

CATEGORY INTEGRATION

500,000–749,000 square feet (46,450–69,674 square meters)

Oakridge refashions ads to show new image

Oakridge Centre, a premier fashion mall, is one of Canada's most productive centers, in one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in the country. The average customer expenditure per visit is \$73 — 7 percent higher than Ivanhoe Cambridge's benchmark of \$68. Ninety percent of shoppers have at least middle incomes, and the area has an ethnically diverse population.

But Oakridge had problems. With 150 stores, it's smaller than competing fashion centers with 230 and 470 stores, respectively. It also competes with a strong downtown center and had lost wealthy shoppers to nearby street-front retail districts. Sales at Oakridge's anchors had weakened. It offered no destination draw such as a large bookstore or lifestyle housewares retailer and was losing appeal among shoppers younger than 45.

With no imminent redevelopment, the key to Oakridge's growth was creating an exceptional, unique experience for customers.

Oakridge needed a comprehensive strategy to create a corporate culture where everyone felt a responsibility to the brand — including three crucial internal stakeholders: Ivanhoe Cambridge employees, contracted service providers and retailers.

Implementation

Oakridge assessed all its operations and held brainstorming sessions to create a thorough branding strategy. It created three communications tools to reinforce the Oakridge brand to the staff, contractors and retailers. The tools: a pocket-size "Brand Blueprint," brand strategy CD package, and an all-inclusive annual general meeting.

The blueprint encouraged stakeholders to be open, distinctive, visionary, revolutionary and involved. The CD was designed as a guide to all center functions. Emphasis was placed not only on what is done, but how it's done. The annual general meeting included staff from Ivanhoe Cambridge, housekeeping and security; retailer attendance topped 50 percent. It was time for communications and rallying enthusiasm.

Oakridge Centre Brand Strategy

Oakridge Centre

Vancouver, British Columbia

Expenses: \$2 million

Owned/Managed by: Ivanhoé Cambridge

Professional Recognition: Jolanda Peters, marketing director, Douglas MacDougall, general manager, Identica, advertising agency



Oakridge remerchandised. Leases for underperforming retailers were not renewed. Specialty leasing space was reduced and potential temporary tenants were subjected to the same rigorous standards as permanent ones.

The center added new amenities to improve customers' experiences, included 45 street banners hung on adjacent routes; customized uniforms for housekeeping and security staff; interior way-finding; a roaming concierge service; a tourist program; and fresh floor mats. Fashion-forward advertising was pegged to three fashion seasons and included outdoor, TV, magazine, ethnic-media, direct-mail, newspaper, online and on-site ads with a distinct visual hook.

Results

Research in 2005 showed that shoppers rated their Oakridge experience at an exceptional 8.1 out of 10. A study in early 2006 showed retailer satisfaction at 8.1, versus a benchmark of 7.8.

An evening fashion event, attended by more than 850 people, raised money for the center's designated charity, Canuck Place.

Deals were signed with many retailers unique to the market, including BOSS Hugo's women's and men's stores, Tommy Bahama, Coach, Lacoste, BCBG Max Azria and Tru Drama. One temp tenant converted to a permanent lease. The center's revenue grew by 3.7 percent, from \$25.9 million to \$29.9 million, between Jan. 1, 2005 and April 30, 2006. As of April 30, 2006, total sales reached \$813 per square foot, up 5.5 percent from \$770 per square foot. Oakridge has the highest sales productivity in Western Canada and is third in the country. It is No. 1 in Ivanhoe Cambridge's portfolio. ■