

P'lovers

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Introduction

In 1992, P'lovers opened on Birmingham Street. One of the owners, Ann Carverzan, strongly felt “the need to make eco-friendly products available in one place because it makes it easier to make environmentally conscious choices.” P'lovers certainly meets this objective selling everything from organic clothing to a large selection of books on environmental topics. With the desire to reinforce their eco-friendly message, extensive renovations were made to ‘green’ the Birmingham storefront. However, they were eventually forced to move to Park Lane Mall to attract more customers. Malls are usually considered to be the antithesis of what it means to be sustainable and environmentally responsible, but P'lovers’ beautiful storefront in Park Lane Mall demonstrates that it is even possible to uphold ‘green’ values in a mall.



Recycled Wallpaper and Cork Flooring

Instead of laying down tile or carpet, the owners of P'lovers decided to use cork flooring; a sustainable resource. Cork flooring is also beneficial to staff who may be on their feet all day because it is easier on joints than tile or concrete alternatives.

Rather than painting, P'lovers stapled brown paper and recycled corrugated cardboard to the wall to create a unique, beautiful, and environmentally friendly surface.



Reused Materials

P'lovers uses furniture made from recycled or re-used materials for shelving and display cases instead of purchasing new or chemically treated wood. Features include everything from industrial wooden pallets to old doors, a rustic atmosphere. P'lovers even rescued an old telephone pole from the landfill to use as a bulletin or display pole.



Energy and Water Conservation

To minimize electricity consumption, P'lovers uses energy efficient light bulbs and does not use a computer. All paper work is done by hand. The staff has access to a small sink in the back room that is set to the lowest pressure possible. In addition, they have turned the hot water off to conserve energy.

“Greening the Business”

When P'lovers orders merchandise they specifically ask about the packaging to ensure the company uses the least amount possible or uses biodegradable packaging.

Customers at P'lovers are invited to forego a bag to reduce waste and the energy invested in the production of the bag. In response P'lovers donates the cost of the bag to a fund for non-for profit organizations, including the Ecology Action Centre. To make it more visually satisfying for customers, the cashier drops a large lima bean into a glass jar to represent the donation.



Problems Encountered

Unfortunately, being located in a mall means that P'lovers is not able to take advantage of any natural lighting, although they use energy efficient light bulbs to conserve energy.

One of the staff commented that occasionally they get customers that react quite strongly when invited to forego a bag to reduce waste and the energy invested in the production of the bag. Located in a mall where shopping bags with store logos plastered on the front are the norm, some customers reply, "Of course I need a bag!" Most of the time after pausing to think, the customer realizes that they do not actually need a bag, especially if they are already holding several!