



Retail management and marketing

Store operations

VO Dr Fiona Ellis-Chadwick

This is a really amazing store. It's a very large operation with all these book shelves, tell me what are some of the operational challenges ?

INTERVIEW: Cathy Rentzenbrink

There are so many books, we need to be able to find out where they are at any one time, which is very hard. Sometimes when customers can't find something, I sort of explain it if you were in a supermarket and someone puts a banana in the apples you can see there's a banana in the apples whereas if you're in a book shop and somebody puts a book of poems in with the crime novels you're not going to see that. We do little finger tip things to make sure things are in the right place but when something goes astray its extremely difficult to find .

VO Dr Fiona Ellis Chadwick

So who decides on visual merchandising?

Cathy Rentzenbrink:

Well it's a mixture, depending on different parts of the shop. There are some areas where.. some areas are more planned than others and some areas are store choice and most of the display areas there might be guide lines but then its up to the store to interpret them how they wish.

Dr Fiona Ellis-Chadwick

So what, say for instance, what kind of area would be planned and would that be central planned?

Cathy Rentzenbrink:

Usually our very front of store areas would have some element of central planning. Maybe, say we were doing a particular promotion and it might be that all the books in the bay we would know either which book went where or which books were supposed to go in that bay. Or it might be that we knew we needed to have a bay of say history books and then we could decide which history books to put in that particular area so there's various ramifications of how everything intersects.

VO Dr Fiona Ellis-Chadwick

Having a store on Marble Arch, it's obviously quite busy so tell me what does it actually take to manage a store like this?

INTERVIEW: Lee Geraci

Well three fundamental things for me would be organisation, because you do really need to be organised, you need to have really good people skills and communication through your people and its constantly assessing where you are and where you can take it because you know assuming you've achieved your end goal and just standing still will lead you nowhere in the future. So whatever we do, we are always looking at how we can make it better, right people, right time making sure we've got the right staffing at the right times to accommodate the customers because there are times of the day when it's busier than others, dividing the work load and breaking it down so you've got the right people for the right jobs at the right times . Obviously meeting the target is very important and with the aids of the reports that we have of data we can look at that and break it down into areas. The big things are the people skills. You've got different people of different ages and its communicating to them what it is you want them to deliver for you and how you want them to deliver it because you know as a business we do encourage our team, we do train our team to deliver a selling module which we want it to be... not robotic... because we want everyone to have their own individuality but

we want to be able to give everyone the same experience from the minute they walk in to the minute they leave the store.

Dr Fiona Ellis-Chadwick:

Do you have issues with shop lifting? Security?

Cathy Rentzenbrink:

It is an issue as it is with any retailer. We have a loss prevention department and depending on the size of the store we have loss prevention assistants and it's something that we're all aware of and it's part of book seller training as well

Dr Fiona Ellis-Chadwick:

What kind of training programs are they're?

Cathy Rentzenbrink:

There are lots of internal training programs so last year for example for Christmas temps we did in our London regions we did a regional training induction day which I was a trainer for. We taught people some systems, how to use tills, did some H R inductions, health and safety and they got to meet different people from different stores so that was quite nice. Usually the induction is just something that happens at the store and there's a process that ties in with the probation period

Lee Geraci:

Everyone we take on is inducted into the business and they all receive the same induction training. We do this through a tool kit that we use in the business and that takes you from A to Z of everything within the requirements of the business we do this through training sessions we call T5's and T50's and we also do things like reviews and appraisals on a regular basis to actually assess our staff. One of the things we do in this particular store which has been quite successful for my store... is that we let's take the adult selling module for example, the process is we follow from the minute a customer walks in to the minute a customer leaves. We assess our staff daily and give feedback on a regular basis so we make sure that they are delivering what we expect from them and if they need help we can direct them in what's not going well for them and help them to achieve that.

Dr Fiona Ellis-Chadwick:

Do you offer any additional services?

Lee Geraci:

We do, we do MCR which is Multi Channel Retailing which is if we don't have the shoe in store whether we've sold of the size or colour we can order it and it can be delivered to their home or bought into the store and they can come back and try it on. In terms of other services we provide, our returns policy is very good you know, we won't quibble about your return if you're not happy. In 99.9% where we know it's genuine, we will give you back your money or change them over for you. We have a 28 day return policy which allows you to return the shoes if you change your mind with a receipt and give you back your money in the method you paid for it otherwise we will offer you a gift voucher.

Cathy Rentzenbrink:

We do lots of things with local schools, we do lots of things like children's story times. We have a really brilliant customer magazine called "Books Quarterly". We've just done a short story competition for our customers with that, I was a judge for that. We have events. We have sort of celebrity events but we also have local events and all that sort of thing. It's one of the really enjoyable parts of the job as well.