

CLOSING? WINDOWS MATTER

NOTES FROM THE FIELD

9/18

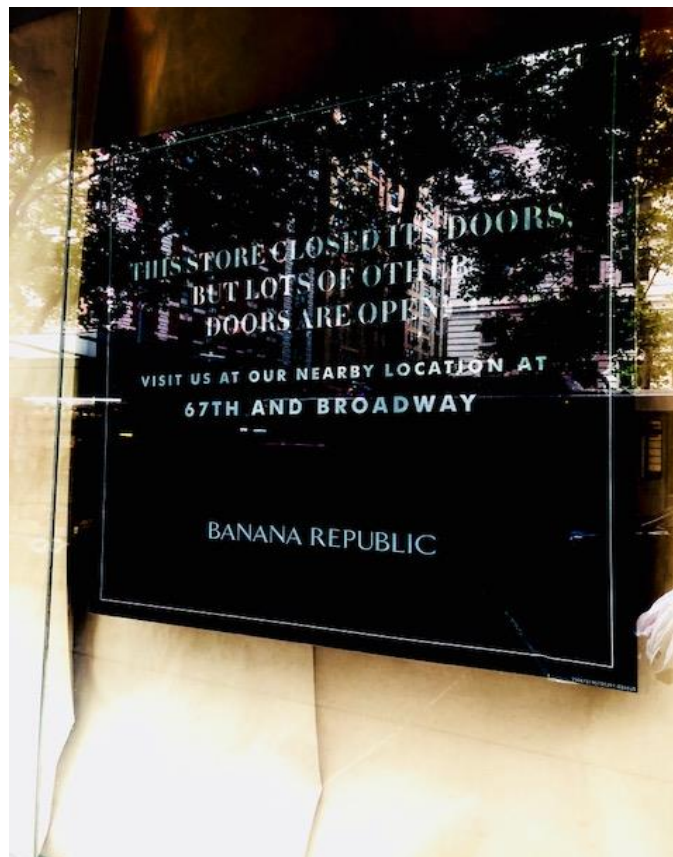
The retail “correction” currently underway in so many locations across the country continues. This is certainly evident in New York City, and the Upper West Side is no exception. Two stores (Gristedes, Banana Republic) situated right next to each other closed within the last several months.

I walk by these vacant storefronts daily and am reminded of the stark contrast in how the two companies chose to communicate with their customers after their decades in the neighborhood. The visual impact of your front windows is critical whether you’re open or closed.



With Gristedes, a grocery store operating in 30 locations around New York City, they simply packed up and left. While the sight lines into the space clearly told the story, their front windows showed product options, smoking policy, and store hours (at least the time that the store opened). I witnessed a family arrive at the storefront and tug at the doors until they noticed the empty space on the floor below, clearly unaware of the permanent closing.

I would not leave storefront windows in this condition for more than an hour let alone two months. In such a competitive food market, what message does this send?



In contrast, Banana Republic, with less than half the number of store locations in New York City, took a different approach that indicated they value their relationship with the customer. They installed signage that simply invited the customer to visit another location on the west side. Additionally, they covered the sight lines into the space to avoid presenting an “empty space” image of their brand. Well done.

While it is unfortunate to see multiple store closures taking place in neighborhoods, senior leadership should endeavor to maintain and grow their ongoing customer relationships, which have been earned over time. Whether you're a bank, restaurant, store, or service, your front windows are an important expression of your brand's story, particularly if you operate in multiple locations.