

Ross Dress for Less Informational Interview Tour

Corporate Profile

Ross Stores, Inc., a Fortune 500 and Nasdaq 100 (ROST) company headquartered in Pleasanton, California, is the nation's second largest off-price company with fiscal 2005 revenues of \$4.9 billion. As of January 28, 2006, the Company operated 714 Ross stores in 26 states and Guam. Ross Stores offers first-quality, in-season, name brand and designer apparel, accessories, footwear and home fashions for the entire family at everyday savings of 20 to 60 percent off department and specialty store regular prices

Baltimore, MD location

Located on a busy thoroughfare on the outskirts of Baltimore City, this Ross Dress for Less is part of a larger mall area that includes other chains such as Trader Joe's, Border's Books, Target, Michael's, Payless Shoes, Kids R Us, and several upscale chain restaurants. It experiences steady foot traffic during the week, with larger rushes during lunch hours and immediately following the school/work day.

Existing Job Descriptions:

- Assistant Manager
- Store Associate
- Floor/Back Stock (not a national or corporate position, but the store manager created it here because of a need; high traffic store.)

Observations:

- While waiting to meet with her (an extra half hour), we noticed disgruntled customers who ran out of time on their lunch hour and left without purchasing.
- The Kid's Section, which included clothes and toys, was a disaster. Kids pulled toys off high shelves and pulled many others with them, then left them on the floor.
- Some racks looked disorganized, particularly in the girl's junior section and women's section. The Men's Department looked great. Women's Shoes were a disaster.
- The back stock room was a mess. There were large bins of colored nibs, organized (sort of) by sizes. These were piled next to boxes of hangers, which were lined under huge clothes bars on wheels. As clothes came in, each stock person (responsible for a different section:

i.e. girl's juniors) would pull out an item, match it to a size nib, grab a hanger and attach the nib, put the piece of clothing on the nibbed hanger, then hang the item on the bar.

- The area around the cash registers was messy; hangers stacked up loosely, returned merchandise in a pile, carts left in narrow aisle between registers and the window, making it difficult for the people using carts to get through.
- Dressing rooms were disorganized; piles and racks full of unpurchased clothing.

Comments by Manager:

- Thanks for waiting; we get slammed over the lunch hour, and that's usually when we get our shipments. I end up unloading trucks or cashiering.
- I'm trying to reorganize.
- I recently got two Below Standard ratings when corporate sent in 'secret shoppers,' on store appearance (particularly clothes mis-sized on the hanger or in the wrong place) and quick service.
- My men's department is spotless; I hired Joe as a cashier, but realized he's great if in charge of the men's department, so I just keep him there.
- I wish that Kid's Department looked like my men's section; it's a thorn in my side.
- Right now I'm losing money in 2 areas: I can't manage the lunch rush fast enough, so I lose customers. And I end up paying so much overtime to my back stock crew to get products ready for the floor in time.
- Be careful walking through this section (Women's Shoes). Women are crazy when shopping for shoes and throw them around when trying to find the 'perfect pair!'
- Here's the back stock room; thank god there are no windows customers can see through!
- I have always hated this system with the sizing nibs (small colored size tags that loop around the top of the hanger, like a collar); they're everywhere and there's no good way to keep them contained. I swear I bring them home in my purse each night!

Ross Dress for Less

Back Room Merchandise Processing

- ✧ Attach sizing nibs to hangers
- ✧ Organize hangers on racks according to size nibs
- ✧ Assist the unloading of merchandise at drop-off
- ✧ Organize unloaded merchandise by store department
- ✧ Strip packaging
- ✧ Hang/fold overstock merchandise after morning crew leaves

Floor Running

- ✧ Reclamation after lunch rush
- ✧ Collect hangers from cash wrap
- ✧ Process transfers or damaged items
- ✧ Return Go-backs from fitting rooms and cashiers, or Hold Closet to Sales

Floor Maintenance

- ✧ Clean fitting rooms
- ✧ Dust and polish fixtures on the Sales Floor
- ✧ Maintain organized toy section
- ✧ Re-pair women's shoes and replace on shelves
- ✧ Reorganize clothing on hangers by size