

Three Key Benchmarks For Store Operations Improvement

A daily dashboard report correlating staff schedules, sales, and store traffic drives process improvement at la Vie en Rose.

by Matt Pillar

Tenacious monitoring of associate scheduling, sales, and store traffic drives operations at la Vie en Rose, a 150-store Canadian retailer of lingerie and swimwear. By analyzing correlations among these metrics, the company applies precise adjustments that drive profits at the store level. “Focusing on any of these key performance indicators (KPIs) autonomously results in something less than a complete picture of the business,” says VP of business technology Madeleine Doucet.

Monitoring sales wasn’t a problem for the company, but *improving* sales by honing associate schedules to match store traffic was. That’s why in early 2010, Doucet led an effort to upgrade the company’s manual scheduling and timekeeping effort prior to a traffic counting implementation. The retailer chose the Web-based TimeZone workforce management system from ITR. “This implementation allowed us to manage schedules by store-level tasks, which was important leading up to the integration of store traffic counting,” explains Doucet.

By June 2010, Doucet had chosen store traffic counters and software from St. Michael Strategies (SMS). Of primary concern for the retailer was choosing a camera that was flexible enough to accommodate a range of store footprints and configurations. Doucet chose SMS thermal imaging cameras over their laser counterparts on the promise that they were more accurate. The cameras feature an adjustable field of view that allows la Vie en Rose to compensate for store fixture obstructions. Another determining factor for la Vie en Rose was the rich integration and reporting functionality offered by TMS, the traffic management and reporting software from SMS.

By September, la Vie en Rose began rolling out the solution and after a brief hiatus during the Christmas season, the retailer completed installation by June 2011. Through integration with POS reports and scheduling software, la Vie en Rose leveraged TMS to produce a dashboard view that gives managers insight into the company’s three primary KPIs.

Dashboard Enables Precision Scheduling

Each morning, stores receive

updated reports that feature pie charts for each KPI. From this report, managers can compare up-to-date weekly sales, schedules, and traffic with those of any other week – last, year prior, month prior, etc. The tool features the ability to adjust the selected time slice to account for peak period variables such as moving holidays.

“In essence, these charts tell store managers the sales they need to attain for the week, empowering them to make adjustments to the schedule based on sales and traffic,” Doucet says. By visualizing traffic patterns in correlation with sales, store managers can identify lost sales opportunities. “Managers can now see that if 100 people came in but only 10 converted into sales, they missed 90% of their opportunities. Increasing that conversion rate by 1% can result in a 10% increase in sales.”

The tool allows la Vie en Rose to apply precision to its scheduling decisions. “We’re scheduling the appropriate associates at the appropriate times to optimize sales. If 30% of a store’s weekly sales need to be done on Thursday, the manager looks at their chart to analyze and adjust staffing levels for that day based on historic traffic and conversion rates,” says Doucet. The dashboard produces other reports related to the productivity of specific employees, such as who worked when, sales by associate, and personal traffic conversion. By identifying its best performers, la Vie en Rose is able to improve its lowest-performing associates by employing the “rising tide lifts all ships” theory. “When we pair poor performers with high performers, we see those poor performers improve,” says Doucet.

The project resulted in some initial store-level pushback. Doucet says some managers distrusted the traffic counts when they saw high traffic levels and poor conversion rates, but that distrust was dispelled by manual test-

counts that verified the accuracy of the cameras. “There are some technologies that you can take away from stores and the managers really don’t care,” says Doucet, “But if I took these dashboards away from them tomorrow, I’d have a riot on my hands.” ■



La Vie en Rose is using sophisticated labor scheduling and traffic counting integration to improve workforce management and sales.

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