



What Happens At Bloomingdale's . . .

I. Women's Fragrance

By Onute Miller, Bloomingdale's, New York City

I certainly hope you know Bloomingdale's. If you don't, then obviously I'm not doing my job correctly.

The first thing I would like to share with you is that 1987 is going to be a wonderful, wonderful fragrance year. There is great news—fragrance business is having an absolute boom at Bloomingdale's, and I think that those of you who created them should have an excellent round of applause.

We like to think that we represent the best in the fragrance industry. We are the showcase for trends, for exclusives, what's new, what's not, and what is to come. We no longer represent New York City alone, yet we are still synonymous with special New York words—words like drama, excitement and theater, in all our markets. This is part of our signature status in selling fragrance. Our customers look to us for the pulse on fragrance, for absolute authority and fashion leadership.

The word "fashion" is a very, very important word now in the fragrance business. Fragrance has truly become a fashion business. Gone is a single brand loyalty. A current trend is the use of

many, many brands. Just as a woman chooses an outfit from Chanel, from Calvin Klein, from Ungaro, Yves St. Laurent or Ralph Lauren, to make a personal statement for an immediate image as she enters the room, so she does with her fragrance as well. Her choice of fragrance is to evoke a subliminal message of fragrance in announcing her mood, her image, and her personality. This message would certainly change if this woman is at a romantic dinner or if she is in a corporate professional meeting.

The time of day and activity can certainly determine her choice as well. Frequently, during the course of the day, the choice may change more than once. In some cases, the fashion image of the media may attract the customer—the controversial sensuality of a brand like Obsession or the classic elegance of Chanel No. 5. For others, buying this fragrance is the closest that they will ever come to a designer label—the difference is between a \$40 eau de toilette spray and a \$500 blouse.

Now I will tell you about our Bloomingdale's customer. This is primarily a woman who buys for herself. She can be any age, all cultures, a



neighbor from our local market, a tourist from across the country or from across the world. She is sophisticated. She is curious. She asks questions and clearly wants to know. She is well-informed on trends. She is well-traveled, and she often requests a fragrance prior to its American debut. She is self-assured and looking for a signature of status. Today that word 'status' is absolutely key in selecting her fragrance. The word 'status' leads me to exclusives.

Exclusives are in keeping with our reputation of fragrance authority. Bloomingdale's is foremost in the presentation of exclusives, and we pride ourselves in this arena. The word 'exclusive' has become a key in appealing to our customers. This becomes an immediate incentive in attracting attention of the consumers. What is limited is automatically more precious and more desirable, heightening sense of self indulgence and pampering. This immediately translates to sales.

Since fragrance is linked so closely with emotion, the image to be projected is achieved immediately through lavish store visuals. This has become our trademark. The creation of a complete environment immediately transports the customer to the fragrance core. Some of our most recent stars are the timeless sophistication of Fendi, the provocative drama of Poison, the celebrity and elegant beauty of Catherine Deneuve, the prestige and truly limited supply of Privilège, and the brilliant allure of La Nuit de Paco Rabanne. Each of these new winners has had its own winning formula for combining the key visual that is so immediately important in attracting consumer attention with additional criteria for success.

In the case of Poison, it was sensual packaging, dramatic colors, a kick of spice throughout the entire promotion, colorful excitement with scented appeal of a new addition, "peacock feathers," for sampling. The fragrance wafted throughout the entire store. The landmark launch date was also a first, July, a previously poisoned time of year for a launch.

Fendi—the complete beauty throughout the entire store, tying in all areas throughout the entire store, translated Italy's current vitality coupled with centuries of culture. There was a proliferation of oversize granite busts inspired by Michaelangelo, laurels updated in leather, sleek and subtle woods with lacquer trims, each detail a tribute to texture beckoning all to enter "The Fendi Dynasty." The spectacular national advertising both print, television and in catalog—all attracted the customers to come running to Bloomingdale's.

Catherine Deneuve, another recent winner—a complete light show in our store featured silhouette, color and logo of the packaging. There was tremendous fragrance sampling in the stores, traditional dramming, invitational mailers, full size fabric tiger lilies scented with essence, poches on the wrists tied and sprayed, each elegantly aggressive yet effective. An exciting telemarketing program of Catherine's own voice at the actual perfumery counters—another first.

Privilège—a previous unknown, a fragrance no one knew was coming. We launched it with an unprecedented quantity of scented launch mailers. We had continuous in-store activity incorporating our visual with beautiful harp music, floral samplers, translating to total opulence.

La Nuit de Paco Rabanne—that's our current hit. It's on this week, and I'd like to invite all of you who have not been to Bloomingdale's recently to see our interpretation of the simple, exquisitely elegant new line.

For your information, I have mentioned some of the marketing aspects of our new winners. They are all unique. Each has its own formula. The one common denominator that is absolutely key in marketing a new fragrance is the training. Each one of our new winners has shared extensive training of all line people. No detail has been eliminated. To maintain this posture of authority that our customers seek, it is vital to ensure our sales people have credibility with the appropriate knowledge. A key concern of the customer is someone who listens to their needs and answers their questions—whether it is to explain a specific product usage or just to help them define their personal fantasy and image.

Now I am going to contradict myself. I just said that our customer is knowledgeable and she demands further information. They still have a few areas that they do not have a handle on. When they request a particular fragrance category other than a brand name, they do not know certain brand categories. They do not know what aldehyde is. They do not know what a chypre is. They even do not know what the word "green" is. Words like topnote, heart and drydown still don't have enough meaning to them. The word olfactory has very, very little meaning, and at this point, they don't really care. They want to look good and they want to feel good. That's all they want to know.

And yet when they do come to the counter, they are full of questions. They use adjectives. They describe fragrances with words like clean, floral, spicy, fresh, bold, sexy, lemon or heavy powdery. I am sure you know and work with these words every single day.



In their actual use of fragrance, our customers have learned about layering and making the fragrance last longer. Primarily, they use two combinations. They layer their eau de toilette with either body lotion or body cream. Few use perfume. There, of course, are bottle collectors that just love bottles. They do rely on perfume as a gift item. A few women still buy themselves perfume and that's the ultimate treat.

Other ancillary items are still an area of tremendous potential, and we must keep teaching the customers about it. We have had tremendous success with getting back down to basics like dramming and educational activities, especially during events like Fragrance Week. The customers are truly grateful for any extra knowledge that they get. We have on-the-floor fun—things like a sense-of-smell test with diplomas at the end of the actual test. These all prove that the customers are interested, and that we as an industry must continue to inform and teach, constantly challenging ourselves for new sampling techniques.

Creativity again becomes a key word. After all, the saddest part of my job is discontinuing a truly beautiful fragrance because we have done something wrong, because it wasn't given a fair

chance, because it was not properly marketed—not because it was not a beautiful fragrance.

Although I cannot discuss our top fragrance performances in terms of rankings, I can reassure all of you that the many categories that exist are all represented in my top ten. It is not purely the floral that rules or the oriental. There are new stars and the classics that strongly re-emerged. The fragrance introductions today no longer depend on just the "juice." I am sorry to tell all of you that. Marketing has become a true key part of it. The stakes are high and they are continuing to get higher. The package, the bottle, the name and the total, total marketing plan is essential in a store like ours and to our customers. They want to know where they are going to be and what the image represents.

My final remark is to share with you our formula for success in pleasing our customers. In addition to selection, service and authority, we cannot forget the ongoing excitement and drama of creating a conducive and compelling environment for business.

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