety of capacities. We can't wait to get your feedback, earn your trust, learn from you and engage with you as *Retail Minded Magazine* continues to evolve. We welcome all inquires and letters, and hope you will be in touch. Please email me directly at nicole@retailminded.com.

Here's to many, many more *Retail Minded Magazines* and success to us all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Nicole Leinbach Reyhle". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Nicole Leinbach Reyhle
Founder & Editorial Director

RM TEAM / thoughts



I'm so excited to support the professional goals and personal well being of boutique businesses through a magazine that delivers total retail lifestyle support. It's unlike anything in the market, and we're just getting started."

– Nicole Leinbach Reyhle

"I am really looking forward to providing our readers with an aesthetic reflecting the type of innovative thinking that seems to come natural for so many boutique retailers. My goal is to present the material in Retail Minded in a way that is visually inspiring and encourages readers to think creatively"

– Robert Hillery

"I wish I would have had a magazine like Retail Minded early in my retailing career. I think Nicole's vision for the magazine is amazing and I hope retailers and students of retailing will enjoy reading it as much as I enjoy bringing it to life with the RM team! Also, I can't wait to meet our readers face-to-face to hear their feedback!"

– Julie Johnson Hillery

"In today's environment, it's more important than ever for small business owners to find strength in numbers, leveraging the knowledge and support available within the small business community. I'm ecstatic to be part of a publication and community that really brings this concept to life."

– Eric Reyhle

"The response I have received from various companies of all sizes - small and large - makes me confident that Retail Minded Magazine is filling a void in the market. I believe it'll be thought of as the retailers bible – certainly each issue can be referenced again and again.

– Sarah Katherine Ryan



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Retail Minded

Founder & Editorial Director

Nicole Leinbach Reyhle
nicole@retailminded.com

Creative Director

Robert Hillery
robert@retailminded.com

Managing Editor

Julie Hillery
julie@retailminded.com

Business Development

Eric Reyhle
eric@retailminded.com

PR Coordinator

Sarah Katherine Ryan
press@retailminded.com

Advisory Board

Georganne Bender
Jim DeBetta
Rich Kizer
Jackie Kold
Abby Heugel
Kate Nardo

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“Have 20 minutes to spare with no tasks on your checklist to complete?”



We asked our Twitter followers how they spend 20 spare minutes when they get the chance... Even if it is only every now and again! The answers may surprise you, as well as give you ideas of how to spend your next free block of time.

SIT! @ClothesAtticd

Restyle a sad display, clean back stock,
read design blogs @SITEnews

straighten up, a little rearranging... @oldportcandy

There are never really 20 minutes to spare! @Edwolves

Paperwork! @CurtainEx_NJ

Mop the floor (yelling at the employees to mop
the floor) @Mortsnodgrass

What do your customers think of you?

Q

I'm constantly wondering what my customers think about my store assortment, merchandising and overall experience. How can I get honest feedback without asking them directly?

A

This is a great question and one that many retailers often would like answered. There are several methods for getting this information without having to ask your customers directly. First, consider establishing a Customer Advisory Board. Invite a select group of your customers to serve on your board to gain their feedback and insight. You can ask for their feedback in a formal way such as participating in a [focus group] (moderated by someone other than you). Or, on a more informal scale, you might hold a small party in the store or a meet-and-mingle event focusing the conversation around the questions you have.

Programs such as Survey Monkey™ provide a quick and inexpensive way to put together customer questionnaires. Once you put a few questions together, information about the survey should also be placed at the bottom of printed receipts. For the tech-savvy, you can also use FaceBook™, Twitter™ and your e-commerce site to promote participation. Consider offering an incentive for customers who participate, but realize it is probably best to do this in a way that still keeps the customers' responses anonymous.

Remember the importance of blending the voices of returning customers with first-time, one-time, and non-customers. All of them will give you a different, but important, perspective. To identify potential customers who currently do not shop your store, the local Chamber of Commerce or the Economic Development office in your town should be able to help you.

One final thought – your customers are giving their opinions everyday about your store assortment, merchandising, and overall experience simply by returning to your store and buying your products!

Retail Minded wants to hear what your questions are!

If it has to do with retail, we want to help. We'll turn to our trusted Advisers, expert industry leaders and anyone else necessary to make sure you get the best answers possible. Please send all questions to julie@retailminded.com.

Due to the large amount of emails received, please note we will only respond to questions that may be featured in Retail Minded Magazine. Thank you for your understanding.



Hiring an Intern

Julie Johnson Hillery

Working with interns can be both challenging and rewarding. The first place to start in assuring a rewarding experience – for both you and the intern – is during the hiring process.

Where do I Find an Intern?

There are several places to look for an intern. If you are fortunate to have a college or trade school nearby that has a business, retailing or merchandising program, this is where to start. Also, in the years that I have worked with interns in both placing them and evaluating them, other college programs who have provided successful retailing interns are in the communications, public relations, or any liberal arts. Most colleges will have a section on their websites outlining their [internship] programs, or you can simply call and ask to be connected with the program's internship coordinator. Once you establish a relationship with an internship coordinator or a professor that the students respect, it will be easier to recruit and maintain interns that are a perfect match. You will also find that your prior successful interns will be the best avenue for identifying successful future interns.

An additional reason to hire an intern through a college program is because those interns will be working for you as part of their college requirements. All research conducted with interns shows that interns earning school credit are more likely to take the internship seriously and act more responsibly. Additionally, you will have an avenue for recourse through the school when problems occur....and, yes, *when* problems occur, and not *if* problems occur. There will always be at least one problem; however, these are generally small issues and not something that should keep you from hiring an intern. In fact, the most common complaint received from my student interns was not being given enough responsibility. What a great "problem" to have!

If you do not have a school in your vicinity, your professional network should be a good resource. Tell everyone you know that you are looking for an intern. You never know who knows someone that knows someone! Many college students return to their hometowns for school breaks and are looking for internships for summer or the holidays.

Today you can directly reach potential interns through social media. Every college student uses online sources including texting, blogging, and tweeting to identify career opportunities. If you are not comfortable with using these, pull aside anyone younger

than 30 years old for a quick lesson. And, remember, once you hire an intern, a great project for them may be managing your social media. This includes teaching you what to do.

Interviewing Intern Candidates

Interviewing intern candidates will not be much different than interviewing other employees. However, since the intern position is somewhat unique, there are certain areas that you should definitely cover. Write down the questions you want to ask and ask them of each candidate. Then, when evaluating the candidates, you can make an equal comparison among them. Also, it will protect you from any allegations of discrimination because you have treated each candidate equally.

Selecting the Best

Some of the best hires, as you already know, will be those with which you feel the most comfortable. In retailing, which is all about relationships, there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. However, even if you are lucky enough to have this happen, you should still take some steps before making an offer. First, check all references the candidate should have given you. When speaking to the references, pay close attention to what they do not say as much as to what they do say. However, remember that today privacy laws limit the amount of information past employers can legally share.

Perhaps one of the best resources you have in learning more about the candidates is the Web. Most, if not all, of your intern candidates will have a Facebook™ page and will also be a member of a social networking group such as LinkedIn™. A simple Google™ search of each candidate is also a good idea. While Googling someone may raise eyebrows for some, it also provides the perfect example of how we live today. Information that is Web-accessible is fair game to reference. Also remember, the intern you hire will ultimately represent your business and you want their online image to be positive.

Of course the final selection of your Intern may come down to a “gut” feeling, or many times will be based on the chemistry you had with the candidate during their interview. However, by taking the few steps outlined here, you will know that in all probability you have found a perfect match!

Next time: Should an Intern be paid?

We would love to answer your questions concerning interns. Please email those to: Julie@retailminded, or Tweet to: [@julie_hillery](https://twitter.com/julie_hillery)

Five Interview Questions Specific to Intern Candidates

Why do you want to work in this industry?

Listen for enthusiasm when the candidate answers this question. The answer will also tell you if the candidate has a true understanding into the dynamic nature of retailing and will also give the candidate a chance to tell you about previous experiences. You want an intern who is excited about retailing and who already has some experience with what is involved.

Why do you want to do an internship at my store?

If the candidate has done his or her homework he or she will be able to tell you something about your store and what makes it a great match for him or her. There are many internships out there. You want to make sure that the candidate is not “shopping” for any internship just to fulfill a college requirement. You want someone that is truly interested in your store and that has some understanding about your business philosophy.

What specific skills do you hope to gain during your internship?

If the candidate can speak clearly to this it will tell you that they are taking the internship seriously. It will also give you an idea how well the intern matches with you. If the intern is looking for someone who can teach them about buying or styling, and you want someone to help with managing your employees, you will know up front that it is not a good match!

What goals have you set for yourself related to your internship?

This question delves even deeper into the thought that the candidate has put into finding an internship and if they are a good match for you. Being able to articulate their goals usually means the candidate will feel responsible for, and will take ownership into, making his or her internship successful. Also, knowing the candidate's goals makes it easier for you when designing projects and responsibilities.

Tell me about a time that you had to use your judgment and make a decision in your previous job.

You need to know that your employees will make sound judgments. Or, if there is another trait that you are especially interested in the intern having, there are a variety of similar behavior questions which will tap into specific skills. For example if customer service is important (and we know that it is usually the most important!), you could ask about a time when a customer had a problem and what the candidate did to correct it.

TAX TIPS

EVERY SMALL BIZ OWNER NEEDS TO KNOW

Chris Wesolowski



- 1 Your exemption status can increase or decrease your refund.** A dollar today is worth more than a dollar tomorrow. Consult a tax advisor to maximize your monthly income.
- 2 Retirement plans have early withdrawl penalties.** Make sure you know all the rules before investing your money.
- 3 If your money is being reported on a 1099, you could be losing thousands.** There are ways to save this money that you may not be aware of.
- 4 Owning a home has significant tax benefits.** Renting and owning cost almost the same. Learn how owning a home may provide tax benefits.
- 5 New tax laws are added yearly.** Never assume that a tax law exists, even if it has in the past. Working with a tax consultant can save you thousands.

Retail Minded's Top Deductible Items (That Will Save \$\$\$)

Don't mess with the IRS! Just because we are "small" and "boutique" doesn't mean we go under the radar. Be smart about your taxes, and that includes what you deduct.

Office Supplies – You name it, you can deduct if... assuming it's for your professional work.

Office Space – Even if your office is in your home, you can take a % of rent or mortgage to deduct. Rent a commercial space? Deduct it!

Subscriptions & Memberships – Nothing is free these days, so make sure to deduct your expenses to trade magazines and organizations. They are typically worth the money, but add up.

Travel, meals, entertainment & gifts – Taking a client out? Shopping for inspiration? Attending a trade show? Deduct it!

Child Care – A lot of small biz owners balance parenthood and work. Is that you? Make sure to deduct your childcare!

Contributed by **Chris Wesolowski**, part of the father-son team of West Tax Services. West Tax Services has been helping clients save tax dollars throughout the country for over 40 years. Inquires can be directed to 312.246.7151.

What is your biggest pet peeve as a customer?

Ever wonder what your customers are thinking? Each issue, we'll ask three "real" customers what their thoughts are about shopping independent boutiques. Our hope? That you will really listen to what they have to say and see how you can apply some of their experiences to help your store thrive.



Lauren Tinerella

Age: 21

Profession: Student

Location: Chicago, IL

My biggest pet peeve is the inconsistency I find with customer service. I never seem to find a happy medium between the levels of service I receive – either I'm hardly helped, or I can't get the employee to leave my side. Even though it is annoying to feel suffocated by an employee, having no help is just as bad.

I've walked into stores and had to wait at least a full minute before being greeted (and not because the employee was with another customer). This makes me feel unimportant immediately. But, aside from feeling like the employees don't care about me, it gives me the opportunity to just walk out. Why would I stay if the employee can't even greet me? When employees aren't helpful I assume it's because they think I'm not going to buy anything or that I can't afford things in their store. Since employees never know "who" they're helping, treating all customers equally is important. Customers know when they're being treated differently than others. For me, great customer service is the key to keeping me as a customer!



Amy Knebel

Age: 40

Profession: Freelance Writer & Dog Mom

Location: Washington, DC

Where are the dresses? Does this come in another color? Why am I in a yoga pose in order to see the merchandise? Of all my shopping pet peeves, disorganized merchandise tops my list. Nowadays, I'm a last minute shopper always in a rush... So when I enter a store I need to quickly ascertain what's there.

Recently, I walked into a local accessories boutique to buy a clutch for that evening and was overwhelmed immediately. Some effort had been made to group items by color, but it was clear that this system wasn't consistently utilized. Merchandise was heaped on very low tables, which made picking through the items very uncomfortable. Making matters worse, the wall shelving ran floor to ceiling, making some items visually and physically inaccessible. Needless to say, my last minute shopping trip failed. I got frustrated before I even saw everything and left clutchless... with a headache! A well-merchandised store beckon shoppers to explore, touch, try and eventually buy; just don't make me work for it.



Linda Johnson

Age: 73

Profession: Custom Drapery Sales, Ret.

Location: Quaker City, OH

I actually have two pet peeves when it comes to shopping. First, I don't want to be ignored when I go into a store. If the employees are busy, at least say hello, or something to acknowledge me being there. I am happy to wait if the employee says they will be with me in a minute or even if they simply smile and make eye contact.

My second pet peeve is being treated poorly because of the way I am dressed or the way I look. I remember going into a store one day when I wasn't feeling well because I wanted to buy perfume as a last-minute gift for my sister. When I told the store employee what I wanted she asked me if I knew how expensive the perfume was...like I couldn't afford it!

I worked retail for years and learned that you never know who has money to spend. The person with the worst looking outfit and no makeup lots of times has more money in their pocket than someone who is dressed up and made up!

LIFESTYLE / **balancing act**

Work, kids, friends, family... Life.

It "is" possible to do it all (or at least know what to put on hold).

Could you please provide a brief profile of yourself so our readers get to know you?

I am a designer, art director, wife to a rocket scientist (for real), mom to a toddler and a kindergartener, Francophile, design educator, typophile, and a surface and pattern designer. I own two businesses. Cathereene Huynh Design (chd) provides communication design solutions and branding consulting to businesses and organizations of various sizes. Additionally I own Feterie, a consumer-focused design boutique specializing in high-end paper goods and bespoke gifts. Recently, I joined the Academy of Art University in San Francisco as adjunct faculty.

My role changes daily. Between the work schedules, school schedules, social activities and sport activities everything definitely keeps me on my toes!

You seem to do it all, 2 young kids, multiple businesses ... what is your secret?

I have a tremendously supportive network of help which is definitely a necessity rather than an option! I am lucky to have the help of a nanny with my children and the help of virtual assistants to help with admin tasks. I've also come to realize that the notion of being a "superwoman" doesn't exist. You need to be able to delegate and adapt to changing your priorities around on a daily basis, especially when one of your children is sick.

What are a few time-saving secrets that you would like to share?

Over the years, I have tried many things to maintain a level of productivity, but the latest time-saving methods I use involve scheduling tasks in manageable blocks of time. I use my iPhone as a calendar, which keeps me reminded when my "time" is up. Another time-saving trick is to take 5 things from my ever growing to-do list each day and concentrate on those for the day. I have found that if I look at my entire to-do list, it can be overwhelming!

Can you talk a little bit about meeting deadlines even when things are a bit hectic?

I am a big fan of online apps for managing projects. Additionally, I set my calendar up backwards from hard deadlines and build

in a few "buffer" days, which have become useful in the past when there's a slip in the schedule.

How do you handle everyday stress?

It's definitely not easy because for me, everyday's schedule is different. I take small breaks throughout the day to re-focus, and communicate often with my husband so that if it's been a tough day he will know I need a break. Lately, I have found baking to be very therapeutic in relieving stress because it allows me to step away and focus on doing something completely unrelated.

Are there certain things that you have had to let go of?

I have learned to let go of having a spotlessly clean house or having the laundry put away every day. With two active kids, I've accepted it will not always look as it did pre-kids. Professionally, I now delegate tasks. It's a learning experience discovering what you are willing to live with and what you are willing to live without.

Anything else about time management?

What works for me may not necessarily work for everyone else. It may take some time to figure out what it is, but find a process that works for you. It's worth figuring out.



San Jose, CA based business owner Cathe Huynh-Sison enjoys some well deserved down time with her two young children.