SYSTEM FOR DISPLAYING A SAMPLE OF A PRODUCT

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Appl. No.: 11/258,118
Filed: Oct. 26, 2005

Publication Classification

Int. Cl. A47F 5/08 (2006.01)
U.S. Cl. 211/94.01

ABSTRACT

A system for exhibiting a sample of a product. The system comprises a rail and a display unit. The rail extends from a first end to a second end, and includes at least one display unit engaging portion. The display unit can be removably mounted on the rail, and has a display surface, formed on the front of the display unit, on which the sample of the product can be mounted. The display unit also has at least one rail engaging portion, the at least one rail engaging portion being removable engageable with the at least one display unit engaging portion. The display unit can be removably mounted on the rail directly at a predetermined location between the first end and the second end of the rail through a snap-fit connection between the at least one rail engaging portion and the at least one display unit engaging portion.
SYSTEM FOR DISPLAYING A SAMPLE OF A PRODUCT

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The invention relates to the display of product samples.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Retail locations typically use display systems to display samples of products being sold to advertise a current price of a product, enable users to find a product, identify a product, and/or for other purposes. A typical display system may include a display unit, to which a sample of a product is fastened. With conventional display units, securely fastening the sample to the display unit may generally require an involved process, such as, for example, drilling holes into the display unit so that the sample can be attached to the display unit with fasteners.

[0003] Once, the sample is fastened to the display unit, the display unit is then mounted at the retail location. The location at which the display unit is mounted may be determined to advertise a current price for the product, enable customers to determine a location of the product, and/or identify the product. For example, the display unit may be mounted over a bin containing the product that corresponds to the sample fastened to the display unit, to enable consumers to find the product. However, conventional display systems may not facilitate interchangeability between display units by enabling the display units to be removably mounted at (and removed from) predetermined locations.

SUMMARY

[0004] One aspect of the invention relates to a system for exhibiting a sample of a product. The system comprises a rail and a display unit. The rail extends from a first end to a second end, and includes at least one display unit engaging portion. The display unit can be removably mounted on the rail, and has a display surface, formed on the front of the display unit, on which the sample of the product can be mounted. The display unit also has at least one rail engaging portion, the at least one rail engaging portion being removably engageable with the at least one display unit engaging portion. The display unit can be removably mounted on the rail directly at a predetermined location between the first end and the second end of the rail through a snap-fit connection between the at least one rail engaging portion and the at least one display unit engaging portion.

[0005] Another aspect of the invention relates to a display unit for exhibiting a sample of a product, the display unit having a front side, a rear side, an upper end, and a lower end, wherein the rear side of the display unit is removably mountable on a rail. The display unit comprises at least one rail engaging portion and a sample mounting member. The at least one rail engaging portion is removably engageable with the rail, and is formed such that the display unit can be removably mounted on the rail directly at a predetermined location on the rail, without sliding the display unit along the rail to the predetermined location. The sample mounting member has a front surface exposed to the front side of the display unit and a rear surface exposed to the rear side of the display unit. The sample mounting member is adapted such that the sample of the product can be mounted to the front surface of the sample mounting member by one or more fasteners that pass through the sample mounting member.

[0006] Another aspect of the invention relates to a system for exhibiting a sample of a product. The system comprises a rail, a first display unit, a second display unit, a display unit, a first rail engaging portion, and a second rail engaging portion. The first display unit engaging portion is provided on the rail. The second display unit engaging portion is provided on the rail. The display unit is formed from a resilient plastic material. The first rail engaging portion is provided on the display unit, and is removably engageable with the first display unit engaging portion such that the display unit can pivot, relative to the rail, about the engagement between the first rail engaging portion and the first display unit engaging portion. The second rail engaging portion is provided on the display unit such that pivoting the display unit about the engagement between the first rail engaging portion and the first display unit engaging portion brings the second rail engaging portion into contact with the second display unit engaging portion so that the second rail engaging portion is resiliently flexed so as to be moved into releasably locking relationship with the second display unit engaging portion.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] The preferred embodiments of the invention will hereinafter be described in conjunction with the appended drawings, provided to illustrate and not to limit the invention, wherein like designations denote like elements, and in which:

[0008] FIG. 1 shows a system for exhibiting samples of products, in accordance with various embodiments of the present invention.

[0009] FIG. 2a shows a side view of the system for exhibiting samples of products, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0010] FIG. 2b shows a side view of the system for exhibiting samples of products, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0011] FIG. 3 shows a cross-sectional view of the system for exhibiting samples of products, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0012] FIG. 4 shows a cross-sectional view of a rail, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0013] FIG. 5 shows a cross-sectional view of a display unit, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0014] FIG. 6 shows a cross-sectional view of the display unit, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0015] FIG. 7 shows an isometric view of the display unit, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

[0016] FIG. 8a shows an isometric back view of the display unit, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.
[0017] FIG. 8b shows a front view of the display unit, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 9 shows a cross-sectional view of the system for exhibiting a sample, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0018] The present invention relates to a marketing system for hardware products at the store level, and more particularly, relates to a display structure for exhibiting samples of products.

[0019] The invention describes a rail and display unit assembly that may be placed at various convenient locations in the store. Further, a plurality of display units may be mounted on the rail. At least one sample of a product is mounted in each display unit of the plurality of display units. The number of display units and the dimensions of each display unit may vary according to the size of the respective samples.

[0020] FIG. 1 shows a system 100 for exhibiting samples of products, in accordance with various embodiments of the present invention. The system 100 includes a rail 102 and a plurality of display units 104. The rail 102 extends from a first end 106 to a second end 108. The display units 104 include a first display unit 104a, a second display unit 104b, and a third display unit 104c. Further, there exists a vacant location 105 between the second display unit 104b and the third display unit 104c. In an embodiment, the rail 102 and the display units 104 are made from a resilient plastic material. Examples of the resilient plastic material may include, but are not limited to, Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC), Thermoplastic Elastomers, and the like.

[0021] In an embodiment, the rail 102 is mounted on a structure such as a shelf in a store. In another embodiment, the assembly is mounted on an overhang of the store. Each display unit of the display units 104 may be removable mounted on the rail 102 at a predetermined location between the first end 106 and the second end 108. A predetermined location may be assigned to each display unit of the display units 104, based on various factors such as the dimensions of each display unit, the type of sample that each display unit exhibits or the order of the placement of each display unit. In one embodiment of the present invention, some or all of the display units 104 are mounted on the rail 102 at predetermined locations that are adjacent to one or more bins containing products. The display units 104 display samples 110 of the products contained in the bins.

[0022] In the embodiment shown in FIG. 1, the system 100 further includes a plurality of samples 110. The samples 110 include a first sample 110a, a second sample 110b, and a third sample 110c. Examples of the samples 110 that may be exhibited on the display units 104 include, but are not limited to, hardware elements such as metal handles and spanners.

[0023] In one embodiment of the present invention, the first sample 110a is mounted on the first display unit 104a, the second sample 110b is mounted on the second display unit 104b, and the third sample 110c is mounted on the third display unit 104c.

[0024] In an embodiment of the invention, the dimensions of each display unit 104 are decided based on the size of the respective sample 110 exhibited. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 1, the size of the sample 110a is equal to that of the sample 110b. Hence, the dimensions of the display unit 104a are equal to that of the display unit 104b. However, the dimensions of the display unit 104c are greater than that of the display unit 104b, since the size of the sample 110c is greater than the size of the sample 110b. In other embodiments, the dimensions of each display unit 104 are decided based on other considerations. For example, the dimensions of the display units 104 may depend on the size of the rail 102, the sizes of bins containing products that correspond to samples 110, and other considerations.

[0025] FIG. 2a shows a side view of a system 200, for exhibiting samples of products, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The system 200 includes a rail 202, and a display unit 204. The display unit 204 includes a first rail engaging portion 212, and a second rail engaging portion 214.

[0026] The display unit 204 may be engaged to the rail 202 by using the first rail engaging portion 212 and the second rail engaging portion 214. In FIG. 2a, the display unit 204 is engaged to the rail 202 at the first rail engaging portion 212. The first rail engaging portion 212 is engaged to the upper edge of the rail 202. The engagement pivots the display unit 204 to the rail 202, in a manner that enables the second rail engaging portion 214 to come in contact with the lower edge of the rail 202 and releasably lock the display unit 204 to the rail 202 in a snap-fit connection. More particularly, as the second rail engaging portion 214 contacts the lower edge of rail 202, the second rail engaging portion 214 is resiliently flexed so as to be moved into releasably locking relationship with the rail 202.

[0027] FIG. 2b shows a side view of the system 200 in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. FIG. 2b illustrates the system 200 when the display unit 204 is engaged to the rail 202 by using the first rail engaging portion 212 and the second rail engaging portion 214. The first rail engaging portion 212 is engaged to the upper edge of the rail 202, and the second rail engaging portion is engaged to the lower edge of the rail 202.

[0028] FIG. 3 shows a cross-sectional view of a system 300, for exhibiting samples of products, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The system 300 includes a rail 302 and a display unit 304. The display unit 304 includes a first rail engaging portion 312 and a second rail engaging portion 314. The second rail engaging portion 314 includes a cam surface 320. The rail 302 includes a face 315, a first display unit engaging portion 316, and a second display unit engaging portion 318. The cam surface 320 is designed so as to provide a grip such that a person can apply pressure on the cam surface using a thumb.

[0029] The first rail engaging portion 312 is removably engageable with the first display unit engaging portion 316, so that the display unit 304 can pivot, relative to the rail 302, around the engagement between the first rail engaging portion 312 and the first display unit engaging portion 316. Pivoting the display unit 304 brings the second rail engaging portion 314 in contact with the second display unit engaging portion 318. In an embodiment, the display unit 304 is made of a resilient plastic material, so that when the second rail engaging portion 314 contacts the second display unit engaging portion 318, the second rail engaging portion 314...
is resiliently flexed to enable the cam surface 320 to clear the second display unit engaging portion 318. As the cam surface 320 clears the second display unit engaging portion 318, the second rail engaging 314 resiliently moves back to an unflexed position, thereby placing the cam surface 320 in contact with the second display unit engaging portion 318. The contact between the cam surface 320 and the second display unit engaging portion 318 provides a releasable locking relationship between the second rail engaging portion 314 and the second display unit engaging portion 318.

[0030] FIG. 4 shows a cross-sectional view of the rail 302, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The rail 302 further includes a rear surface 422 and a base 424. The face 315 includes an upper edge 426 and a lower edge 428. The first display unit engaging portion 316 is located proximate to the upper edge 426 and the second display unit engaging portion 318 is located proximate to the lower edge 428. The first display unit engaging portion 316 includes a groove 430. In an embodiment, the groove 430 is behind the upper edge 426. The second display unit engaging portion 318 includes a protrusion 432. In an embodiment, the protrusion 432 is located below the base 424. Further, there may exist a structure designated A in FIG. 4 between the base 424 and the protrusion 432 in order to provide additional strength and durability to the rail 302. The groove 430 and the protrusion 432 run through the rail 302 from the first end 106 to the second end 108.

[0031] In an embodiment, the rear surface 422 is placed approximately vertically on a structure such as a shelf or an overhang, and the face 315 is built at an angle ‘α’, with respect to the rear surface 422. The angle α may be decided subjectively. For example, in one embodiment, angle α is approximately between 30° and 40°. The base 424 may be used to rest the rail 302 on a suitable part of the structure and may be affixed using various mechanical means of attachment known in the art including bolting, fastening, and the like. In one embodiment, the attachment may be carried out by means of an adhesive bonding.

[0032] FIG. 5 shows a cross-sectional view of the display unit 304, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The display unit 304 includes a front side 534, a rear side 536, an upper end 538, and a lower end 540. The front side 534 includes a display surface 542. Further, the first rail engaging portion 312 includes a tab 544, while the second rail engaging portion 314 includes the cam surface 320. In an embodiment, the tab 544 is removably engageable with the groove 430. Similarly, the cam surface 320 is removably engageable with the protrusion 432. Moreover, the rear side 536 rests firmly on face 315 of rail 302.

[0033] Written indicia may be provided on the display surface 542, to provide information about the sample that is mounted on the display unit 304. In an embodiment, the display surface 542 is a solid surface, which extends from the front side 534 to the rear side 536.

[0034] In one embodiment, a preprinted label may be affixed at the top of the display surface 542. The preprinted label can include fastener markings, where fasteners may be drilled to enable the sample 110 to be mounted on the display unit 304. Holes may be drilled through the fastener markings on the preprinted label before the sample 110 is mounted on the display unit 304. When the sample 110 is to be mounted on the display unit 304, the sample 110 is superimposed over the holes. Thereafter the fasteners are driven into the holes in the display surface 542 to secure the sample 110 to the display unit 304.

[0035] In an embodiment, the display surface 542 is a thin surface. For example, in one embodiment, the thickness of the display surface 542 is approximately between 5 millimeters and 10 millimeters. Since the display surface 542 is a thin surface, the sample may be fastened without pre-drilled holes. Fasteners may be drilled into the display surface 542 by the application of a requisite force that can be achieved by means of, for example, hammering.

[0036] In one embodiment, the display surface 542 is a mesh surface, which can be, for example, a flexible netting of fine wire. The netting creates mesh openings between the wires. This enables the sample 110 to be fastened without pre-drilling holes, since the flexible netting allows fasteners to be fixed through the mesh openings.

[0037] FIG. 6 shows a cross-sectional view of the display unit 304, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The display unit 304 includes a display surface 542 and a corrugated back surface 648. In an embodiment, the display surface 542 is a thin solid surface. Further, the corrugated back surface 648 is a surface with approximately parallel and alternating ridges and grooves. Therefore, the corrugated back surface 648 engages the fastener rigidly once the fastener penetrates the display surface 542. The corrugation in the corrugated back surface 648 lies approximately throughout the length of the display surface 542.

[0038] In one embodiment, the display surface 542 is replaced by a sample mounting member (not shown in the figure). The sample mounting member includes a front surface and a rear surface. The front surface is exposed to the front side 534 and the rear surface is exposed to the rear side 536 of the display unit 304. In an embodiment, the front surface is either a solid surface or a mesh surface. It may be apparent to a person skilled in the art that the method of mounting the sample 110 on the front surface is similar to the method of mounting the sample on the display surface 542 as described with reference to FIG. 5.

[0039] In one embodiment, the front surface is a thin surface and the rear surface is a corrugated surface. Herein the attachment of the sample to the sample mounting member is achieved when the fasteners are guided through the front surface by application of a requisite force. It may be noted that the corrugated surface helps to engage the fasteners better, once guided through the front surface. Further, the mode of mounting the sample on the front surface is similar to the mode of mounting the sample on the display surface 542 as described with reference to FIG. 6.

[0040] FIG. 7 shows an isometric view of a display unit 704, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The display unit 704 includes a first opening 750, a second opening 752, and a third opening 754. The display unit 704 also includes a first tab 744a, a second tab 744b, and a cam surface 720.

[0041] In one embodiment, the first tab 744a and the second tab 744b are engaged with groove 430 of the first display unit engaging portion 316 and the cam surface 720 is engaged with protrusion 432 of the second display unit engaging portion 318. In one embodiment, the openings 750, 752, and 754 are engaged with protrusions (not shown) extending from the rail 302.
Fig. 8b shows a cross-sectional view of a system 900 for exhibiting a sample 910, in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. The system includes the rail 302, the display unit 304, a plurality of fasteners 958, a plurality of nut-bolt arrangements 960 and a shelf 962.

The base 424 is used to rest the rail 302 on a suitable horizontal surface of the shelf 962. The rail 302 is rested so as to place the rear surface 422 approximately parallel to a structure 964. In an embodiment, the structure 964 is a vertical wall or barrier. Moreover, the rail 302 is affixed to the shelf 962 using the nut-bolt arrangements 960. It should be apparent to any known mechanism suitable for affixing the rail 302 to the shelf 962 may be used.

The display unit 304 is mounted on the rail 302 as explained earlier with reference to Fig. 2, i.e., the first rail engaging portion 312 is engaged to the first display unit engaging portion 316 and the second rail engaging portion 314 is engaged to the second display unit engaging portion 318.

Further, the sample 910, which in an embodiment is a metal handle, is mounted on the display unit 304 as follows. The sample 910 is placed rigidly on the display surface 542 and the fasteners 958 are driven through the flat ends of sample 910. The corrugated back surface 648 engages the fasteners 958 rigidly once they penetrate the display surface 542.

Various embodiments of the system allow the display of samples of products such as hardware elements. The system provides the flexibility to remove or add any number of display units mounted on a rail of the system. In addition, the system also provides the flexibility to change the order in which the samples are displayed since the display units are removably engaged with the rail.

Furthermore, the system allows simple and flexible attachment of a sample on a display unit since the display surface of a display unit may be a mesh surface. Alternatively, the display surface may be a thin solid surface with the display unit including a corrugated back surface.

Various embodiments of the invention also allow easy identification of the sample mounted on a display unit. In one embodiment, the display unit includes written indicia provided on the display surface which enable labeling of the mounted sample.

One skilled in the art will understand that the embodiments of the system shown in the figures and described above are exemplary only and not intended to be limiting. It is within the scope of the invention to provide any known rail and display unit with any or all of the features of the present invention. For example, a display unit constructed according to the principles of the present invention can be applied to any known display structure.

The features of the rail including the resilient plastic construction, the shape of the rail, the angle α, the geometry of the cross-section of the rail, and the method of engaging a display unit can be used separately or in combination on any existing rail model. In one embodiment, the face of the rail is not formed as a solid surface, but includes openings therein. In one embodiment, the face of the rail is not formed as a solid surface, but includes openings therein. Similarly, the geometry of the cross-section of the display unit, the method of mounting the sample, and the methods of engaging fasteners can be used on any existing display structure.

It can be appreciated by one skilled in the art that it is within the scope of the present invention to apply the teachings presented herein to construct a system for exhibiting samples of products, that can display samples of a wide range of sizes and that it is not intended to limit the invention to the embodiments or to the specific measurements or ranges of measurements presented herein.

It will thus be seen that the objects of the present invention have been fully and effectively accomplished. It will be realized, however, that the foregoing specific embodiments have been shown and described for the purposes of illustrating the functional and structural principles of the present invention and is subject to change without departure from such principles. Therefore, this invention includes all modifications encompassed within the spirit and scope of the following claims.

While the preferred embodiments of the invention have been illustrated and described, it will be clear that the invention is not limited to these embodiments only. Numerous modifications, changes, variations, substitutions and equivalents will be apparent to those skilled in the art, without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, as described in the claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A system for exhibiting a sample of a product, the system comprising:
   a rail that extends from a first end to a second end, and including at least one display unit engaging portion; and
   a display unit that can be removably mounted on the rail, the display unit having a display surface, formed on the front of the display unit, on which the sample of the product can be mounted, and having at least one rail engaging portion, the at least one rail engaging portion being removably engageable with the at least one display unit engaging portion, wherein the display unit can be removably mounted on the rail directly at a predetermined location between the first end and the second end of the rail through a
snap-fit connection between the at least one rail engaging portion and the at least one display unit engaging portion.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the rail has a face with an upper edge and a lower edge, and the at least one display unit engaging portion comprises a first display unit engaging portion located proximate to the upper edge of the face, and a second display unit engaging portion located proximate to the lower edge of the face.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein the at least one rail engaging portion comprises a first rail engaging portion and a second rail engaging portion, the first rail engaging portion extending from the display unit and being removably engageable with the first display unit engaging portion, the second rail engaging portion extending from the display unit and being removably engageable with the second display unit engaging portion.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the display unit comprises written indicia provided on the display surface providing information on the sample.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the rail includes a face having an upper edge and a lower edge, and forms a substantially continuous surface bounded by the first end of the rail, the second end of the rail, the upper edge of the face, and the lower edge of the face.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein the face is oriented at an angle with respect to the vertical.

7. The system of claim 6, wherein the angle at which the face is oriented is formed such that the lower edge of the face extends further towards a front of the system than the upper edge of the face.

8. The system of claim 2, wherein the first display unit engaging portion comprises a groove that is formed proximate to the upper edge of the face and runs substantially continuously from the first end of the rail to the second end of the rail.

9. The system of claim 8, wherein the first rail engaging portion comprises a tab that is removably engageable with the groove.

10. The system of claim 2, wherein the second display unit engaging portion comprises a protrusion that is formed proximate to the lower edge of the face and runs substantially continuously from the first end of the rail to the second end of the rail.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the second rail engaging portion comprises a cam surface that is removably engageable with the protrusion.

12. A display unit for exhibiting a sample of a product, the display unit having a front side, a rear side, an upper end, and a lower end, wherein the rear side of the display unit is removably mountable on a rail, the display unit comprising:

at least one rail engaging portion that is removably engageable with the rail, and is formed such that the display unit can be removably mounted on the rail directly at a predetermined location on the rail, without sliding the display unit along the rail to the predetermined location; and

a sample mounting member having a front surface exposed to the front side of the display unit and a rear surface exposed to the rear side of the display unit, wherein the sample mounting member is adapted such that the sample of the product can be mounted to the front surface of the sample mounting member by one or more fasteners that pass through the sample mounting member.

13. The display unit of claim 12, wherein the at least one rail engaging portion comprises:

a first rail engaging portion that extends from the display unit proximate to the upper end of the display unit, the first rail engaging portion being removably engageable with the rail; and

a second rail engaging portion that extends from the display unit proximate to the lower end of the display unit, the second rail engaging portion being removably engageable with the rail.

14. The display unit of claim 12, wherein the at least one rail engaging portion is formed such that when the display unit is removably mounted on the rail, the display unit can be removed from the rail without sliding along the rail.

15. The display unit of claim 12, wherein the sample mounting member includes a solid member, and one or more holes can be drilled in the solid member to enable the one or more fasteners to pass through the sample mounting member.

16. The display unit of claim 12, wherein the sample mounting member includes a mesh member that forms a plurality of mesh openings, and the one or more fasteners can be driven through the mesh openings of the mesh member to mount the sample of the product to the sample mounting member.

17. The display unit of claim 12, wherein the rear surface of the sample mounting member is corrugated to better engage the one or more fasteners.

18. The display unit of claim 12, further comprising written indicia on the front side of the display unit that provides information on the sample.

19. A system for exhibiting a sample of a product, the system comprising:

a rail;

a first display unit engaging portion provided on the rail;

a second display unit engaging portion provided on the rail;

a display unit formed from a resilient plastic material;

a first rail engaging portion provided on the display unit, the first rail engaging portion being removably engageable with the display unit engaging portion such that the display unit can pivot, relative to the rail, about the engagement between the first rail engaging portion and the first display unit engaging portion; and

a second rail engaging portion provided on the display unit such that pivoting the display unit about the engagement between the first rail engaging portion and the first display unit engaging portion brings the second rail engaging portion into contact with the second display unit engaging portion so that the second rail engaging portion is resiliently flexed so as to be moved into a releasably locking relationship with the second display unit engaging portion.

20. The system of claim 19, further comprising a cam surface provided on the second rail engaging portion that
contacts the second rail engaging portion to provided the releasibly locking relationship therebetween.

21. The system of claim 20, wherein the second display unit engaging portion includes a protrusion provided on the rail.

22. The system of claim 19, wherein the first rail engaging portion includes a tab that extends from the display unit.

23. The system of claim 22, wherein the first display unit engaging portion includes a groove provided in a surface of the rail.

24. The system of claim 19, further comprising written indicia provided on a front surface of the display unit, the written indicia providing information on the sample.

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