

LARGER SALES In Less Space

Although allocated a diminished departmental footprint compared with the previous year, the NAB Little Creek, Va., stationery area still had an excellent year in fiscal 2009, sporting an impressive sales gain in a smaller amount of space.

FACTS AND FIGURES

According to Wanda Marshall, NAB Little Creek's consumables divisional manager (DMM), although the square footage of the department was trimmed by 36.8 percent, from 576 sq. ft. to 364 sq. ft. for basic merchandise, fiscal 2009 sales were \$339,000, 9.1-percent better than a year earlier and 6.9 percent over plan.

"Customers shop the exchange's stationery department largely due to the aggressive advertising, great selection and the strong in-stocks all year and throughout the Back-to-School (BTS) season," Marshall noted, adding that during BTS, the department expands by 120 sq. ft. of selling space to accommodate the increased inventory.

Breaking down the types of clientele that the department serves, she said the biggest segment is "full nesters," at 31.1 percent, followed by "double dippers" (two incomes, husband and wife working) at 26.3 percent; "empty nesters" at 19.6 percent; senior shoppers at 14.6 percent; and "new arrivals" at 4.3 percent.

THE ASSORTMENT

Marshall explained the department's selection contains basic writing tools, notepads, journal books, notebooks, and stationery accessories, "and is attractive to patrons because our selection is what customers are looking for at the right price."

One brand that falls into that category is Rose Art. "Rose Art is extremely popular due to the Navy Exchange's aggressive advertising, and customers love the price point," she said.

Customers know they can obtain traditional items at the store at the right price point. "Elmer's Glue is a basic, and even though other brands cost less, some customers go with a name they know and trust," Marshall noted. "BIC is a staple for almost every school-age person along with providing quality product for the professional, and Mead binders and paper products are also one of the brands customers are loyal to, due to the price point and quality of the binders."

Traditional items with a new look are also popular in the department. "Notebooks, folders and binders with popular teen idols such as Miley Cyrus's Hannah Montana character and the Nickelodeon TV show iCarly were popular during 2009," Marshall said.



NEXCOM PHOTO

In-stocks at the NAB Little Creek stationery department on important categories such as writing instruments are monitored carefully in cooperation with headquarters buying staff, especially during the Back-to-School period.

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

Among the hottest products in the department are those that allow for artistic expression, including items under the Crayola name. "They are no longer just crayons," Marshall explained. "The Crayola outdoor art and indoor washable marker categories have added excitement to the stationery world, and get the younger generation interested in art at an early stage."

Another hot area due to artistic creativity is "Fuzzy Posters," which offer kids an easier way to color.

"With a strong trend within the video game industry, many customers are seeking an alternate to their children spending so much time on the computer, and both Crayola and Fuzzy Poster items are good alternatives, a fun way to spend family time," Marshall said.

In addition to traditional and creative items, and Marshall said the NAB Little Creek store also "puts a strong emphasis" on carrying a good selection of American flags. "Little Creek ensures extra product is ordered to support the

—Continued

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NAB Little Creek, Va., Stationery Dept.

At-A-Glance

Square Footage: 364 sq. ft. (120 sq. ft. of additional selling space during Back-To-School)

Sales — Fiscal 2009: \$339,000

Fiscal 2010 Projection: \$356,000

Key Department Staff:

Wanda Marshall, Consumables Divisional Manager
Iris Johnson, Full-Time Associate

Source: NEXCOM



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demand during patriotic holidays, and maintains strong in-stocks year round,” she noted.

PROMOTIONS, CROSS-MERCHANDISING

Stationery is well promoted within the department, and Marshall enjoys a strong partnership with Jeanne Horton, the headquarters-based General Merchandise Group (GMG) stationery planner/distributor, to ensure sufficient quantities to support the demand generated by promotions.

Marshall said that among the most popular promotions during fiscal 2009 were “10 for \$1” Rose Art crayons; “three for \$1” notebook paper; “10 for \$1” 70-count notebooks; and “two for \$1” glue sticks. “These were extremely successful advertising events for the Back-to-School season, and our advertising was right on time with what customers were looking for,” she said.

In addition, Marshall said that NAB Little Creek was “extremely successful” in its cross-merchandising efforts with calculators within the stationery department. “Extra product was ordered throughout the season to keep up with the demand that existed from placing these items within the stationery area,” she said.

Another item that was cross-merchandised was tax-related software. “Customers are more likely to look for tax software in stationery than in the Sight and Sound department,” Marshall explained.

“The exchange’s aggressive advertising brings customers into the department, where they find everything they need for their stationery Back-to-School requirements, and also in other categories, such as facial tissue, sandwich bags, snacks and backpacks that are readily available at the exchange,” Marshall said.

LONE FULL-TIMER

The department’s full-time associate, Iris Johnson, is tasked to do what it takes to keep it successful. “Iris works one-on-one with her divisional manager on pre-season order quantities and continues the partnership throughout the season to ensure Little Creek has sufficient quantities to support the heavy seasonal demand,” Marshall said. “Iris knows what the customers are looking for, as she is on the floor and is ‘in the know’ about what is going on in the stationery world.”

Johnson wears many hats in the department. “Iris has a multitude of assignments to include stocking, program maintenance, staging of sale-event merchandise, providing input on quantities to support the seasonal demand and working with customers to ensure their shopping experience is rewarding,” Marshall noted.

CONTINUED SUCCESS

The department’s sales success is slated to continue through fiscal 2010. Marshall said projected stationery sales during the fiscal year are nearly \$356,000, 5 percent better than the prior year.

Continued sales improvement does not surprise Marshall. “Stationery is an exciting department in many ways, as there is constant turning of merchandise and very unique selling peaks,” she noted. “Many of the products carried within stationery are ‘must-have’ products,” as opposed to indulgence items.

“Our everyday selection provides both the professional and student with product needed on daily basis and at a great retail,” Marshall continued. “With many local school systems providing lists of items required, it enables stores to ensure items on the lists are readily available.”

—E and C NEWS