

Solutions

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Cooperative Development Services Welcomes Debbie Suassuna

BY RICK MCMONAGLE

During these turbulent economic times, there are many uncertainties that co-ops face as they expand within their existing markets or into new markets. Clearly, the development of an accurate sales forecast for a new store is an important step in successfully selecting new store locations. For the past eight years, food co-ops have benefited from the expertise provided by Pete Davis in the area of market analysis and sales forecasting. Pete has been working as a Location and Site Analysis consultant for Cooperative Development Services (CDS) since 2000 and has helped numerous co-ops successfully open new stores and relocate/expand their existing sites. We are pleased to announce that Debbie Suassuna, of G2G Research Group, will be joining the CDS team as a Location and Site Analysis consultant.

Debbie has known Pete Davis for over twenty years and through her friendship and professional experiences with him, she has become familiar with the cooperative community. While she enjoyed her work for larger stores and companies, she looks forward to more personal attachments with co-op clients. "From what I learned from Pete, working with co-ops is about relationships," said Debbie. "These types of more personal relationships are what I am looking for," she added.

Debbie holds a B.A. in Economic Geography from the University of Cincinnati in Ohio and an M.B.A. from the California State University in Hayward, California. Debbie has 20 years of experience in conducting site location research in the retail and restaurant industries, both as a consultant for a variety of retailers and as an in-house research expert. For the past five years, Debbie worked within the Real Estate Department of Williams-Sonoma, Inc., where she was responsible for the site location and consumer research



activities for all of the company's retail brands (Williams-Sonoma, Pottery Barn, Pottery Barn Kids, West Elm, and Williams-Sonoma Home). While employed with Williams-Sonoma, Inc., Debbie was instrumental in developing sound forecasting models for each retail brand and was able to significantly increase the accuracy of the company's sales forecasts for new store locations and store expansions. According to Arthur Tropp, Senior Vice President of Real Estate at Williams Sonoma, Inc., "Debbie has not only done an excellent job of predicting our stores' sales performance, but she has provided us with a better understanding of our retail customer and their shopping behavior, adding significant value to our real estate decision making and planning. I greatly appreciate the insight and thoughtfulness she has provided on various issues pertaining to our business."

In addition to working at Williams-Sonoma, Inc., Debbie was also employed for 13 years by Thompson Associates (now Pitney Bowes MapInfo) which is a full-service consulting firm based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. While employed at Thompson Associates, Debbie had the opportunity to meet and work with Pete Davis. In fact,

A Tradition of Managing Change

Managers and others see change happening in their co-ops on a daily basis. Being responsive and adaptive to those dynamics keeps a co-op growing, profitable and a valued community asset. To be ready for the future, we must be prepared to constantly adapt to the changing market.

Co-ops can't do it alone. Successfully serving your member owners' needs everyday is a big responsibility. Dealing with the complex issues of growth, expansion and relocation requires outside experience and expertise. At CDS, we see ourselves as partners, by your side, ready to help find solutions to complex situations and take advantage of promising opportunities.

We deeply value the trust and respect we have gained in your service over the past 22 years. And we are committed to working with you for the next 20 years and beyond. With this issue we welcome Debbie Suassuna to CDS. Even as some of our faces change, our dedication to your success remains the same. We are ready to continue on with you in our long and productive tradition of managing change.

—Marilyn Scholl

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Our Mission

CDS is dedicated to building and strengthening cooperative businesses by providing consulting, training and development services.

CDS includes a network of independent consulting professionals experienced in all aspects of developing food cooperatives. CDS consultants have worked on over 500 projects and will tailor their services to fit your needs and deliver results.

Board Leadership Development

- CBLD—Cooperative Board Leadership Development
- Board training and facilitation
- Strengthen board/manager relations
- Policy Governance® and Accountability
- Member owner linkage

Expansion and Relocation

- Expansion planning
- Financial pro forma
- Capitalization and member loans
- Business strategy
- Market, location and site analysis
- Trade area and market penetration analysis
- Project management
- Store planning and design services

Improving Operational Performance

- Business planning, goal setting and monitoring
- Audit and strengthen operational systems
- CoCoFiSt
- CoCoFiSt workshops
- Margin enhancement
- Labor controls
- Merchandising
- Financial system design and assessment
- Management training, coaching, and support

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Pete participated in her training at Thompson Associates in the early 1990's. According to Pete, "Debbie is one of the most capable site location analysts I have known in my 40 year career. Her experience with specialty store location research, site analysis and sales forecasting is both broad and deep; she has worked with big box retailers, smaller specialty stores, as well as with chain stores and independent retailers. If I were a retailer looking to expand my business, Debbie is an analyst in whom I would have a high level of confidence."

"Debbie is one of the most capable site location analysts I have known in my 40 year career."

At Thompson Associates, Debbie managed the research activities for a variety of retail and restaurant clients, which provided her with a broad range of experiences that will undoubtedly prove helpful in guiding the store expansion plans for our food co-ops.

Debbie looks forward to having a direct impact on the future success of her co-op clients and she knows that managers will depend on the information from her sales forecasts. "My goal is to provide co-ops with accurate sales forecasts and to help them understand the many aspects of a successful store", Debbie said. "I want to educate managers and staff so they can fully benefit from my work—I want it to be relevant to them."

Marilyn Scholl, the Coordinator for CDS' Food Co-op Consultants, had the opportunity to meet and talk with Debbie last September and believes that "CDS is very fortunate to have found someone with Debbie's experience and skills to work with Pete. Expansion projects are becoming more and more complex, and co-ops need disciplined research to use for making decisions. The future is never certain, and so the more data are used as a basis for analysis, the more likely the results will be predictable and risk minimized."

Debbie can provide co-ops with a variety of services that are useful when considering new store locations or the expansion or relocation of an existing store. These services not only provide co-ops with a better understanding of their customers, but a better understanding of their stores' trade areas and market penetration as well. These services include:

- Sales Forecasts—to quantify the sales poten-

tial for a new store or an expansion/relocation of an existing store.

- Sales Transfer Analysis—to quantify the impact that a new store will have on an existing store.
- Problem Store Analysis—to identify areas where an existing store may underperform.
- Store Deployment Strategies for New Markets—to determine how many stores a market could support and where those stores should be located to maximize sales potential.
- Store In-Fill Strategies for Existing Markets—to identify areas of a market that are underserved by the existing store deployment network and are large enough to successfully support a new store.
- Store Sales Distribution/Customer Distribution Mapping—also known as CAT surveys (customer address and transaction).
- Consumer Research Studies—to obtain crucial information regarding customer shopping habits, behavior, perceptions and opinions through customer interviews, telephone surveys, internet surveys or focus groups.

You will have an opportunity to meet Debbie at the 2008 CCMA Conference in Portland, Oregon. Debbie is looking forward to meeting the members of the co-op community and learning more about your market and consumer research needs. "I will work hard to ensure that co-ops have all of the information that they need to make those critical decisions that are necessary for successfully growing their business in an increasingly complex and changing marketplace," said Debbie.

"My goal is to provide co-ops with accurate sales forecasts and to help them understand the many aspects of a successful store."

For more information about Debbie and her company, visit her website at www.g2gresearch.com. If you would like more information about the market and consumer research services available to co-ops, or to request a proposal to quantify the sales potential for a new store location, or a relocation/expansion of an existing store, you can reach Debbie at 925-833-8524 or DebbieSuassuna@cdsfood.coop.



CASE STUDY

The Next Steps: Market Research and Analysis for Today's Needs and Tomorrow's Potential

Many co-ops find themselves the victims of too much success. They are bursting at the seams as memberships and sales increase, an expanding inventory demands more shelf space and the parking lot is beyond capacity. How co-ops manage growth issues is a key indicator of their future sustainability and prosperity.

Co-ops contemplating a store expansion or relocation have turned to CDS for expert advice and consultation. We provide a wide array of expansion feasibility and planning services. Our consultants have provided co-ops with critical market analysis, sales forecasts and location and site analysis to make informed decisions about their store's operations at both current and possible future locations.

Larrane Hartridge, General Manager of New Leaf Market in Tallahassee, Florida, donned one of her three hard hats as the construction work for the store expansion got underway on the other side of the wall from her office. Based on market research and analysis done by CDS, her co-op decided that the best location for expansion was literally right next door. Pete Davis conducted two studies for New Leaf Market. "These were invaluable studies both for considering a possible second location and for creating a marketing plan," said Larrane. She also used the study data for targeting new members and to inform the membership. "Everybody should have one of these studies," she said.

Moving from the Sunshine State to Buffalo, New York, the Lexington Co-op turned to objective information to guide their decision to move from a 1,200 square foot store on a side street to a 5,000 square foot store on the main street. "Our gut told us it was the right thing to do, but we needed a professional opinion to find a location where the market was strongest," voiced Tim Bartlett, General Manager. The study gave them hard data on the three potential sites they were considering early in the site relocation process. "It was very useful in guiding our site search," said Tim. "We believed in it." The co-op used the study results in a number of

ways including to support financial information to take to the bank, to inform and educate the board of directors and membership, marketing, and to ultimately choose the new store location.

Mississippi Market in St. Paul, Minnesota currently has two stores and is analyzing how to move its smaller store to a new and better site. "Since the stores are in rather close proximity to each other, learning the boundaries of their trade areas was important and necessary information to have. CDS provided the co-op with the boundary details and that proved useful to educate me and the board of directors in all of the aspects of a possible store move," said Gail Graham, General Manager.

Along with informing a major undertaking like an expansion or the creation of a new store, detailed market data is very useful in the ongoing strategic planning of a retail food co-op.

Along with informing a major undertaking like an expansion or the creation of a new store, detailed market data is useful in the ongoing strategic planning of a retail food co-op. The Davis Food Co-op regularly uses professional market assessments to track the marketplace, changes in demographics and competition. When recently faced with a Trader Joe's store moving into their market, a market study developed by CDS helped them predict its potential impact on the cooperative. "My CFO says that every time we have a market study presentation, it's like getting a college education," said Eric Stomberg, the General Manager. "It's so informative."

Whether a co-op is taking on a major competitor down the block or trying to manage the effects of burgeoning sales on its current location, employees and infrastructure, the need for professional advice backed by real numbers is essential. Food co-ops have found the need for expertise to guide them along the way.



Welcome Debbie Suassuna

Debbie comes to CDS with almost 20 years of location research and site analysis experience. She has broad experience having worked with big box retailers, smaller specialty stores, as well as with chain stores and independent retailers.

Debbie's areas of expertise are:

- Market, location and site analysis
- Sales forecasting
- Real estate strategy
- Remodel, expansion, relocation analysis

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