

Stringing

SELLING STRINGS

Variety Store

Make sure your string inventory provides a thorough selection for current and potential customers.

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In any retail business, managing inventory is essential to being successful. Having too much inventory will wreck your profit margin, while not having enough inventory can hurt sales and the potential for repeat business. It's not only important to have the right *amount* of inventory, but it's vital to have the right *selection* available—which is especially true for strings.

If stringing is a big part of your business, having a good selection can be tricky. On one hand, you want to present to your customers the newest strings that are being introduced. But if you're doing your job effectively, you have probably already spent a lot of time getting your players into a string set-up

that works for their game. So, once they're content with their string, it's hard to try to get them into something new. In addition, if you are managing your inventory, then bringing in a new string may mean you need to drop another string to make room. It can be quite the conundrum.

First, make sure you have a good variety of options to fit your current clients as well as potential ones. Whether you stock 10 strings or 50 strings will depend on your volume.

You need to make sure you hit every category of string, but skew your inventory to your clients. If the majority of your players are young big hitters who prefer a stiff, durable string, you don't need half of your inventory to be natural

gut or multifilaments. But, you also don't want to exclude a category, either. You need to cover your bases for potential clients who may play differently.

New string introductions should be assessed to see if they make sense for your business. Does the new string fill a void in your inventory? Is it very similar to something you already stock? If so, determine if it offers any advantages. Is the new string less expensive, providing a better margin? Does it provide some other incentive or advantage to either you or your client? If so, then you may want to replace an existing string with the new one. If not, then pass.



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You certainly want to investigate and consider new introductions, as there seems to be new technology coming all the time. But remember that many of the top-selling strings have been on the market for years. New is not always better, but don't ignore new products and place your clients in the position to miss something that may improve their performance.

While clients tend to find a good string set-up and stick with it, remember that their game is constantly changing, and their needs must be constantly evaluated. As a player gains skills—or, conversely, ages and loses some skills—their needs will change.

Make sure you are keeping an open dialogue with each client every time they come in into your shop. Even if they stay with the same set-up, it shows them that you care and are working to help them play their best every time they step on the court. ■



As a player's game constantly changes, so will their stringing needs.