

# Communication Practices Provide Continued Benefits

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In a world of constant challenge, change and economic woes, we are often asked, “How do you keep growing, what makes Woodburn Company Stores recession-proof?” The center has had the distinction of being a leader in so many ways during its 11 esteemed years, and 2010 was no different. In fact, our achievements of 6% traffic and 9% sales increases and hosting nearly 600 tour busses were even more notable due to the economic environment and retail challenges. One of our competitors paid us the ultimate compliment recently – “Woodburn sets the bar high for the rest of us...can you stop already?” Our reply was, “thank you for the compliment, but NO, we won’t stop already!”

Yes, we have a great lineup of amazing brand names, but we must still constantly think of ways to keep ensure customers continue choosing Woodburn Company Stores first for their shopping experience. How do we do it?

## Customer Service

We continually work with the stores to enhance their customer service, because we strongly believe that is what sets us apart and keeps our loyal customers returning. We provide training for store employees, hire professional secret shoppers and reward the stores that get perfect scores. We also have our own force of secret shoppers that give out \$5 vouchers to employees they encounter who go above and beyond to offer an “Extra Degree” of customer service. We use quips and actual customer experiences in our newsletters to help tenants understand how important and global their interactions are.

We want WCS to show-off a personality and not be boring for shoppers. Throughout the center, our staff and loyal partners work to enhance the customer experience with things like unique seasonal landscaping and displays that feature locally-grown plants, clean and well-maintained walkways and restrooms, and having employees trained to be goodwill ambassadors by greeting shoppers or giving them friendly directions. We incorporate creative ideas constantly so that customers always see new things when they return time and again.

## Help Us Help You

We continually repeat this mantra to our tenants...our office doors are always open for them to talk about their business, what’s new, ideas how they can improve their traffic and sales, or to learn more how we can all work together to bring shoppers here. We work closely with their corporate offices to always proactively support their initiatives.

We hold regular meetings for store managers to keep them apprised of marketing plans, trends, and to let them provide suggestions or ask us questions. We send out a detailed bi-weekly newsletter that not only serves as a resource for important information, but it scrapbooks our successes for everyone to see. We’ve even occasionally been accused of overcommunicating, if that’s possible!



Photos courtesy Woodburn Company Stores

## Educate and Motivate

Every February, we host our tenants and community connectors for a themed kick-off meeting to reward them for their hard work. We present awards, marketing plans, talk about what’s new, but mostly, we just want them to have fun and get excited about being an important part of the larger picture.

For this year’s theme, we chose “LED-ing The Way” to tie in with our new LED sign that will be installed by early summer, and to instill how we strive to always stay ahead. For the meeting, we dubbed this large screen “WBTV” and created our own news network about it to help educate and excite tenants about the power it will have to help increase their sales and traffic. To showcase plans for the year, we utilized the visual power of video and shot fun segments with tenants actually competing in contests based on reality TV shows. Those shows also reflected themes we wanted to communicate, such as Think Bigger! – “Man(ager) vs. Food” and Teamwork – “Cash Shuttle”.

It was challenging to get people to step out of their comfort zones and participate in these skits (until we jumped in with them!), but when the final videos were shown in context during our annual meeting, people started to cheer and get really excited about seeing themselves and their co-workers onscreen. We’ve already been approached asking to be included in next year’s videos! This not only reinforces our themes of teamwork and getting involved, but it helps us build awareness, excitement and trust for the success of planned marketing efforts.

Our annual kick-off meeting was a success! We were swamped with excited tenant calls and emails the next day saying how much they enjoyed it, and asking what they can do to work with us and increase their business. These positive comments validate that our time and resources put toward this event are a worthy investment. Our various communication efforts provide the cohesion that makes the parts (the stores) contribute to the strength of the whole – Woodburn Company Stores – and ultimately, our shared success!

Call 503-981-1900 or visit [www.woodburncompanystores.com](http://www.woodburncompanystores.com).