

Center raises profile through partnerships

Located in Toronto's financial district, First Canadian Place is Canada's tallest office building and has 200,000 square feet of stores, services and eateries. Its customers are the 80,000 people working in the complex plus 100,000 more workers within a two-block radius. A pedestrian walkway brings shoppers to FCP but also to other nearby retail concourses, and FCP's competition will only increase when Trump International Hotel and Tower opens and the redevelopment of the city's Union Station is complete.

FCP's sales had flattened, despite steady traffic and events it's offered for nearly a decade, including concerts, exhibits and lunch-hour lectures. The center decided to expand and repackage its events and activities to maintain foot traffic and boost sales.

Implementation

Partnerships with music companies, publishers, cosmetic-industry representatives and arts and cultural institutions allowed FCP to host increasingly high-profile entertainment and create promotional prize packages at minimal cost.

The center printed a pocket-sized booklet listing all the season's events that was dropped on 8,000 desks in the office complex on three occasions. FCP distributed 4,000 more copies in the mall.

But 90 percent of customers cited FCP's Web site as their primary source of information about the center, so it launched a new site dedicated to its events. The site includes photos and even music downloads from performers. The center also held monthly online contests.

FCP Events

First Canadian Place
Toronto

Expenses: C\$230,570

Owned by: First Place Tower Brookfield Properties Inc.

Managed by: Brookfield Properties (PI) Inc.

Professional Recognition: Brenda Parres, director, arts & events, Lucie Bisson, director, marketing, Kathy Meyers, general manager, Lisa Sladen, coordinator, online services

FCP launched a first for a downtown center, a walking club called "Move!" Partnering with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, FCP challenged participants to walk the equivalent of a cross-Canada trip. A "Talks and Walks" session offers exclusive programming for club members.

With HarperCollins Publishers, FCP launched a book club, "First Look."



Results

In 2005–2006, FCP hosted 300 events, 250 of which were pre-registered by a total of 50,000 people, an increase of 15 percent over the prior year. FCP Events reached 255,000 people through the lunch-hour lectures and hosted 30 stage events and 20 art exhibits.

Musicians included INXS, Il Divo, The Philosopher Kings and Sarah Brightman, who drew more than 3,000 people per performance. Guest speakers included decorating guru Debbie Travis and cooking pros Donna Hay, Michele Cranston and Bill Granger.

Partnerships allowed FCP to secure nearly \$300,000 in product samples, gift bags and contest prizes.

FCP accommodated many art and photography exhibitions. It was the first venue other than an art gallery to host exhibitions of Artic Quest, a collaboration between astronaut Roberta Bondar and artist Doris McCarthy.

Move! has attracted 800 participants who already walked more than 2 million kilometers (1.2 million miles). The book club has more than 200 members.

The new Web site attracted nearly 50,000 unique visits since its launch in September 2005. The center's e-mail newsletter grew by 50 percent, from 8,000 to 12,000 recipients. Online contests received an average of 1,500 ballots per contest.

About 100 FCP retailers have marketed via the new Web site and 50 offered cross-promotions. FCP hosted 225 merchandising events, seen by 50,000 shoppers. Retailers tracking sales reported increases from 6 percent to 15 percent for the year to date.

Finally, comparable sales grew by 4 percent in the year ending in April 2006. ■