

Business Retention & Expansion Retail Blitz Spring/Summer 2009

Partnership for Community Growth & Development
in conjunction with
the Liberty Area Chamber of Commerce
and
Historic Downtown Liberty



Retail Blitz Overview

The purpose of retail blitz was to gauge the immediate well-being of that industry sector. Retail sales tax makes up a considerable portion of the City of Liberty's revenue stream. As news about the economic climate continued to look grim, the Business Retention Committee of the Partnership for Community Growth & Development decided a Retail Blitz could be helpful in providing a picture of the current situation and the future. Staying in touch with our businesses helps us identify opportunities for business expansions and threats of those leaving or closing.

The Liberty Area Chamber of Commerce and Historic Downtown Liberty had representatives at the Partnership's Business Retention Committee meeting when discussing the blitz. Due to the relationships built in each of their organizations, it was decided their help in the visits would make a big difference. Both groups agreed to assist.

We went about the task of identifying potential visits and assigning them based on relationships. As is the case with the non-retail business visits, all information is held in strictest confidence.

Confidentiality is a firm aspect of the Partnership's business retention program.

The names of the participating companies are not divulged in this report. Confidentiality provides the participant a feeling of complete confidence that their data is secure and will not be shared on an individual basis but only in aggregated formats. Consequently, only the three organizations know specifically who was visited.

When the visits were complete, the surveys were given to the Partnership for data input. A sample of the survey tool is at the end of this report.

Following are key findings from the twenty completed visits.

Key findings

The committee discussed all the available reports and decided the following should be included in the report to the City:

- The businesses are concerned that their supplier/distributors will stay in business.
- Smoking ban elicited different opinions.
- The downtown cooperative effort with the merchant group should be continued.
- Fountain Bluff has a positive impact on retail businesses during the summer.
- If layoffs occur it will impact sales.
- Low building permits/no residential construction impact sales.

The following strengths and weaknesses were on several of the surveys:

- Strengths
 - Loyalty of customers
 - Police
 - Growth of the community
 - Traffic counts (retailers appreciate)
 - Quality of life
- Weaknesses noted most often were:
 - Uncertainty of the economy
 - Signage

The committee determined that this is a good opportunity to educate the retail community about signage requirements in case there is a lack of understanding about regulations.

In general, the retail surveys rank their workforce much differently than regular business visits. However, this showed an improvement over last year.

Business Dynamics report shows that sales are, for the most part, either increasing or stable.

Survey synopsis

With the assistance of the Liberty Area Chamber of Commerce and HDLI, the following is a brief look at the twenty retail visits. These visits will build upon ones completed previously which in turn begins to provide trends. We have chosen key reports and highlights.

- **Business Dynamics Report**
 - Number of sales
 - 55% are increasing
 - 30% are stable
 - 10% are decreasing
 - 5% provided no answer
 - Average sale value
 - 35% are increasing
 - 55% said stable
 - 5% are decreasing
 - 5% provided no answer

- Sales generators
 - 44% generate sales from referrals/word of mouth
 - 23% from walk-ins/call ins
 - 21% from advertising
 - the remaining were from direct mail, telemarketing, catalog, internet and tradeshow
 - 42% indicate they participate in cooperative marketing
 - 35% are increasing their advertising/promotion budget, 35% remain stable
- **Customer Mix Report**
 - Majority of the retailers' trade area is < 50 miles
 - Customer mix is mostly families, 39% from business
 - age of their customers range between 25-55
 - customers' income ranges from \$35,000 – \$150,000 annually
 - customers visit at least weekly
- **Workforce Evaluation Report**
 - Average age of their retail workforce – 30
 - 50% of the full-time employees are head of household
 - Workforce Availability on a 7-point (excellent) scale is 5.72
 - Workforce Quality on a 7-point scale is 5.16
 - Workforce Stability on a 7-point scale is 5.28
 - Workforce Productivity on a 7-point scale is 5.95
- **Public Services Evaluation Report** (all based on a 7-point excellent scale)
 - Police – 6.39
 - Fire – 6.47
 - Ambulance – 6.41
 - Traffic control – 4.76 (notation: improving)
 - Schools – 6.31
 - Universities (William Jewell) – 6.31
 - Sign regulations – 4.06
- **Community Product/Service Gap Report**
 - Suggested 'missing' retailers included
 - Discount stores
 - Upscale/fine dining options

Conclusions

Follow-up work to be done includes:

- tracking those who are at risk of leaving or closing
- recruiting retailers from the noted gaps
- increasing the potential business customer base for retailers
- consider a letter to retailers regarding signage, outdoor events and tent sales

The Partnership's Business Retention Committee is pleased it could provide added value to the City in its business retention program. As noted in our 2008 report, we were committed to increasing the number of retail visits in 2009. This effort certainly meets that goal.

Recognitions

The Partnership thanks its investors, including the City of Liberty, our Business Retention Committee and survey participants for their support of this program. Special thanks also to KCP&L for their financial support of the Synchronist software and program.

Because these retail visits are in addition to our city contract requirement of thirty, this report could not have been accomplished without the help of Gayle Potter with the Chamber and Rich Groves with HDLI. A fine example of collaboration for the betterment of the business community and city.

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Attachment Retail Survey Tool

You're free to succeed



CRTS ON-SITE VISIT FORM

To be filled out by the interviewer — Information is confidential

10.15.08

Company Information	
Company Name	Date of Visit (mm/dd/yy)
Contact Name	City/State/ZIP
Other Company Participants and Titles	
Phone () -	
Contact(s)	
Lead Interviewer	Organization
Other Interviewer(s)	Organization(s)

Product/Service	
1. What is your company's greatest achievement in the last three years? _____ DNA/K Dcl	

2. Has your product/service mix changed significantly in the past three (3) years? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No DNA/K Dcl	
If yes, please explain: _____	

3. Do you anticipate a significant change in your product/service mix in the next 18 months? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No DNA/K Dcl	
If yes, please explain: _____	

4. Do you serve any special market niches or produce any customized products/services <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No DNA/K Dcl from this location?	
If yes, please explain: _____	

5. Would you characterize this business as: high margin/low volume standard margins low margin/high volume DNA/K Dcl	
6. What is your approximate trade area in miles: <5 5-10 11-15 16-20 21-50 51-100 100+ mi. DNA/K Dcl	
7. On average, what is the frequency of customer/client visits: Once Daily Weekly Monthly Bi-Monthly DNA/K Dcl	
Quarterly Semi Annually Annually Other _____	
Total number of customer/client annually? _____	
8. Are total sales for this facility: <input type="checkbox"/> Increasing <input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Decreasing DNA/K Dcl	
What is the primary influence? _____	

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Workforce								
	Low						High	
15. How do you rate the availability of workers in this area:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K Dcl
How do you rate the quality of the workforce in this area:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K Dcl
How do you rate the stability of the workforce in this area:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K Dcl
How would you rate productivity in this facility:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K Dcl
16. What is the average age of employees? _____								DNA/K Dcl
17. Approximately what percentage of full-time employees are heads of households?	None	0-20	21-40					
	41-60	61-80	80-100					
18. Are projected employment needs for this facility:	<input type="checkbox"/> Increasing <input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Decreasing							DNA/K Dcl
19. Is the number of unfilled positions:	<input type="checkbox"/> Increasing <input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Decreasing							DNA/K Dcl
Approximate number of unfilled positions today: _____								
What positions are most difficult to fill and why? _____								

20. Do you "import" employees from outside the normal employee drive range?							<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	DNA/K Dcl
If yes, from where? _____								
What time of year? _____								
What position(s): _____								
21. Have you experienced or do you anticipate any significant changes in the make-up of your workforce?							<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	DNA/K Dcl
If yes, how did/will you deal with this change? _____								

[Interviewer (circle one each): Was the comment: Positive, Negative, Both]								
22. Does the business provide health and retirement benefits?	<input type="checkbox"/> Health <input type="checkbox"/> Pension <input type="checkbox"/> 401K/Profit Sharing <input type="checkbox"/> None							DNA/K Dcl
If benefits: <input type="checkbox"/> Full time <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time <input type="checkbox"/> Both								
If health benefit, what percentage of health benefit are covered by the employer? Individual _____ % Family _____ %								
Comments? _____								

23. Does the company provide on-the-job or outside training?	<input type="checkbox"/> On-the-job <input type="checkbox"/> Outside <input type="checkbox"/> Both						DNA/K Dcl	
If using outside training, what percentage of training is provided by others? _____ %								
If using outside providers, what training provider(s) are used? Comments? _____								

If no outside training, would you like information about training providers?							<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	DNA/K Dcl
24. Is company investment in employee training:	<input type="checkbox"/> Increasing <input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Decreasing <input type="checkbox"/> None							DNA/K Dcl
Workforce Notes								

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Community		
25. What are the community's strengths as a place to do business? _____		DNA/K Dcl

26. What are the community's weaknesses as a place to do business? _____		DNA/K Dcl

27. What type of businesses/products are your customers looking for that they are not finding in this community? _____		DNA/K Dcl

28. Have there been any changes in the community or neighborhood impacting your business in the last two (2) years (demographic, physical, competition)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	DNA/K Dcl
Comments: _____		

[Interviewer (circle one each): Is the comment about Community, Neighborhood, Both Was the comment: Positive, Negative, Both]		
29. Do you anticipate any community or neighborhood changes?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	DNA/K Dcl
Comments: _____		

[Interviewer (circle one each): Is the comment about Community, Neighborhood, Both Was the comment: Positive, Negative, Both]		
30. Has your attitude toward doing business in this community changed during the last two (2) years?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	DNA/K Dcl
If Yes, how has your attitude changed? (Interviewer, Circle one – Positive, Negative, Both)		

31. Does your company have any difficulty securing needed business services in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	DNA/K Dcl
If yes, what services? _____		

32. Do you anticipate any federal, state, or local legislation changes that will adversely affect your business in the next five years:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	DNA/K Dcl
If yes, what changes? _____		
How will they affect the company? _____		

33. Do you anticipate any federal, state, or local legislation changes that will benefit your business in the next five years:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	DNA/K Dcl
If yes, what changes? _____		
How will they affect the company? _____		

Community Notes		

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Technology												
34. Is there new technology emerging that will substantially change your company's business?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	DNA/K	Dcl						
<i>Comments:</i> (Circle one – Positive, Negative, Both) _____												
35. Are there new technology-based business opportunities emerging for your company?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	DNA/K	Dcl						
<i>Comments:</i> _____												
36. Compared to your business segment, how would you rank your company's use of technology for:												
Use	Low						High					
Internal office operations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl			
Operations/Production	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl			
Sales and inventory management	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl			
Marketing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl			
<i>Comments:</i> _____												
37. Compared to your business segment, is your company's technology investment:				Below Average				Above Average				
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl
<i>Comments:</i> _____												
38. Is the community's technology infrastructure adequate for your company's growth plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	DNA/K	Dcl						
<i>Comments:</i> _____												
<i>Technology Notes</i>												

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Management	
39. In the past 18 months has the company's ownership or senior management changed or are changes expected?	
Changed ownership/senior management	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Planned Change <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No DNA/K Dcl
Comments?	_____
Has the local manager changed or is a change expected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No DNA/K Dcl
Comments?	_____
40. Is the owner or one of the owners involved in the day-to-day operations of the business?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No DNA/K Dcl
41. The top 20% of your best clients represent approximately what percent of your sales:	<15%, 16-35%, 36-55%, 56-75% >76% DNA/K Dcl
42. Is the company's advertising/promotion budget	<input type="checkbox"/> Increasing <input type="checkbox"/> Stable <input type="checkbox"/> Decreasing <input type="checkbox"/> None DNA/K Dcl
43. Does your company invest time/money in a cooperative marketing effort (advertising, events, promotions, etc.) with other area businesses?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No DNA/K Dcl
Comments?	_____
44. Have there been any changes in distributor/supplier relationships which have negatively impacted your business in the last two (2) years?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No DNA/K Dcl
Comments?	_____
Are any distributor/supplier changes anticipated?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No DNA/K Dcl
Comments?	_____
<i>Management Notes</i>	

CRTS ON-SITE VISIT FORM

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Community Service										
45. Please rate the quality of the following services provided by/in the community on a scale of 1 to 7.										
				Low					High	
A) Police protection	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
B) Fire protection	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
C) Ambulance paramedic service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
D) Streetscape maintenance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
E) Streets and roads (local)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
F) Highways (state/federal)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
G) Traffic control	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
H) Public transportation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
I) Airline passenger service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
J) Health care services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
K) Spousal employment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
L) Child care	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
M) Community college/tech college	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
N) College(s) and university(ies)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
O) Housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
P) Schools (K–12)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
Q) Property tax assessment (fair & equitable)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
R) Zoning changes and building permits	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
S) Regulatory enforcement (fair & equitable)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
T) Sign regulations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
U) Community planning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
V) Chamber of Commerce or business assoc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
W) Economic Development Organization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
X) Visitors Bureau	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			DNA/K Dcl
For services with satisfaction rated 3 or below , please comment:										
Service issue 1 (<i>circle one</i>) A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X	Low Rank Comment 1: _____ _____ _____									
Service issue 2 (<i>circle one</i>) A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X	Low Rank Comment 2: _____ _____ _____									
Service issue 3 (<i>circle one</i>) A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X	Low Rank Comment 3: _____ _____ _____									
Community Service Notes										

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Utility Services										
46. Please rate your satisfaction with your utility services.										
Type of Utility	Low		Satisfaction					High		
A) Water	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl	
B) Sewer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl	
C) Solid waste removal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl	
D) Natural gas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl	
E) Electric	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl	
F) Telecom (voice)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl	
G) Cellular service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl	
H) Internet access	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl	
I) Internet speed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	DNA/K	Dcl	
For any utility services with satisfaction rated 3 or below , please comment:										
Utility service issue 1 (<i>circle one</i>) A B C D E F G H I			Low Rank Comment 1: _____ _____ _____							
Utility service issue 2 (<i>circle one</i>) A B C D E F G H I			Low Rank Comment 2: _____ _____ _____							
Utility service issue 3 (<i>circle one</i>) A B C D E F G H I			Low Rank Comment 3: _____ _____ _____							
Utility Notes										
Do you have any other comments you would like to share?										

Thank you for your assistance.