



Master the Stress Test

By Tony Gattari and Achievers Group

YOU HAVE QUEUES that run for miles. Screaming kids! Stressed mothers! Music that gets played over and over again! Stock that hasn't been put out. The store looks like a bombsite. It must be Christmas!!



Most retailers blame poor results on economic conditions, or competitors' discounting, when in reality poor preparation by the retailer generally causes the result.

So if Christmas brings in three or four times the sales as your normal month, you had better prepare well!

Treat Christmas as the Grand Final – Sporting teams build up for the grand final. The whole year is built on winning the prize. In retail you should build your team up so that you have the best team on the field; one that is focused and will go the extra mile at Christmas.

Some retailers hire Christmas casuals. Managing your labour cost spikes effectively is not a bad strategy in terms of cash flow, but it can be a nightmare if you do not train these people effectively. Ensure that you have a robust induction process in place for all new staff.

Be in Stock – If you don't want to freak people out and never see them again then there is one thing you should do – stock up on your best-selling lines. If they are lines that you sell high volumes of 52 weeks of the year, back yourself and order heaps of these products, because you will be able to sell them after Christmas.

Make Catalogue Lines Easy to Find – Put these lines on tables, front ends, bulk stacks and in easy-to-find places. Make it easy for people to buy with the appropriate signage and ticketing. Also these should be your volume lines, or they should not have been in your catalogue in the first place.

Keep the Register Queues Short – If people wait in a queue for 20 minutes, they will feel like they have waited for 45 minutes. Ensure that your registers are clear of clutter, have enough staff and that all point of sales are working and bags are in large supply so that there are no delays in the processing of transactions.

Ensure Your Sales Staff are Selling – If you receive high volumes of stock at Christmas, look at separating your team into register staff, sales staff and processing staff. Speed is important in service and having stock out at all times maximises your sales opportunities. Also look at implementing a night fill team if you can afford it.

Do Rosters in Advance – Lock in your casuals to reduce your exposure to being short-staffed at crucial times. Get all availabilities a few weeks in advance and ensure that you have enough people for the last week before Christmas and for post-Christmas sales.

Christmas is not the Same Anymore – The recent increase in gift voucher sales is staggering. People are copping out of buying people presents and using the easy option of giving them a gift voucher. People appreciate receiving gift vouchers as they can buy more items at post-Christmas sales. So if you're not selling gift vouchers already, then maybe you should. And if you do then you should be letting everyone know you do.

* Visit www.howlingsuccess.com.au for a variety of Business Resources presented by Tony Gattari. We have recordings of all workshops conducted by Tony Gattari and Howling Success, as well as a variety of books, manuals and more.

Tony Gattari is a business development expert who has worked with more than 110 businesses worldwide. His company Achievers Group has teamed with Howling Success Marketing to bring a range of workshops to the Pet Industry. Visit www.howlingsuccess.com.au for more details. 'Sales Success' workshop coming in February 2007.

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