

Newsletter September 2007

Nancy and Val came down from Boise for three days with two their managers, Jodi and Lynn. They came down to compare our operations with theirs. Although, both their sales and operations are doing well, they felt that we must be doing some things a little more efficiently. The Albuquerque store has somewhat higher sales, and does a few more trade-ins on a daily basis (50 to 70). We are mostly able to get out our trade-ins by the next day, and yet have a significantly lower payroll. In a short time we assessed what shortcuts we might be taking in the Albuquerque store without even realizing it just in the interest of keeping up. (An example was when we gave up steaming, and found out it didn't hurt sales at all.) We found over 20 things we might be doing in the Albuquerque store that might help to them, and hopefully the rest of you. We also found some things they were much better at in the Boise than we were in the Albuquerque store. I'm sure if we visited the Boise store we would find even more things we could learn from them, so we plan to do so in the next year.

One of the things we think helps keep our employees efficient is a bonus plan for record months. The employees know that in order for us to meet "goals" all of us have to do our part, work as a team, and make sure there are plenty of items on the racks for sale. Because an employee that is working hard loses their bonus money if another employee is not doing their job, the hard-working employees let me know if another employee isn't doing their job well. Our employees encourage each other and have a great deal to say about whom we hire and fire. All our employees are trained to take care of customers in a timely, friendly, manner. Our employees are told the first day they come to work the four priorities for the store: 1st priority -- customer at the register ready to pay, 2nd priority -- customer waiting for their trade-in's. (We do our best NOT to have drop-offs and try to complete their trade-in while they shop.) 3rd priority -- processing the trade-ins to be put on the floor. 4th priority -- cleaning and organizing the store. All the priorities are important but our employees have to deal with priorities in order of their importance, even if it means the employee is pulled away from their normal duties to help the others. We work with each person's natural abilities and talents for their normal duties, but all our employees are cross-trained to some extent so they can perform as a team and not develop into "cliques".

We spent a lot of time on the included comparison chart, so read it carefully and see if any of this comparison of stores can help you. Remember, you are always welcome to come to Albuquerque and participate in this type of exercise. If you cannot come to Albuquerque, try to do this exercise on paper and send us your comments before next month.

Melinda