



## Bull in a China Shop... and a Hairdresser, and a Bookstore, and a Toy Shop

*Retailer motivation is just one area requiring the attention of a savvy shopping centre marketing manager. Talking retail with retailers is a skill well worth developing if you want to have any empathy with, and to be able to provide assistance to them. The more you learn about the retail profession and the more exposure they have to successful peers, the better.*

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Shopping centre management company Retail First recognised the need for quality retailer training which focused on retail marketing, customer service and selling skills.

To fulfil this need, Retail First called on retailing legend and multi-award winner Barry Bull to present his ideas to the large group of retailers that make up Retail First shopping centres.

The "Bull in a China Shop" half-day seminar was held at the Sofitel Hotel in Brisbane on 8 August 2006, and was Retail First's premier consolidated group retailer training event.

Barry's presentation, teamed with his latest book *The Bullseye Principle*, emphasised the need to have goals and a strategy to achieve them.

Retail First's Group Marketing Manager Rebecca Gascoigne said that the customers' experience is the only thing a retailer can offer for free, and when times are

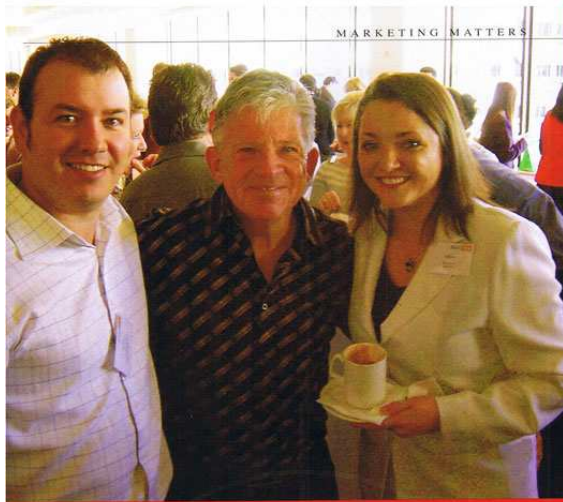
tough it becomes the major point of difference over competitors.

"Motivating and inspiring our retailers to set goals and focus on their level of service is imperative in today's competitive retail environment, and that is what we set out to achieve by holding this event," she said.

"Barry's retail success was not based on a chain of stores, but one store where he focused on his core strengths and points of difference. This was particularly appealing for a lot of our retailers, demonstrating that you do not have to be one of the 'big guys' to make your business successful".

Retail First represents 18 shopping centres in south-east Queensland, with approximately 500,000sqm under management and more than 1700 retailers.

The impressive list of its centres includes: Arndale Shopping Centre; Aspley Hypemarket;



Mike Gascoigne - Centre Manager at Arndale Shopping Centre; Barry Bull; and Rebecca Gascoigne - Group Marketing Manager for Retail First.

Australia Fair Shopping Centre; Booval Fair; Brookside Shopping Centre; Cannon Hill Kmart Plaza; Capalaba Park Shopping Centre; Fairfield Gardens; Logan Central Plaza; Mt Gravatt Plaza; Peninsula Fair; Margate Village; Redbank Plaza; Stafford City Shopping Centre; Sunny Park; Sunnybank Hills Shoppingtown; Sunnybank Plaza; and Toowong Village.

### Lessons learned

The seminar was an excellent portfolio initiative and brought many benefits:

- Retail First was able to provide superior training and a keynote speaker at a five-star venue and split the costs across all the centres.
- Smaller centres in the portfolio would not be able to provide this standard of training as a centre-specific initiative due to cost.

- Retailers were excited and saw it as a novelty to be invited to a lovely venue for training.
- Retailers indicated that they were particularly interested in Barry Bull as a speaker as he was a retailer himself and was an independent, so his strategies and the problems that he faced were the same as what a lot of retailers face.

- Retailer feedback was excellent with all participants rating the initiative as excellent, and stating that they would like to see it held as an annual event - and this is being planned now.
- Over 400 retailers attended the event, and their enthusiasm and glowing reports generated queries from retailers who didn't attend as to whether the event would be repeated.

Some of the important things that retailers got out of the half-day session were:

- Begin with the end in mind - have a goal and a plan to get there.
- Write your goals down - what gets written gets done.
- Don't let short term obstacles hinder your goals.
- Customer service is "old hat" - it is all about the customer experience and this is the only thing you can offer that your competitors don't. Customer service is not about smiling and saying, "Have a nice day." The customer experience is far more than that - product advice, loyalty programs, store layout, how the customers feel when they walk into your store, and so on.
- Find your uniqueness. Don't imitate - innovate. You cannot compete with the retail giants who are constantly undercutting independents in price, so don't try to imitate their pricing war; provide more.
- Focus on your gross and net profit. There is no point in selling more units of stock at a minimal net profit; sell less for more profit.
- You need to get your stock control balance right. There is no point in having a mountain of stock that you cannot sell, but if you don't have enough stock then you will lose sales - it's an important balancing act.
- No matter what retail industry we are in, everything is continually changing. Whether it is a newsagent, photo lab, music store, hair salon, pharmacy, butcher or a food court outlet, we have to stay close to our customers, understand their changing needs and wants, and be one step ahead of the game. We need to diversify or die.