

Extended Hours Equals Over-Extended Employees

by Stephanie Bond

Extended hours come with the territory of the holiday sales period—to accommodate customers' busy schedules, you have to offer them more time to get through your doors. In fact, often the holiday dollars go to the retailers who make the shopping experience the most convenient! But requiring your staff to work extra hours can lead to a tired, stressed staff during a time when their lives outside of work require more of them as well. How do you keep your employees fresh and enthusiastic when pressure is high and patience is short?

- **Have a morning pep talk.** Take a few minutes every morning to give your employees a pep talk and a quick round-robin of praise for jobs well done.
- **Offer frequent breaks.** Taking even a few minutes away from the sales floor to recharge is an important part of any employee's day.
- **Change the scenery.** Spruce up the break room, the stock room, the loading dock, or any place where employees will be spending a lot of time!
- **Foster sustained energy.** Holiday sweets will get everyone going for a while, but will lead to an afternoon energy crash. Instead, provide healthy treats for the employees, like fruit, nuts and energy bars.
- **Promote camaraderie.** Challenge employees to get together and come up with solutions or improvements.
- **Solicit feedback.** One way to make employees feel appreciated is to tap into their experience and ask their opinion on matters concerning the store and/or the customers.
- **Join the fray.** Employees respect and appreciate a boss who rolls up his/her shirtsleeves and jumps in when the going gets tough.
- **Reward a good work ethic.** A holiday bonus doesn't have to be huge to be meaningful—how about a day's paid vacation once the holiday rush has passed?

Almost every successful bookstore credits its success to enthusiastic employees who connect with customers. During the hectic sales season, don't neglect or take for granted your most valuable business assets—your hard-working, book-loving employees! ~**SBond**

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