





**a** Modular fixtures on casters (from Labruna Industries) allow Brookstone to group, separate or relocate units, depending on changing merchandising needs. **b** Lifestyle assortments are a key element of Brookstone's merchandising thrust. Wall units can be used for displays, graphics, shelving or combinations thereof.

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# fixtures in a changing world

Merchandising systems help retailers tell their stories

**MANY RETAILERS USE FIXTURES AS EXTENSIONS** of their images and brands. That means fixtures are called upon not only to present merchandise but also to help create a comfortable and identifiable shopping environment – all within the confines of today's tight capital spending budgets.

On the following pages, *VM+SD* takes its annual in-depth look at the store fixture industry – manufacturers, products and projects. Starting below are case studies showing how Brookstone, Jockey, Yankee Candle and Nike are using new merchandising systems to reinforce their identities and move more goods.

## **BROOKSTONE'S VISION**

Brookstone sees itself as a laboratory, developing hundreds of new gifts, gadgets and other consumer products every year.

With such rapid research and development, it's little wonder that the Nashua, N.H.-based retailer has come up with a new store design, and overhauled one just a year old.

"We're item-driven," says Scott Jackson, Brookstone's vp, retail creative services. "We started out primarily selling other people's products. Now, we sell mostly our own products. And it's the uniqueness of our products that drives our business. We need to showcase one item at a time versus a collection of products."

So, with the help of design consultant JGA Inc. (Southfield, Mich.), the multi-channel company applied a more visually focused concept to its retail prototype. "We tried to implement what we know about how people shop catalogs," says Ken Nisch, JGA chairman and project principal. "We began to look at the store editorially versus architecturally."

The store design is intended to showcase individual products and, where appropriate, present lifestyle assortments. And the key is flexibility. Large wall displays near the entrance, highlighting new products or special promotions with larger-than-life graphics, can be changed out as often as needed. "Feature presentations are like a catalog cover," says Nisch, "meant to pique your interest and draw you in."

Key-item towers near the door "punctuate new products with visual exclamation points," according to Jackson, reinforcing the product emphasis as shoppers enter and begin walking through the store.

Brookstone also installed a modular display system, with tables (from Labruna Industries, Ontario, Calif.) designed so they could be grouped or separated in dozens of different configurations, with a series of toppers to increase the display possibilities. Interchangeable cable com-

**Brookstone's new retail concept, debuting at two locations in Connecticut, depends on a multimedia barrage of graphics, materials and focal key-item towers, each displaying new products in tactile settings.**



The new Brookstone stores are largely built on graphics and other visual icons, partly a reflection of the company's heritage as a catalog retailer.

"the third level of presentation") – shadow-boxes, wall signs and the occasional topiary "B" – are an attempt to create visual interest right to the back of the store, not just at the front as had been the prior practice. "It's our new lifestyle presence," he says. "Fewer products on the shelves, more about the experience."

And everything is designed to be reactive, to new promotions, new seasons, new holidays. "JGA provided us with a flexible kit of parts," says Jackson, "so that shelves on the wall can also be used for the fixtures on the floor. And graphics elements are interchangeable."

Flexibility can be tricky, of course, if not closely controlled. But Brookstone gives each of its more than 250 store managers a sophisticated planogram and monthly instructions, so that all stores maintain the appropriate themes and remain current.

The new prototype was introduced in two Connecticut locations: a more traditional, mall-based store in the Stamford Town Center and an unusual (for Brookstone) freestanding street location in Westport Village Square. "We have tended to be in malls, because that's where our market has been," says Jackson, referring to affluent and upscale shoppers. But the retailer has increasingly been looking at non-traditional mall sites, such as lifestyle centers; entertainment centers (primarily movie theaters and restaurants, with only some select retail); and airports.

"Our new approach has been tested," says Jackson, "and we're locked and loaded. We're ready for the roll-out."

– Steve Kaufman, Editor

ponents add to the flexibility. But, notes Nisch, "while the components are technically interchangeable, they also offer variety through the use of various thicknesses of wood, clear glass and other materials. The fixtures give the sense of being highly specialized."

Products are displayed inside the toppers on what Jackson calls "tactile elements." So wine-related products sit on cork or buckskin pads. Health and fitness products are on terrycloth, automobile products on chrome, outdoor-living merchandise on bamboo and so on.

Large focal walls are similarly flexible, containing graphics or shelving or combinations of the two. Graphics and other visual icons throughout the store (what Jackson calls

**Client:** Brookstone Inc., Nashua, N.H. – Scott Jackson, vp, retail creative services; Rob Edgerly, visual director; Ron Tise, creative director

**Design:** JGA Inc., Southfield, Mich. – Ken Nisch, chairman, project principal; Mike Curtis, creative director; Pete Garrett, project manager

**Suppliers:** Labruna Industries, Ontario, Calif. (fixtures); Buell Flooring Group, Dallas (wood flooring); Durkan Patterned Carpet, Atlanta (carpeting); Color Associates, St. Louis, Process Display, Minneapolis (graphics); Capital Lighting, Hartford, Conn. (lighting); Van Stry Design, Medford, Mass., Look, New York,

Viaggio Inc., Farmingdale, N.Y. (props and decoratives); Planteriors, Berkeley Heights, N.J., Ruggles Sign Co., Versailles, Ky. (signage); Carlson Co., Madison, Wis. (storefront)