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## Retail Profile: Vintage Villas

Scottsdale, Ariz.

Susan Dickenson -- Home Accents Today, 10/1/2009



Jody Smith and her mother Cindy Vallee opened **Vintage Villas** in Scottsdale, Ariz., eight years ago as a small boutique selling antiques, accents and gifts. A couple of years ago, the two launched a makeover service, working with customers' existing furniture pieces to create a new look through dramatic rearranging, and changing out or updating the rugs, lamps, pillows and accessories.

"We have really focused on that service, instead of relying on walk-in sales, so in the last couple of years our investment in home accents has increased dramatically," Smith said. Today, Vintage Villas gives Old World a new twist with dramatic displays of home furnishings, gifts and accessories that incorporate a lot of bling ("anything I glue a crystal to sells"), tassels, picture frames ("can't keep them in stock"), and lighting.

As owners Jody Smith and Cindy Vallee expanded their business to include accessory makeovers, the store's selection of home accents grew. Baby gifts and one-of-a-kind nursery pieces were recently added to the mix.

"When we moved in," Smith continued, "we tore out the fluorescent lighting and hung chandeliers to create a boutique atmosphere. Our customers know to come here when they want a light fixture to be a piece of interest, like in a powder room or over a kitchen island. We scour the markets for small, artisan lighting companies or vendors that import and may have only a few chandeliers." Her average retail price point for frames is \$50, and for lamps,

\$300.

Opened in 2002, Vintage Villas consists of a 2,400-sq.-ft. showroom and 400-sq.-ft. office. Home accents accounts for roughly 60% of sales.

**Describe your store:** Our store is laid out in vignettes. The displays look like a very dramatic interpretation of a home. We have also added a room with baby gifts and one-of-a-kind nursery pieces called Vintage Bambina.

How's business? Our sales are definitely up. August and September have been better than expected due to a few accessory makeover projects. The customers seem to be in better spirits and they are looking to buy. I am cautiously optimistic as we head into fourth quarter, but based on what I am hearing from the customers, everyone is ready for this holiday season.

What makes you different? Merchandising and customer service. It's amazing how many times a customer will say it's the first time they have ever seen a frame — when I've seen it all over town. To me, that is concrete evidence of how displaying a product can set you apart from the competition. I also truly believe we have the best service in Scottsdale. Customers want to be addressed by name ... they want to know that you remembered their daughter went to college this year — and they're still looking for a perfect piece for the entry. We give our customers enough options so they never feel trapped — anything in the store can go home on 24-hour approval, and we have a good return policy.

**Describe your customers:** Our customers range from professional interior designers and casual home decor aficionados, to the frequent gift giver.

How do you reach your customers? We advertise in **Phoenix Home and Garden**, our local design magazine, using product shots and store photos. I mail out a newsletter every quarter after returning from market with trends, pictures of pieces we ordered that



will be coming in, and any specials we are running in the store. We have a Web site, I'm working on an online store, plan to be on [Facebook](#), and want to launch an e-mail marketing campaign. We host events about once a quarter — seasonal events, trunk shows with vendors, Cinco de Mayo parties, book signings. Every year, we allocate a certain amount to be donated for customer charity donations and silent auction request.

What is the most enjoyable part of your job? My customers! We have been blessed with the most amazing clients. I love talking to people and hearing about their lives. I also enjoy creating all the marketing materials and advertising and have had fun building a brand.

**Home accents categories:** Wall decor, lighting, rugs, pillows, permanent botanicals, mirrors, frames, small furniture accent pieces, vases, sculptures, decorative candles/candleholders, tabletop

**Tradeshows/markets you shop:** Dallas, High Point once a year and then we try to attend a couple of additional markets — Las Vegas, Atlanta or New York. We are hoping to get to Paris and Milan in the next couple of years.

**Key vendors:** [CBK](#), [Imax](#), [Surya Rugs](#), [Haute House Home Furnishings](#), [Ashton Fine Art](#), [David Michael](#), [MAC Sculpture](#), [English Home](#), [Beljen Mills](#)

**Web site:** [vintagevillashome.com](http://vintagevillashome.com)

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