

Connect with the legend ... through the Boeing Store

By Carrie Howard

Boeing employees love their work so much they would take it home with them—if only they could fit a jet fighter, helicopter or commercial aircraft in the garage.

That's where the Boeing Store can help. "It's impossible for people who build products that cost tens of millions of dollars each to take home a piece of their work," said Jim Newcomb, director of Brand Management and Promotion. "But they can own a desktop model or a logo T-shirt, and those little things mean a lot.

"Employees and retirees are proud of the things they've done at Boeing, and we at the Boeing Store are working to create a venue where they can express that pride."

Boeing sites operated ad hoc gift stores for years, selling everything from T-shirts to aspirin to appliances. In the late 1990s, the stores were centralized under Boeing Stores Inc., a subsidiary that reports to Brand Management and Advertising. The objective was to create a self-sustaining, break-even business that would protect company trademarks, promote the Boeing brand, and offer reasonably priced merchandise to employees, Boeing fans and aerospace enthusiasts around the world.

"Our association with Brand Management gives us immediate access to brand expertise and design approvals for store merchandise as well as special-order items," said Mike Wasch, senior manager of Boeing Stores. "That ensures that we are always closely aligned with the company's brand strategy and promotional efforts."

Employees can use Pride@Boeing and service award points to make purchases at the stores; special sales and discounts are offered frequently throughout the year. Some stores are open extended hours to serve second- and third-shift employees, and BoeingStore.com is available around the clock for online shopping. A traveling store makes more than 400 visits to 43 Boeing or supplier/partner sites every year. Boeing Stores also is a Shared Services preferred provider for custom merchandise orders and works with authorized resellers to offer Boeing merchandise at museums, flight shops and airports in targeted locations around the world.

While retail sales declined across the country during the first quarter of the year, Boeing Store sales remained strong. Customer



"The Boeing Store gives people a concrete way to express their affection for the company and its products."

— Jim Newcomb, director of Brand Management and Promotion

PHOTO: In addition to offering Boeing-themed merchandise, the Boeing Store protects company trademarks and promotes the Boeing brand. BOB FERGUSON/BOEING



service is an important component of the stores' success and the brand experience. Kelly Yamamoto, sales and marketing manager, said: "We get complimentary letters about our customer service all the time. Even in this poor economy, we got more letters in the first quarter of this year than we did all last year. It's amazing how many people take the time to write us." Customers laud the sales staff's efforts to find exactly the right gift, locate and deliver an item in a certain size or color, and even answer questions about the company and its products.

"You have to search for a salesperson in the big department stores now," Yamamoto said. "But when people come into our stores, I can guarantee they'll be well taken care of."

PHOTOS: (ABOVE) Customer service is a top priority for Boeing Store sales staff, who help customers find the right gift as well as answer questions about the company and its products. BOB FERGUSON/BOEING

Boeing Store managers and staff are not just employees of the stores—they're also customers. "My older brother is a tech guy," Newcomb said. "So whenever I'm struggling with a gift idea for him, I know I can send him something from the Boeing Store and he will always love it. A friend of his saw an airplane model I gave him and liked it, so we sent the friend a snap-together model, and it's sitting on his desk at work now. Little gestures like that bring people closer to Boeing.

"Everyone enjoys being connected to a legend. The Boeing Store gives people a concrete way to express their affection for the company and its products," Newcomb said. "It's not just about sticking a logo on a T-shirt. It's about pride and personal ownership of what the Boeing brand means." ■

(BELOW) The Boeing Store recently introduced the Boeing Heritage Collection, celebrating the company's rich legacy in aerospace with designs that display heritage company logos and historic aircraft. JIM COLEY/BOEING

Boeing Store at a glance

Retail locations: 14, plus a traveling store
Web site: www.boeingstore.com
Product selection: More than 1,000 different items

Aircraft models sold (2008): 41,220
T-shirts sold (2008): 90,710
Pens sold (2008): 125,840

