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COME ON IN

Retailer Positions Store as Community Hub

As an independent retailer, you have the opportunity to make your store a hub of activity—hosting events that are not only exciting for the community but your employees as well. One store that serves as a perfect example of this is Eagle Hardware Farm and Ranch in Royse City, Texas. There, Shawn Risinger has made it his mission to be not just a store owner but to make his store a center of activity in the community in which he does business.

Risinger bought Eagle Hardware six years ago. His only caveat when purchasing the store was a personal one: He would make the store more than just a place to work.

“I did not want to come every morning, unlock the doors and just sell stuff to people,” he says. “I am a very community-oriented person.”

Through concentrated efforts, Risinger has made Eagle Hardware more than just a place to buy stuff. He’s connected with his community on many levels and will continue to make that bond stronger in the years to come.

Lasting Impressions

The biggest way Risinger reaches out to the residents of Royse City and beyond is through the



Ladies' Night at **Eagle Hardware Farm and Ranch** includes practical advice as well as personal inspiration in the form of a motivational speaker.



many classes and workshops he hosts. Since these events happen annually, the community looks forward to and plans for them.

Among the events are a ladies' night out, workshops to teach young and old how to raise chickens and specialized seminars for cattle ranchers and horse owners. Hosting these events is a great way to bring customers into the store, but it's also how Risinger builds camaraderie and goodwill within the community. And, while he pays upfront costs for these events, Risinger sees a return on that investment.

"I watch the number of transactions I make during a day, and if I'm reaching more people, that's going to be proven by the number of sales I have that day," Risinger says. "Whenever I have an event, I see the number of transactions go up and, year-to-date, I have 3,000 more sales than this time last year."

While ladies' night and chicken workshops are somewhat common in home improvement stores, Risinger tries to make his events memorable. That lasting impression brings event attendees back to the store later on.

"Our ladies' night out features cheese, crackers and a light dinner," he says. "This year, I showed guests how to fix a leaky faucet and a running toilet. At the end, we had a speaker who turned out to be very motivational—not about hardware—but about life. We have heard so many positive comments and had so many expressions of appreciation about that event."

A Reason for Reaching Out

When planning events, Risinger looks to his community and plans according to their interests. Because Eagle Hardware Farm and Ranch is located in an area where outdoor activities are popular, he hosts a Wildlife Expo each September. This gets his customers ready for hunting season and brings them to his store for gear.

"The expo includes vendor booths and seminars about wildlife, hunting and sporting goods," he says. "I work with vendors to put it together and offer customers information and new products to look at."

The Wildlife Expo invites outdoor fanatics to explore new products.



Christmas Eve at Eagle Hardware Farm and Ranch includes a prayer service and sharing holiday treats.

Oh, Hardware Night

During the holiday season, Risinger reaches out to children and families. He invites the community to a unique event held at Eagle Hardware Farm and Ranch: Christmas Eve at the Hardware Store. Risinger, a pastor, celebrates a non-denominational service, inviting the community to rejoice in the holiday.

"The event started with just a few families several years ago and grew to more than 250 families last year," he says. "I laugh and remind them, 'You're at a hardware store celebrating Christmas Eve!' But every year, new people come."

Personal Payback

While the goal of each of these events isn't necessarily to sell any particular products, the events foster community awareness, creating a place where the community can gather.

"It makes us different and helps people know that we're here so when they need a tape measure, they'll choose to come to us," he says. "I know it pays dividends, because I've seen our business grow." ➡

Year-round Promos

Eagle Hardware Farm and Ranch hosts several events annually. Owner Shawn Risinger developed a calendar so customers would be aware of the events and become accustomed to them happening every year at the same time. Below are his biggest events and when they occur.

- February: Ladies' Night Out at the Hardware Store
- March: Chicken Workshop; Stock-Your-Pond Fish Truck
- April: Garden Workshop with Soil Sampling
- May: Horse Owner's Workshop
- June: Cattle Owner's Workshop
- September: Wildlife Expo
- October: Think Pink Event celebrating Breast Cancer Awareness Month and Mobile Mammogram Unit
- December: Kids' Night Out; Christmas Eve at the Hardware Store Service

Remember that events such as these often require permitting or proper approval from municipal authorities. It will be up to you to ensure you're following the laws for your state. When planning, do your homework upfront and discuss any potential liabilities with your attorney.