

Designing Your Pop-up Space

Have a Specific Goal

Pop-up shops can accomplish a variety of goals. You can use them to test-market a new product line, or test a new neighbourhood or shopping centre before opening a permanent space. They can be brand-building exercises to attract new customers and raise awareness of your business. Your goal for your pop-up shop will guide your other decisions, so start by setting a specific, measurable target. For instance, if you're testing the feasibility of a certain neighbourhood, identify what benchmarks you'll use to decide if the location will work long-term.

Select the Right Location

Just as with any retail business, "location, location, location" is key to pop-up success. Based on the goals you've set, your next step is selecting the perfect space. There are lots of options. You may be able to rent pop-up space in a shopping centre or find unused retail space in your neighbourhood. There are also websites where you can search for local pop-up space.

But when it comes to pop-ups, you can (and should) think outside the box, too. Do a mobile pop-up shop in a converted bus, van or mobile home. Partner with a complementary business to hold a pop-up inside their retail space. You can even do a pop-up in a disused shopping container.

Do the Paperwork

Your pop-up is booming—then suddenly the fire marshal shuts you down. Don't let this happen. Check with your landlord and read your pop-up lease to make sure you know what's allowed and what's not. If you're doing a mobile pop-up or other pop-up without a landlord, check with local authorities and get the required permits before you open for business. And check with your business insurance agent to see if you need any special coverage.

Provide Good WiFi

Social media is the lifeblood of a pop-up, so having reliable, fast Wi-Fi access for your customers is essential. How else will they take selfies and share their status to let friends know about your pop-up? Set up a guest Wi-Fi network separate from the network you use for accepting payments. Prominently share the Wi-Fi password on signage and on your social platforms so people can quickly get online.

Create an Experience

For you, the entrepreneur, pop-ups are about selling product and services. But for customers, they're all about the experience. Make your pop-up an unforgettable, unique experience that customers will get excited about, go out of their way to find, and tell their friends about. Think of it as planning a social event rather than a retail display spot. You could have live music, photo opportunities, refreshments or contests.

Don't forget about signage and design—vital elements in attracting attention for your pop-up shop. Plan how you'll get passersby to stop, stare and come into your space.

Build Buzz in Advance

What if you gave a pop-up shop and nobody came? That could happen if you don't do some pre-pop-up marketing. Start by letting your best customers know about your upcoming pop-up. Then contact local members of the media as well as social media influencers in your market. You want your pop-up to go viral, so focus on spreading the word via social media. Begin marketing a month or so in advance using hashtags specific to the event.

People love feeling special, and exclusivity is part of a pop-up's appeal—not everyone will get to go. Offer influencers and customers an incentive to attend, like a free gift or first peek at a new product you're launching. Share "teasers" about what customers can expect via social media, email newsletters and other advertising.

Connecting with Customers

During the pop-up, focus not just on selling product/services, but also on making connections with customers. Ideally, your pop-up will attract lots of first-time visitors. Get them to sign up to receive marketing messages from you or ask them to follow you on social media. The goal is to create relationships you can build on.

Don't forget about your "virtual" audience. Share videos of the day's events and live-stream the fun on social media to get customers to "come on down." Make it like a party that no one wants to miss.