

Fast education

Prior to its opening on Nov. 13, hundreds of workers at Jersey Shore Premium Outlets in Tinton Falls have to be trained on everything from how to work the cash registers to the details of stores' products

By [David P. Willis](#) • BUSINESS WRITER • November 5, 2008

Workers are putting the final touches on the stores at Jersey Shore Premium Outlets in Tinton Falls.

In the background, retailers are putting hundreds of employees through training to get ready for the outlet center's grand opening on Nov. 13.

"It is extensive," said Dan Sawall, general manager for Nike Factory Stores, which will have about 40 employees there. "When we open our doors, we want the consumer to have the premium experience. The only way they can have that experience is if our Nike employees are trained properly."

The new center, owned by Roseland-based Chelsea Property Group, which also operates Jackson Premium Outlets, will have 120 shops, totaling about 435,000 square feet. The outlet stores includes high-end brands Burberry, Elie Tahari, Juicy Couture, Ugg and Kate Spade.

Collectively, the shops will be among the largest employers in Monmouth and Ocean counties. With the help of a job fair in September, the stores sought to hire about 1,100 people.

The process to train workers in the retail industry starts even before they are hired.

"The key is getting the right type of person at the beginning because it makes training easier down the road," said Donna Flagg, principal of The Krysalis Group, a business and management consulting firm in New York City. "We are talking about attitude."



Jersey Shore Premium Outlets is scheduled to host its grand opening on Nov. 13. The new center, owned by Roseland-based Chelsea Property Group, which also operates Jackson Premium Outlets, will have 120 shops, including Burberry, Elie Tahari, Juicy Couture, Ugg and Kate Spade. (STAFF PHOTOS: BOB BIELK)



Can they interact with the public? Can they sell? "It is not easy to find 100 percent of a work force that is naturally included and brings those abilities in," Flagg said.

Once hired, companies start to train employees about a month or so before the store opens. Of course, there's training on how to use the cash register and ring up sales. Workers also are taught about store policies.

These days, training goes beyond the mechanics of a sale. Now, retailers show workers how to engage customers, said K.C. Blonski, director of retail markets for AchieveGlobal, a skills training company that works with retailers.

"It could be as simple as "Good morning, what brings you in today?" or it could be "That is a great blouse that you have on, I have a sweater that would look beautiful with it," Blonski said. "Whether it be a positive experience or a neutral or negative experience, that's what lasts and we associate that with the brand."

Employees often get a crash course on the company's culture.

"The brand has a significance in the public spectrum that is huge," said Nike's Sawall. "We make sure they know everything about the history, the principles of the company, the commitments we make to the consumer."

Employees at Sony Retail Stores are put through a week of customer service training, said Dennis Syracuse, senior vice president of Sony Retail Stores. Among other things, workers are shown how to approach customers and support the Sony brand and experience.

Workers also complete online training courses where they learn all about Sony's products, including the specifications and how they are used, Syracuse said.

"They help you make the right decision so you are buying a product that will fit your lifestyle," Syracuse said.

At Nike, employees need to know the intricacies of the company's footwear. For instance, what shoes are best for a casual runner or someone who plays basketball, Sawall said.

"They will be able to advise when the consumer comes in which shoes they want to use," Sawall said.

David P. Willis: (732) 643-4039 or dwillis@app.com