



Brian Finlayson

# Shipshape

An estimated 85,000 overseas visitors are expected in New Zealand for the September/October Rugby World Cup 2011.

**T**hey'll be looking for authentic Kiwi action, on and off the rugby field, so it's important that you have strategies in place to make any shopping excursions memorable for all the right reasons.

The following are some quick tips to get your business shipshape for RWC visitors:

## 1) Treat them well

Ensure customer service is on the mark and that all employees know your expectations. If you're taking on new staff, get them trained and confident in dealing with customers. The New Zealand Retailers Association (NZRA) has several customer service seminars planned between now and September, so book your space, contact me for more details on 0800 472 472 and press 3.

## 2) Do your homework

What is it visitors will want to buy as gifts and reminders of their time in New Zealand? Think of appropriate product lines and have them in stock.

## 3) Talk the talk

If you're lucky enough be retailing in one of the towns or cities hosting a RWC game, it might be worthwhile hiring someone who speaks their language. If so, roster them on during peak business times; they needn't be serving customers, as such, but be available as needed to answer any questions.

## 4) Get the look

Get in the spirit and dress in the national or team colours of any overseas visitors. Use these colours to make eye-catching window displays and signage; better still, get some welcoming signage in the language of the overseas visitors.

## 5) Promotions

Give visitors a reason to come inside your shop. Advertise any promotions in tourist publications or popular hot spots such as hotels, motels and local attractions. I also suggest having an in-store promotional area.

## 6) Post it

Offer packaging and postage to save tourists the hassle of lugging parcels around the countryside. If it's not a service you usually provide but would like to, talk to your local NZ Post Shop or call the NZRA to get the details on how to go about it.

## 7) Get together

Get involved and network with other local retailers and the wider business community to showcase your town to its best advantage. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so take a team approach.

## Christchurch retailer aftershocks ...

I'm spending a lot of my time trying to help Christchurch retailers get up and running again. It's hard going for many;

and for some, more so than it should be because they've discovered their insurance cover is inadequate.

Please, please, make the time to review your insurance; pick up the phone and contact your broker to double-check your cover. A 30-minute phone call now could literally save your business in the event of a disaster.

Also, check your lease and, again, make sure you understand the details – such as whether in the event of a natural disaster, you can sublease or downsize your premises, or get out of your lease or have your rent reduced.

Call your lawyer and review these details now.

## Employment matters

Unfortunately, many employers have to lay off staff these days.

It's never a pleasant job but you can make it easier on yourself by making sure that your employment contract includes the force majeure clause which, in short, frees both parties from liability or obligation when an Act of God (such as an earthquake) occurs. As an employer that means you can dismiss staff without notice, as long as you fulfill holiday pay obligations. If you need further clarification on this clause or any other employment contract details, I would advise that you contact the NZRA employment adviser, Roy Hanrahan, or Kathy Owen on 0800 472 472. ■

□ **Brian Finlayson** is a member of the New Zealand Retailers Association (NZRA) advisory team and the Southern regional manager of the NZRA. He can be contacted by e-mail at: [bfinlayson@retail.org.nz](mailto:bfinlayson@retail.org.nz) or by phone on: 027 4750 410.

## GOLD STAR CUSTOMER SERVICE

On my recent travels, I witnessed two excellent examples of customer service. The first was in a women's clothing shop where the staff went the extra mile to meet the customer's requests for certain clothing items. I was impressed by the way the staff member took the attitude that nothing was a bother and listened and acted on what was being asked. She made the customer feel valued and her efforts paid off with the satisfied customer spending \$700.

Another heartening example of customer service was at a bike and lawnmower repair shop where the staff member offered, unprompted, to deliver the lawnmower back to the customer's home. It was appreciated by the woman who clearly didn't enjoy lugging dirty lawnmowers, and no doubt she'll return the favour with repeat business.

I love witnessing these gold star acts of retail service – so keep it up!