

The shopping center the way it plays: success tactics

How to retain the best retailers? How to recruit tenants to help promote the shopping center and increase common turnaround? How to motivate sales clerks and managers so they keep driving up sales? Russian shopping center managers may look for some answers to these questions in the experience of their American counterparts. Mall Group and the Russian Council of Shopping Centers are preparing for publication the ICSC's hands-on guidebook — Marketing for Shopping Centers.

A comprehensive approach

Retaining and motivating retailers is one of the foundations of a shopping center's success. To achieve it, a managing or marketing director must establish close communication with tenants. Dialog is not as difficult as it may seem — after all, you both want better traffic and turnaround for the shopping center.

A marketing plan, then, is a kind of roadmap to chart out the marketing director's course of action and set down all shopping center personnel's work duties and responsibilities. The plan must first of all include clear objectives: what is required from tenants, how they must participate in promotions and special events. Here are some possible objectives.

- 1 Increase tenants' attendance of quarterly general meetings, held by the management, from 60% to 80%, starting from the first meeting in January.
- 2 Raise retailer participation in management-sponsored programs and events, e.g. handing out of gift certificates during holidays, to 85%.
- 3 Bring up to 75% their participation in transport advertising of the shopping center during the summer season — ads for the main (target) market.

The codex

Every American shopping center prepares a special informational book for tenants, which explains internal regulations in the shopping center, order of the day, general policies and lists contact details for management and maintenance personnel. The book has a pouch for bulletins and letters from the administration. Determine to send some messages, announcements or reminders to tenants at least once a week. Ideally, the marketing director should deliver these reminders.

Invent an original form for messages, events and so on. One U.S. shopping center has made its codex into a gamebook. The shopping center's council acted as team captains, and news bulletins were composed as game plans. Another shopping center turned to the subject of family and showed the council nesting on a family tree, while the bulletin pouch looked like a fridge. Any subject will do — from Wild Wild West to a blockbuster movie. It is all good, as long as the tenants are entertained enough to go along with the marketing plan.

Motivation programs

Often marketing experts meet with tenants' resilience, reluctance to attend meetings and so on. To motivate them,

special programs need to be developed. Award tenants small prizes for participating in corporate fun, or appeal to their ambition and maintain competitive spirit in the shopping center. It's important to determine weekly, monthly, quarterly Best Tenants by growth of sales and quality of service, celebrate outperforming clerks and managers, announce winners' names, hang up celebration banners, set up lotteries and walls of fame.

Funding

American shopping centers have a history of almost 70 years of well-organized trade. The country's shopping centers have found many ways to involve tenants in funding their promotional programs. By the 2000s landlords have started using flexible co-financing schemes to find sponsors among tenants. At the same time shopping center marketologists began to look into ways of increasing tenants' sales. The authors firmly believe that today 70–80% of funding for all shopping center promotions should come from tenants. After all, marketologists' work, loyalty and advancement programs are aimed at making tenants prosperous and happy!