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GIVING RETAILERS AND DEVELOPERS THE GREEN LIGHT

Consultant firm Jeff Green Partners finds feasibility before its clients find success.

By Anastasia Parsons



Jeff Green Partners has been working with Lucy, a women's activewear retail chain, on its nationwide rollout strategy, counseling the company on which markets to consider for entry and forecasting sales for all new sites. This store, located in Brea, California, opened earlier this year.

Jeffrey Green's new business venture is unconventional. Sure, Jeff Green Partners is built upon the 22 years of retail real estate experience compiled by its founder and president, and the firm is in the process of consulting such big-name clients as L.L.Bean, but what makes Green's concept truly unique is that to get the job done, all he needs is a phone, a computer, an airport and a few trusted contracted employees.

Before establishing Jeff Green Partners 2 years ago in Mill Valley, California, Green's industry resume was well documented. As president and owner of The Green Group, he provided consulting services to retail, restaurant and entertainment clients until the organization merged with, and became known as, Market Insite Group in 2001. Green then served as president of the Mill Valley, CA-based firm for approximately 2 years following the merger. After awhile, Green states that he missed "kicking the dirt," and witnessing the changes in the retail industry first-hand. He wanted to work with smaller retailers and shopping center owners and developers, groups he felt he was less likely to take on as head of a large company. "It's more rewarding to see a chain grow before your eyes," says Green. "I'm working with them in their infancy and being less of a researcher and more of a strategist, which this venture has allowed me to do."

The basic definition for the Jeff Green Partners con-

cept is a national and international consultative service that explores all phases of shopping center, retail, hotel and housing feasibility, redevelopment, retail expansion planning, statistical modeling/demographic, lifestyle studies/database development, and long-term viability. Green, with the help of his staff, composed entirely of contracted employees situated in different geographic regions across the United States and Canada, works both as a sole consultant for a client and as an alternative expert for in-house research departments. He does so with resources similar to that of a corporate enterprise, but grounded in the philosophy of a boutique firm.

Each of Green's staff members—all top professionals in their particular real estate specialty and all individuals he's worked with on past projects—work on a contractual basis when assisting a client. A majority of project communication is done "virtually" through the Internet and via the telephone, and Green states that the realization that his business could run effectively this way was an "eye-opener." Green stresses that his venture speaks to the fact that there are truly 24 hours in a day, and that how one works can be their decision, as long as the project gets done.

"I think [the Jeff Green Partners] concept makes the quality of everyone's life better, and it does not hurt the end product or the quality of the research," says Green. "What it does allow me to do

is be out on the road more and more, to be attuned to the market formats and that's really what I love to do."

It is the research that Green states is one of the more unique techniques employed by his firm. Jeff Green Partners marries demographic and psychographic data to gain a more insightful picture of the difference in life stage and lifestyle around a specific site, as well as how the population spends.

"Demographics are one of those things we used for years, but it's only telling half the story," says Green. To determine if a client will find the type of property with the amount of customer traffic it's looking for in a particular market, Green takes the U.S. Census Bureau data for the area and refines it by running it through his own retail expenditure potential models. When profiling a new development, Jeff Green Partners expands on the numbers by including residential trade areas, the work force in and around a retail district; population thresholds, required cotenancy support, and sales volume numbers whether actual or estimated. For clients planning multiple store in a market, Green and his staff help prioritize expansion projects by analyzing the retailers' shoppers. The retailer customer data is applied to Green's lifestyle model, and markets with matching residential clusters are consid-

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Green

ered as new location sites.

Green has assisted clients such as Estee Lauder, L.L. Bean, Lucy—a retailer for women's active wear—finding successful new locations by using such methods. More specifically, he serves on the real estate committee for L.L.Bean and Lucy, helping both to strategize their retail growth potential. West Coast chain Lucy has gone from 13 to 30 stores with the guidance of Jeff Green Partners, and plans to continue the expansion with an additional 20 in the next year.

Shopping center owners and managers require a slightly different approach from Green. He states that it's first understanding what is and isn't working within a center, and then pairing that information with site and market characteristics and

area retail voids. "It's more about understanding the voids in the marketplace," says Green. "You have to learn how to best compliment what's there and not necessarily compete against it."

As for retail real estate trends on the horizon, Green points to the increasing presence of lifestyle centers. "I think lifestyle centers have been successful for the most part because they've [the developers] taken a destination and made it convenient, meaning they locate on top of their retailers' target customer," says Green.

The firm has consulted with developers and retailers looking to launch and populate these centers for this reason, and Green has helped each determine how much space is supportable, how much square footage should

be devoted per category, which tenants will contribute successfully to the property and what retailers could be potential prospects. He's worked with Cousins Properties in Atlanta to make such decisions on projects like Avenue East Cobb; and helped troubleshoot on slightly more challenging properties, including Westcor's Chandler Fashion Center in Chandler, Arizona, and La Encantada in Tucson. The Chandler property needed to accommodate what the population and market were going to become, for the surrounding retail and residential districts hadn't expanded to the area yet. Green helped profile the market's potential for retail traffic. For the La Encantada project, Green was brought in to define and quantify the four distinct consumer segments that would frequent the center—year-round residents, part-time residents, tourists and Mexican nationals who cross the border to shop—and bring all those data points together.

In looking to the future of his own business, Green states that he's quite happy with the progress of Jeff Green Partners. He's content to keep his staff contractual, his focus on the client and his office virtual. "My motto in life is that I want to learn to do one thing well, and that is help retailers and shopping center owners build the correct format in the correct place."■
