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Shopper Events to Manage Sam's Club's 'Tastes and Tips'

Jan 25, 2010 12:39 PM, By JULIE GALLAGHER

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BENTONVILLE, Ark. — Sam's Club eliminated 10,000 demo associate positions and appointed third-party marketing company Shopper Events to facilitate product sampling, it announced here Sunday.

Its new "Tastes and Tips" demo program will include integrated demo stations, signage, uniforms and product selling.

Affected employees will have the opportunity to apply for positions with Shopper Events, which expects to hire the same number of people, said President and Chief Executive Officer Brian Cornell in a letter to associates.

Shopper Events is the company that manages Wal-Mart's "Bright Ideas" in-store demo program. Shopper Events requires that personnel responsible for executing these demos are W-2 and I-9 employees who've undergone background checks and are food safety certified.

The company that was formed by competing sales agencies Advantage Sales and Marketing and Crossmark, took over the task at Wal-Mart to improve the in-store experience.

Before doing so, "There was inconsistent staffing quality, an unpredictable shopper experience, no performance evaluations and 60% on day execution," said Terry Nannie, senior director of marketing for Wal-Mart, at the Grocery Manufacturers Association's Merchandising, Sales and Marketing Conference in November. In-store execution rates have since climbed to 95%.

On the day of events, grocery sales on average are lifted 99%, candy 386%, pet 245%, dairy 151%, frozen 78%, home entertainment 17% and fresh bakery 276%.

Sampling is particularly beneficial for new items, which receive an average lift of 57% four weeks post event.



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