9. Operational Procedures

This Section discusses the day to day operations and gives some ideas regarding different aspects of supervising and managing a thrift store ministry.

Section Contents:

Operational Procedures

Accounting
The accounting should be kept up to date at least once a week, preferably daily.

Actions
Enter the sales and the deposit amounts for each day in the accounting program.

Pay bills. It should go without saying, but, pay all bills **on time**. Keep track of when bills are due so you do not miss any payment dates.

*See Sample "Monthly Bills Due" This form allows you to keep track of when bills are due and how much money is available to pay them.

Pay Sales Tax – in the beginning you may only have to send in the Sales Tax once a quarter, as your sales increase, the state will require once a month.

Enter any Returned NSF checks

Reconcile Bank Account each month

Keep track of sales and profit & loss for each month

Tally the items donated for the month

Present the financials at each board meeting

*See "Donation Tracking" this section, p. 170
*See Sample "Profit to Date" Spreadsheet

Occupational Licenses (Business Tax)
Renew for county and city each year and post the new license near the register.

Tangible Property Tax
As a business you will have to file Tangible Property Tax. You must list every single item in the store that is not for sale. Desks, computer, printer, clothes racks, shelving, staplers and on and on. This is very time consuming, especially the first year.

Enter everything in a spread sheet which can be saved for subsequent years. Each year, add the items you have acquire for that tax year, and delete those you no longer have. Indicate whether you purchased the items or they were donated to you, and if they were sold or retired. Each county will be slightly different, however, the sample forms will give you an idea of what to expect.

Make sure the county has you listed as a non-profit. You still have to file, however, some county's will not require you, as a non-profit, to pay. With the new law, if your assets are below $25,000, you do not have to file or pay. You must file for an exemption the first year.

Insurance

Property Liability
Customer Liability
 Volunteer Liability
Vehicle
Worker's Compensation

Property Liability

If you own your facility this insurance covers the building and the contents, if you are renting, this insurance covers the contents only; the latter is much less expensive. If you are renting, the Landlord requires you to have insurance on the contents so that in the event of a catastrophe, you would be able to get up and running again with an income so you are able to pay the rent. If the Landlord wishes, they can be added to the policy as a Loss Payee.

The property insurance is renewed each year on March 1. You should receive an updated insurance form from your Church conference;

a) Verify that the loss payee (the landlord) information is correct
b) Send a copy to the landlord
c) Send payment to the conference

Customer Liability

If a customer is injured in your store, your Conference insurance may cover up to $10,000 in medical expenses.

If a customer is injured, complete the "Statement of Loss" claim form. If medical attention is required they can present the medical facility with a copy. Some facilities will give treatment and then submit to the conference for payment, others will require the patient to pay up front. If the latter is the case, the patient submits their receipts to the conference, to be reimbursed.

Volunteer Liability

This insurance is supplemental; it pays only for covered medical expenses not paid by the volunteers own insurance.

If medical attention is required, the volunteer should give the medical facility their own insurance information and also have the "Volunteer Labor – Policy" claim form filled out by the medical facility and the doctor.

If the volunteer's insurance does not pay some of the expense, then follow the requirements of the "Volunteer Labor – Policy" claim form.

Vehicle
The vehicle insurance is renewed each year on July 1. You will receive an updated insurance form from the conference,

a) Verify that all of the information is correct.
b) Place new insurance card in vehicle

If you have an automobile accident that is your fault, fill out the "Automobile Claim Notice", fax and then mail a copy to the Church's Conference - Risk Management Department.

They will send someone to appraise all vehicles involved. When the cost of the damage to your vehicle is determined, they will send you a check for that amount. Shop to find the best place (price/quality) to have your vehicle repaired.

Worker's Compensation
If an employee is injured, fill out the "First Report of Injury or Illness" claim form. This claim form must be filled out immediately, whether the employee seeks medical attention or not. If the employee decides to get medical attention at a later date, they will not be covered if the claim form was not filled out and sent to the conference.

If an employee is injured and requires medical attention, they must go to an **approved** medial facility. Find out from the conference which medical facility is approved for your area, and post that information where all employees have access.

If the employee requires emergency attention, they may be taken to the nearest emergency facility. Notify your approved facility and the conference immediately.

Claim form must be faxed to Church Conference immediately, and then mailed. The insurance company must receive the original within 7 days of the occurrence.

*See – 23. Appendix 4 - Forms – Files; B. Operations; "Injury Claim Info Sheet"

Safety
Safety does not happen by itself, it takes a continuous conscious effort. Staff and volunteers should be educated regarding safety procedures. Remind those who lift on a regular basis, to do so properly. Everyone should be on the lookout for dangerous situations; spilled drink, broken furniture, stacked items that may fall, items sticking out into a walk way. When noticed, these things should be taken care of immediately.

When moving a heavy item, discuss before hand how it will be done and make sure each person involved understands the plan. If you question the way something is going to be done, find another way. If you realize you are in a hurry, slow down. Talk with both staff and volunteers about safety on a regular basis. Give praise when you see something being done in a safe manner.

It is a good idea to have at least two people in the store at all times who have been trained in CPR and First Aid. Have a small First Aid kit available (hydrogen peroxide, band aids, antibacterial cream). If there is an emergency, call 911, do not try to transport. If someone needs medical care, follow the procedure as outlined under "Insurance."

Advertising

We have found word of mouth advertising from loyal customers to be the most beneficial. Most ads are expensive; spend your advertising dollars wisely. Test different avenues before jumping in with both feet. A discount coupon may be used for newspaper type adds to determine effectiveness. We have found newspaper adds to not be cost effective. We have had some success with placing our information in local retired community phone books. You need to experiment with what works best in your area, and at what time of year.

Some other ideas –

- Name and Phone number on your pick-up and deliver vehicles: We get several calls a month from people who see our truck and trailer out and about.
- Welcome Wagon:
- Trading Flyers: Place a flyer in other locally owned businesses and place their flyer in yours. Restaurants, Laundromats, Hair Salons, Real Estate Agencies, even other thrift stores. Think of places people frequent when they are moving into an area.
- Signs: Place "Real estate" signs out by the road that read "Thrift Store" with an arrow pointing to your store.
- Shopping Guide: Make a list of the local thrift stores and consignment shops. Have them available at your store and get other listed stores to make them available.

*See Sample "Shopping Guide"

Board Meetings

All major decisions should be made by the board. The secretary keeps a record of each topic discussed and any motions made, and produces the minutes. The minutes should be kept in a safe place to be referred to if there is ever a question on actions taken. At each board meeting the minutes from the previous meeting and the financial status is presented.

As the ministry progresses, the board will get a feel for how much they need to be involved. They may choose to meet once a month – or more often in the beginning, – as they see the store running smoothly, they may choose to meet less often. There are always things that should be by board vote; Hiring of Employees, Major Purchases, Lease Issues, etc..

Church Involvement

One of the goals for the thrift store ministry is to be a church wide effort. Church wide, does not mean that every member will serve at the store. A church wide effort signifies that every church member is aware of, and supports in whatever way they can, the ministry of the store. Each member should understand the ministry goals of the store and support in word and when possible deed, this outreach of their church.

To further this goal, we continually look for ways to involve the church by having them:

Feel ownership
Understand the significance of the ministry
Look out for ways to further the store ministry
Informed of the different aspects of the ministry
Informed of the ministry's needs

An informed church membership is of utmost importance, you do not want someone saying 'I did not realize you needed help with that', or worse yet, 'I didn't know we had a thrift store.'

Here are a few ideas of how to keep information regarding the thrift store ministry in front of the members:

> Place a blurb in the bulletin. You may consider placing something in the bulletin for a few weeks and then out for a few; when it is in there every week it becomes common and is easily overlooked. When you place it back in, change the copy to give it a different feel.
>
> Every so often (monthly/quarterly) place an insert in the bulletin. The insert can outline some of the recent activities, give pertinent information – location, hours of operation, etc. – alert members to areas in which they can help fill a need.
>
> Give personal testimonies of ministry experiences during lay activities time – monthly/quarterly. This is a great way to involve your team, including those who belong to other churches.
>
> Schedule a work bee
>
> Place a flyer on the bulletin board
>
> Page(s) on church web site
>
> The most effective way to receive help – personal invitation.
> A comment heard from a member who was also a church officer in a church where the thrift store closed for lack of volunteers, "No one asked me to help."

As you keep the store ministry in front of the church, you will gain the prayer support of the membership and God will impress upon those He would have serve in a tangible way at the store to come and do so. As team members experience the working of God through the ministry, they will convey to their friends the benefits they enjoy through serving, and will encourage them to join the team.

God uses the area of personnel to continue teaching us to trust Him in all things, He is our provider – including personnel – He will send those He would have serve with us, in His way and with His timing. We may think we need someone yesterday, however, God knows the work He is doing in all lives involved and He will provide when and who He knows is best.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the life blood of the ministry, they are indispensable and each one should be cherished. There are to many things to do and customers to assist for just a couple of people to do everything. Treat the volunteers with respect and appreciate any time they are willing to give.

If a volunteer is serving in a department other than the cash register, they should feel free to come as they are able. We are glad to have them as part of the ministry and want to make it as easy as possible for them to serve. Most volunteers will settle into a routine. If you have specific needs for certain days, let the volunteers know, so they can adjust their schedules if possible.

*See 15. “Department Manager Responsibilities”
*See Appendix 3 “Volunteer Appreciation and Guidelines”

Prayer Book / Worship

The store ministry is an opportunity to be a house of prayer. We place a note book near the front of the store where people can notate their prayers and praises. It is a blessing to see the pages that are filled each week, we are grateful that people feel comfortable in sharing their cares with us.

Each morning we have a devotional/worship time with all those who would like to join. We use this time to read a devotional and discuss God's leading and share experiences of the previous day. We then spend time in prayer as we lift up all those who have come to serve and thank God for His many blessings, we also lift up those who have written in our prayer book, thanking God that He is making Himself known in each situation. It is a time to remind each other that our purpose is to allow God to use the day ahead to create more of His character in us and allow His light to shine through us.

Not everyone will be able to attend and no one should feel obligated, you want those who desire time in prayer to come together to praise God. Staff and volunteers will look forward to this time when the atmosphere is positive and uplifting.

Client Assistance

There should be several people trained and designated to interview and assist clients who are in need. This is one of the major things that set us apart; we give. One of these trained individuals should be available at the store during all operating hours.

When a client comes for assistance they are coming to us with more than their apparent need of food and clothes; they are coming to us with a need for a sympathetic ear, a need to be loved, a need to be respected. The people selected to work with the clients should be those who have shown a willingness for God to grow His character in them, who have a desire for God to give them His love, understanding and compassion for others.

*See "Client Assistance" p. 251

Client Assistance Tracking

It is important to fill out the Client Assistance form correctly each time items are donated. This information is used at the end of the month to calculate totals.

Tracking information needed on the form; number of family members, type and number of items given, and the dollar value. Place a 'tick' next to the price for each item in a category. List each piece of furniture and the dollar value.

*See – 23. Appendix 4 - Forms – Files; D. Accounting; Client Assistance Form - Sample
*See – 23. Appendix 4 - Forms – Files; G. Forms; Client Assistance Form

At the end of the month all information is posted to the "Assistance Register" form. The top part of the "Assistance Register Chart" form is the total dollar amount given, the bottom portion is a breakdown of the number of different items given and volunteer information.

*See – 23. Appendix 4 - Forms – Files; D. Accounting; Assistance Register - Sample
*See – 23. Appendix 4 - Forms – Files; D. Accounting; Assistance Register Spreadsheet

Preparing the Donation Data

On each Client Assistance form; total each line, then total each form.

Example;	5 shirts	$15
	Sofa	$75
	25 Kitchen Items	$ 8
		$98

We do not go by the color fastener on the clothes, we list them at the original price, dress $4, shirt $3, infant $2, etc..

Assistance Register

When you have totaled all the forms, enter the information in the "Assistance Register" Spreadsheet.
Select the tab for the month the donations were given. Enter the information from each form.
Example; family members 2, clothes 5, furniture 1, Misc. 25, total dollar amount $98.00.

The Miscellaneous items include any item that does not fall under the other three categories, e.g. dishes, silverware, toys.

The volunteer hours are generated from the “Volunteer Sign In” Sheet. Total these hours and record in the “Assistance Register” spreadsheet for the corresponding month in column B line 11.

To keep track of how many volunteers you have each month/quarter, use the “VHours” page of the “Assistance Register” spreadsheet. Place the volunteer names in column A, place a 1 in the cell for the corresponding month(s) they volunteer; this will give you a monthly, quarterly and yearly total. The yearly total must be entered manually on the “Assistance Given” chart, this number is found in column B line 14 for each consecutive month, this ‘new’ total is re-entered each month on the “Assistance Given” chart in column H line 37.

Present the “Assistance Given” chart at the board meeting and post where customers and volunteers are able to see tangible results of their willingness to be used by God.

Receiving Donations

The success of the thrift store ministry depends on the steady of flow of donated items. This is your life blood, without donated items you have nothing to sell as well as nothing to give. It is an ongoing everyday occurrence that you trust will continue day after day, month after month. You will never get caught up; there will always be more items to sort, price, and stock.

It is important to have a plan in place regarding how you receive donated items. There are two ways you will receive donations; 1) Customers bring them to you 2) you go and pick them up.

Decide if you will receive the donations at the front or back of the store. This decision should be based on the layout of your store and the ease of access at each entrance. Receiving at the back is preferred, but if your only option is the front it can still be done. The location for receiving should also be the one used for loading merchandise going out.

There are five types of ‘vehicles’ needed to transport items around and through the store. 1) Flat cart 2) Two wheel dolly 3) Shopping buggy 4) Mattress Cart 5) Four wheel dolly.

The flat cart is used to move the large heavier items; sofas, chairs, dressers, desks, etc. The two wheel dolly is used to move; book cases, appliances, etc. The shopping buggy is used for smaller items; lamps, loose books, small bags of clothes, etc. These ‘vehicles’ should be kept close to the designated receiving location.

Receiving at the Back

Have a door bell so that customers are able to alert you to their presence. Designate a person to receive the donations. If there is a large donation or heavy items, they can call on the radio for assistance.

Receiving at the Front

If you do not have rear access, then receive the donations at the front door. This can present traffic flow problems and congestion, but it is doable. Customers can request help at the register for unloading. If help is not immediately available, the register person can call on the radio and request assistance.

Donations at Register

Keep a buggy near the register counter where customers can place bags and small items they are donating. As the buggy becomes full, a volunteer can replace it with an empty one and take the full one to the sorting area. They should disperse the items in the buggy to the appropriate departments.

Dispersing

As donations come in they should be dispersed to the appropriate sorting areas; clothes, miscellaneous, electric, linens, books, and furniture.

If you have a staging area for the furniture, it can be inspected, priced and then placed out on the sales floor. If you do not have a staging area, the furniture will need to be placed directly on the sales floor. If you have the personnel available, the furniture can be priced as it is coming in, otherwise, check the floor periodically and price the new arrivals.

Loading

Most thrift stores do not offer assistance when customers come to pick up their merchandise, if you have the personnel this is an area that can set you apart from the others. It also allows you to control how things are moved through the store and adds a level of safety.

When loading items in a customer's vehicle, be very careful that no damage is done. If a customer wants an item pushed into a small area – let them do it.

We do not stock rope for tying down furniture for a couple reasons. 1) It can get very expensive to provide rope for everyone. 2) We do not want the liability if our rope is not sufficient for the job. We have the convenience of being next door to a Family Dollar store that sells clothes line rope that works great, it is $2.00 for 100 feet. When customers ask if we have rope, we tell them, "no, but you can get it next door."

If a customer needs to lay a refrigerator on its side for transportation, be sure they are aware that they should not plug it in for twenty-four hours after they stand it back up; the Freon needs to settle. If they plug it in before then, it will be ruined.

Overstocked

There will be times during the year when you feel like you have run out of space to receive certain types of donations. When this happens, think carefully before turning away more donations, you do not want customers to get out of the habit of bringing their items to you. You need a plan in place that will allow you to continue receiving donations even though you may be full.

The first thing to consider is, are you really full? Sometimes you may feel you do not have room for even one more item, yet if you try, you may be surprised to find a spot for it. There may come a time though when there is not another inch of space to place an incoming bag of clothes.

At this point you need to create space, either by selling more items, or removing them. The second option is difficult because our tendency is to hang on to what we have. The best alternative is to do a quick sort and glean out the best, then remove the balance from the store. This gives room to receive more merchandise that can go through the same sorting process. This gives you the cream of the crop to put out for sale and keeps your customers coming back; the shoppers and the donators.

When you get caught up, or donations slow down again, go back to your standard way of sorting.

Recycling

It can be a challenge to dispose of unwanted merchandise, one solution is to find a textile recycling company who will pick up your unwanted clothes, shoes, electronics, and books. This is a great option because they will pay you for what they pick up.

We use Suncoast Textile Recycling Corp. out of St. Petersburg Florida. Do an on-line search for "Florida Textile Recycling Company" to find a company that services your area.

Find a local metal scrap man who will come and pick up your unwanted appliances and metal items.

Declining

Refusing donations is a tough situation, you do not want to offend the customer, however, you are not a trash depository. People become attached to their things; they can easily become insulted if they feel you consider their items junk. It takes tact and discretion to handle each individual case.

If you decide you are not able to accept someone's donations, decline in a polite courteous manner. Keep in mind that the flow of donations is your life blood; you do not want unhappy customers spreading the word that you do not take donations. Sometimes this is unavoidable, but you want to be conscious of it and try to keep the number of unhappy customers few and far between.

For more ideas on how to decline donations see; *Floor Manager, Decline donations from customers,* p. 195

Forms & Tags

Listed below are the forms and tags you will need. Make copies as needed (you will need a paper cutter).

Store Hours	Donation Sheet	Pick up	Delivery
Tax Receipt	Volunteer Sign In	SOLD	HOLD
Community Service Sign In			

*See – 23. Appendix 4 - Forms – Files; F. Tags - Slips

Store Hours
Post the store hours on the front window and have them available as a third of a page handout at the front counter in a brochure holder.

Tax Receipt
When someone makes a donation, ask if they would like a tax receipt. If they do, put the current date and sign. It is the customer's responsibility to fill in the information of what was donated and the estimated value.

Volunteer and Community Service Sign in Sheet
Keep the Volunteer Sign in sheet in a place that has easy access for everyone. Use this form to determine the total number of hours given by the volunteers each month and enter them in the "Assistance Register". We use a clip board behind the register counter.

Place blank community service sheets in a three ring binder. When someone comes to complete community service hours, fill out one of the sheets with their information. Each day they come, enter the time when they arrive and leave. When they are finished with their hours make them a copy, file the original in case they loose theirs.

*See –17. Community Service
*See – 23. Appendix 4 - Forms – Files; G. Forms; Volunteer Record
*See – 23. Appendix 4 - Forms – Files; G. Forms; Community Service Record

Donations
See **<u>Donation Tracking</u>** above

Pick up & Delivery
When taking a request for a pick up or delivery, fill in all the information. The Confirmed, Left Message and Time, is for the use of the person doing the scheduling.

Hold/Sold Tags
When filling out a *hold tag* make sure the customer knows that the item is held only until the time specified on the tag, if they have not purchased it or called to make other arrangements, it will be for sale when the *hold tag* expires.

The *sold* tag should be filled out correctly and placed on the merchandise as soon as it is sold. It sounds strange, but we have customers who make a purchase and then forget and do not come back to pick up their item. With the phone number on the *sold tag* we are able to call and remind them, or we find out they no longer want it and we put it back out for sale.

For further discussion on Hold/Sold Tags see; *Floor Manager, Hold/Sold Tags,* p. 192 - 194

Pricing

Learning how to price comes from experience and knowledge gained. The goal is to have fair prices, not too high, not too low; a price consistent with the market. A good way to gain this knowledge is to visit local thrift stores and get a feel for their pricing, also notice what they may have an abundance of; it may be something you want to price low so the item does not stack up on you, computer monitors for example. You may find some items that do not sell at any price; an example for us is movie projector screens (we throw them away).

The same type of items will come through consistently, you will get a feel for a baseline price, use this baseline as you price nicer items higher and lesser quality items lower.

Fair pricing is important, you need to make sales to pay the bills, yet you do not want a reputation for pricing things too high. You are always willing to negotiate, and many customers will ask for a lower price if they feel you are too high, however, there is a large majority of customers who will just go elsewhere if they feel your overall pricing is too high (and they will tell their friends).

Miscellaneous

Give a standard price to the common recurring items – silverware, mugs, plates, glasses, linens, vases, baskets, etc.

This area is the most subjective because there are so many different items that will come through. Some questions to ask yourself as you determine the price of an item; a) what did it sell for when it was new? b) what is the condition? c) how common is it? d) what have we priced similar items for?

If you have an item that you are not sure of, it is a good idea to have several people confer and come up with a consensus on price.

Furniture

Remember you want to sell, but you also do not want to "leave money on the table". Price fairly but be willing to bargain.

Price Adjustment

Adjust your pricing according to the season and or the demand. There will be times when it seems like you can ask just about anything for a sofa and get it, and other times when you can not even give them away. Be attentive to these market changes and adjust prices accordingly.

e-bay Items

Be on the look out for items that might be worth more than average. A good way to check the value of an item is to look it up on e-bay. Look in the completed auction section to get an idea of what people paid for similar items. You cannot spend all day on the internet, but a few things can be set aside to check. If you have an item you found on e-bay, print out a copy of what it sold for and place that information with your item for sale. You might ask the same as what it sold for on e-bay, (they do not have to pay any shipping when purchased from you) or if you want to move it, a little less.

Example; Nancy Drew board game – e-bay $75.00, we sold in store for $50.00, a lot more than our standard $1.00 - $2.00, and about the same is if we had sold it on e-bay and had to pay someone a 30% commission.

If you have a volunteer that is familiar with e-bay, they can list some items for the store. If not, you may find someone who does e-bay full/part time who is willing to list items for you, they usually charge about 30% as a commission. The benefit of listing on e-bay is exposure to a wider market, the down side is; there are no guarantees, just because an item sold for a certain amount before does not mean yours will. If you list an item on e-bay, be sure to take it off the sales floor. Do not sell *everythin*g on e-bay; you will loose some of your customers who come in looking for those things.

Items to Discard

There are some items that come into the store that we cannot justify selling.

Anything to do with Halloween

> Costumes for dress up (cowboy, princes etc.) can be put out on a regular basis (not held back for Halloween).

Pokemon items
Harry Potter
Sun worship items

Allow God to guide in what should be thrown away, even if it is in good condition.

Inventory Control

To gauge how long something has been in the store you will need a very good memory or a tracking system. When you know how long something had been out for sale, you are able to decide when to mark it down or whether or not you are willing to accept an offer from a customer.

For clothes, see “Clothes Tagging”.

There are several ways to track how long something has been in the store.

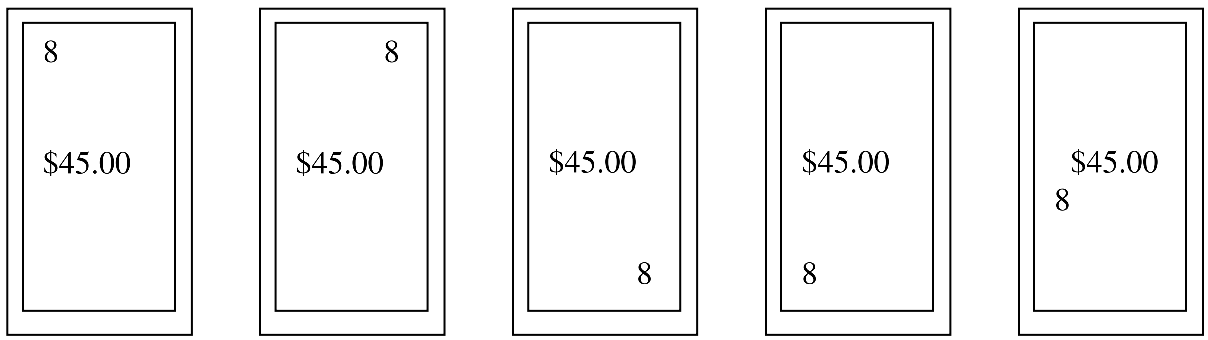
1. Write the date on the price tag
2. Use a code

Code

Here is an example of a code system.

Place a number for the corresponding month in one of five positions on the price tag. Starting with the upper left hand corner and going clock wise, each position represents a week in the month. If an item is priced in the second week of August, it would be marked in this way; the number eight is placed in the upper right hand corner. (Use the middle of the left side for the fifth week.)

When you look at the tag you are able to tell when the item was put out for sale. If you look at a tag marked in the above example in the third week of August, you know the item has only been out for one week, if you are looking at it in the third week of September, you know the item has been out for over a month.



First Week of August | Second Week of August | Third Week of August | Fourth Week of August | Fifth Week of August

Sales

There are several ways to conduct a sale; by specific departments, or the entire store. Just women's slacks or all clothes – just items on the miscellaneous shelves or all clothes and Miscellaneous – just stuffed toys or all toys, etc.

You do not want to have a store wide sale all the time, or leave a sale on for to long; after awhile it is no longer a sale. We have found that a 50% off sale lasting a week is very effective. If things are slow, a sale can be a great shot in the arm. You do not need a sale when things are moving and turning over rapidly. A sale is a nice way to thank your customers for their patronage, it is also good to have a sale when you are getting overstocked on an item. We have a storewide sale about 3 – 4 times per year, with specific item sales (women's slacks) more often.

When you plan a sale, be prepared with extra help; on the sales floor and at the register. We have found that a well timed sale can create a "buying frenzy". An interesting phenomenon is to watch the "buying frenzy" continue after the sale.

There may be a few select items you hold back till after the sale, but for the most part we continue to put items out during a sale. Be careful when putting out new items during a sale that you do not price them high knowing they are half off; customers get wise to this and it gives you a bad reputation.

During a sale restrict the use of hold tags to the close of that business day, or post signs that say 'No Holds During Sale.' Also be mindful when a sale is coming up and try to keep the items on hold before the sale to a minimum.

Post signs in all departments that are on sale – All Clothes 50% off – All Toys 50% off, etc. If we are having a large sale, (more than a couple of departments on sale) we hang a SALE sign out front. It is amazing though, that no matter how many signs you put out, there will be those who do not see them and are surprised when they check out and receive a discount on their purchase.

*See – Appendix 11 – Signs; Sale Signs

At the conclusion of a sale, go through the department that was on sale and do a major cleaning, throw away (or put out for free) things that have been there forever. Do not get rid of everything, you want to leave some things there to sell, however, it is a good time to discard/recycle items that are not selling. Cleaning the shelves also makes room for new things and gives a fresh look; people do not want to see the same items every time they come to shop.

Lower valued items that you get a lot of can pile up and it may look like you have a lot, however, it might just be parts and pieces. It is better to have a few nice solid items, then a stack of junk.

Periodically sort through and only keep the best of what you have and discard/recycle the rest.

Monitors – smaller, older, not as pretty

Walkers – without wheels, non-folding, missing parts, dirty

Potty Chairs – missing bucket, old, dirty

Picture Frames	Stuffed Animals	Golf Clubs	Ceiling Lights	Vases
Wood Items	Mugs			

Don't hold on to things – let them go. If it has been there for an extended period of time – reduce it, give it, or throw it.

Communication

You need a way to communicate between staff and with the cashier. When customers need assistance they can come to the register and ask for help, the cashier then calls for assistance.

1. Cordless Phone – The phone has an intercom feature to communicate between phones. The down side is a busy signal if one of the phones is in use.

2. Family Radio Service (FRS) Radios (similar to walkie-talkies) – Use FRS Radios when you need to be in contact with more than two people. A benefit is that everyone with a radio is aware of what is going on, and can give their input when a question is asked, the radios also free up the phone. Life becomes fun when the phone rings, someone calls on the radio and then your cell phone rings.

Remember when you talk on the radio that anyone within hearing distance can hear what you say. This is especially important when someone calls asking for a price, it would not be good for the customer to hear you say "We would take fifty, but try to get seventy-five." If you want to get more, go and discuss the matter face to face.

Reframe from negotiating with a customer over the radio. If the register person calls and says a customer is offering $15.00 for an item marked $25.00, you need to make a decision; if you are willing to accept their offer respond in the affirmative, but if you would really like to get $20.00, go and talk with the customer face to face, this is the best way, even if you end up taking their offer.

Departments

Refer to section "10 Departments" for information on how to operate each one. The operation of a specific department will depend on: store size, department size, number and time commitment of each volunteer.

Window Display

Depending on your store layout, a display in the front window can be a great asset. It should be changed on a regular basis, so make sure you have available help to keep it up to date.

Change the window display theme 6 to 12 times per year. Collect clothes and miscellaneous items throughout the year that go along with a particular window theme. How much you collect depends on how much storage space you have available.

The themed window displays are a great draw to the store. Customers will want to purchase items from your window display, we have found it is best to make everything available immediately. Remember, we are a Thrift Store, not a museum. The items can be priced slightly higher while they are in the window, if the customer is willing to pay the higher price then good for you and for them. It is a win for both!

Themes:
Western, 50's, Victorian, Bridal, Beach, Safari, Vintage, Retro, Autumn, and Back to School

Glitz & Glam (New Years):
Black, Gold, Sequined, Glitter, Shoes, Hats, Purses, & Clothes

Holiday:
Valentines, Easter, Mother's/Father's Day, 4th of July, St. Patrick's Day, Christmas

Tax Deductible Donations

You come under the 501 (c) (3) of the General Conference and therefore the donations given to you are tax deductible by the donor. When someone gives you a donation, offer them a receipt for tax deduction purposes. To take the deduction a person must itemize on Schedule A.

*See – 23. Appendix 4 - Forms – Files; Customer Tax Receipt

The following are some excerpts from IRS publications that will give you some knowledge as you deal with customers and their questions regarding tax deductions. You are not an authority and they should check with their accountant for more information.

> "**Deductions of Less Than $250**
> If you make any non-cash contribution, you must get and keep a receipt from the charitable organization showing:
> 1. The name of the charitable organization,
> 2. The date and location of the charitable contribution, and
> 3. A reasonably detailed description of the property." IRS Publication 526

Further information on tax deductible items: http://www.irs.gov/publications/p526/ar01.html

Fair Market Value:
Quotes from IRS Publication 561 p.4.

> "The FMV (fair market value) of used household goods, such as furniture, appliances, and linens, is usually much lower than the price paid when new. Such used property may have little or no market value because of its worn condition. It may be out of style or no longer useful.
>
> You cannot take a deduction for household goods donated after August 17, 2006 unless they are in good used condition or better."
>
> "Used clothing and other personal items are usually worth far less than the price you paid for them. Valuation of items of clothing does not lend itself to fixed formulas or methods.
>
> The price that buyers of used items actually pay in used clothing stores, such as consignment or thrift shops, is an indication of the value.
>
> You cannot take a deduction for clothing donated after August 17, 2006 unless it is in good used condition or better." IRS Publication 561 p.4

How to value donated items, IRS Publication 561 - http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p561.pdf

A few customers will ask you to put your Tax Identification Number on the tax receipt you give them in acknowledgment of their donation. It is fine to give them your tax number, but just so you know, according to IRS Publication 1771, you are not required to have it on your receipts.

For more information see IRS Publication 1771, p. 3 - http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1771.pdf

Vehicle Donation:
Generally a person can only deduct the amount you sell their vehicle for. An exception that may allow them to deduct the vehicle's fair market value, would be if you "give or sell the vehicle to a needy individual at a price significantly below fair market value and that the gift or sale is in direct furtherance of the charity's charitable purpose of relieving the poor and distressed or the underprivileged who are in need of a means of transportation." IRS Publication 4303

For information regarding vehicle donation, see IRS Publication 4303
http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4303.pdf