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How to Find the Best Retail Space for Your Pop-up Shop

Land a location that suits your goals and budget with these tips.



Opening a pop-up store is a great way to boost your business — if enough people find it. Because these stores are temporary by nature and the window for making a profit is small, picking the right location is critical. Choose well, and your pop-up should thrive. Choose poorly, and it may go bust.

Pop-up shops can live in countless places, from empty retail storefronts to public event spaces to active stores that may rent you room to sell your related goods.



Alex Cohen, lead specialist at CORE, a New York City real estate company, shopping for a pop-up store location is not all too different than shopping for a traditional store location

If you choose to rent empty retail space, scouting locations is not dissimilar to shopping for a traditional store location, said Alex Cohen, lead commercial specialist at New York City real estate company CORE.

Some of the same considerations apply: visibility, storefront size, signage potential and the volume and demographics of customer traffic to neighboring retailers.

“Obviously, you want to avoid locations that may be subject to road closures, police actions and other calamities that may undermine your sales,” Cohen said.

Here are Cohen’s top tips for choosing the best, most appropriate spot.



Know exactly what you want out of your pop-up shop before you decide on a location.

Clarify your goals

Before you look for locations, determine what you want from your shop.

“You must establish whether the goal of the pop-up is to maximize net revenue from sales, which would make a location’s rent cost and other expenses critical concerns, or to build brand awareness or launch a new product, in which case the relationship between rent and potential sales is less direct,” Cohen said.

Determine how much money you have to spend

Don’t assume empty store space equals low rent. “Even neighborhoods with a large amount of vacant storefronts don’t necessarily mean your pop-up will get a deal on rent,” he said.

When you look at a space, think about how much time and money will it take to make it work. Does it have the basics you need, such as enough shelving and good lighting? Do you need a dressing room? Can you build one if there isn’t? Does it have adequate electricity and access to Wi-Fi for your POS system?

Decide how visible your pop-up shop needs to be

“One approach is to focus on very high-traffic and expensive rent areas where foot traffic and visibility will drive customers to the the pop-up store location,” Cohen said. “In New York City, this would mean renting a store in Times Square for a mass market audience, on Madison Avenue in the 60s if you are targeting well-heeled tourists or the wealthy, Upper East Side and older demographic, or prime Soho streets for the affluent younger shopper.”

An alternative approach is to rent space in a lower traffic, less visible (and therefore less expensive) location. “But for these locations, more marketing dollars will be spent to drive traffic to the store as a destination.”



Pop-up shops can be opened in locations anywhere from trucks and trailers to unused industrial spaces.

Know your target customer

No matter how much money you have to spend on location, if you put your pop-up shop in an area where none of your potential customers will find it, you won't succeed.

Know who is most likely to purchase your products and do all you can to locate your pop-up in their path. If you've been selling merchandise online or in a main store, you may already know your niche. Next, research the types of customers who frequent the area you're considering. Visit the space at different times of day. Pay attention to other shops in the area to see if you can capitalize on their customer traffic.

Read the fine print

Know the terms and restrictions of your lease or rental agreement. “Definitely avoid stores where your leased possession of the store is dependent on when and if an existing tenant vacates. An existing tenant holding over in the space can eat into your valuable selling period,” Cohen said.

Be sure you can make temporary modifications the site or shop if you need to. Confirm the rules for signage and the hours you may operate.

Know the difference between a lease and a license. A lease is a temporary agreement for use of a space. It will state how you may and may not use the space and is generally for exclusive use of a space. A license gives you the right to use the owner's space, much like a lease; however, it may not grant you exclusive use of a space. A license is granted for more short term use of a space.

Finally, be sure you have the permits required by the municipality in which you plan to conduct business.