Owner Open Forum on Access Discounts
8.6.2020
Present: Melinda (GM), Alice Ma, Cheyne Mayer, Kathy Wood, Bob Hoffman, Cynthia & Peter Mika, Greg Meyer, Mary Paxson, Pamela Lee, Kristy Wood, Connie Brumm & Tom Newhof, Bill Beck, Cathy Porter, Olivia Craine, Christina Baldwin, Priscilla Schmidt, Chloe Rambo (Board Admin)

Customer Ideas and Feedback Received Via Email (to Board Admin) Prior to the Forum:
**Feedback has been copied word for word and has not been edited for grammar.*

Email #1:
Hello,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to give an opinion on this important matter. I would really like to see the Flower program remain in place. This has allowed my daughter to access healthy foods on numerous times and I feel that the disabled are a group that really gets left out in many ways but the coop has been great in providing something that really helps. The senior discount is nice too but there are numerous senior discounts around town and at eating establishments. Perhaps there are seniors that also qualify for the Flower discount? I think that if anything needs to be dropped, it should be Wellness Wednesday and Student Friday.

Thank you!

Email #2:
A friend forwarded your recent notice to members. I don't know why I didn't get one, either my membership is due for renewal (I haven't been to town for about a month) or you don't have my current email address.

I won't be able to make the zoom meeting, and since I didn't get the recent email I am concerned that I might not get the survey either, so I am writing now.

As a member and customer for many years, I am appalled that in hard times you still give the staff raises. No business does that and stays in business. You need to reconsider who keeps you in business - the customers, or the staff? And consider whether the staff prefers a raise, or job security. While it is nice of you to treat the staff so well, it also irks me to know that that I, as a customer, am the one paying for it. As a low-income senior, I can't afford to keep doing that.

If you drop the senior discount I will have to reconsider my shopping habits. I'm sure much of what I have been buying at the Coop can be found online, I'll just need to plan ahead better. If

you keep the senior discount, I'll be back, as soon as I can shop there without a damn mask. (I'm currently boycotting Moscow because of the mask rule.) Thank you for reading my email.

Email #3:

Get rid of Wellness Wednesday and student discount. Keep Flower until the very end.

If you are still doing Rooted, print or online, drop this. Rooted has always been a luxury, not a necessity.

Finally, run Produce more profitably. Stop the emphasis on "perfection." This is one reason why I quit. Being a person who hates waste, i couldn't stand the "extreme culling". Yes, those nearly perfect culls went to animals whose owners always went through the boxes to get the good stuff out first. Or they went to employees (but few cook). For as long as I can remember there was 30%-off produce until Logan. Scott had it. Mike had it, partly because he is old-school and partly because I was working in Produce a lot and I (old-school) was the one who did it, that is, went to the little bit of effort to wash and put in a purple plastic bag with a sticker.

Last week I picked up a box of culls that had many pounds of perfect carrots in it (some broken, most whole). I gave a lot away and cooked and pureed 4 quarts to use for soup base. Whoever was working just didn't want to fool with washing and culling what was left at the bottom of the basket and putting those on top of a new bag of carrots, which is the proper procedure.

An easy way (no labor) is to put all the 30% culls (washed, which takes off some "cullable defects") in the same basket and let people pick them out and tell the cashier these are from the 30% basket. Use the honor system instead of putting 30% off into plastic net bags.

So you have a 2-layer cull system: first sold anyway at a deep discount which makes customers happy and second into the cull box for animals.

Meeting Overview:

**Meeting started at 5:02 p.m.*

Melinda shared background information from the July FYI on financial planning, including preparation for estimated percentages of sales decline during an oncoming recession.

Melinda shared that the decision to "cut" any discount programs would not be a blanket decision, and all input was welcome. Melinda also asked everyone on the call if they thought we had any "room" to make adjustments, or if discount programs should continue exactly how they are.

Customer Ideas and Feedback During the Forum:

- The FLOWER Discount is the one we shouldn't reduce, but we could consider running other discounts every other week (like Senior Discount and Student Discount), or even once a month. Or consider getting rid of Wellness Wednesday, because you wouldn't be discriminating against seniors or students.
- The information gathered from people on their income (to shift owners and people currently getting the Senior Discount into FLOWER) would have to be voluntary. Even if the Senior Discount does not increase sales overall, how would you frame the decision to do away with it when other people and businesses are struggling like the Co-op is?
- Better to decrease personnel rather than get rid of any discount - especially Senior Discount.
- Wondering if there is a way to ask for more information on why sales and/or number of shoppers is down (safety, they're not leaving home, economic issue)? Could we ask this on the Survey? Consider increasing the membership fee? Ask customers to "pay forward" their equity payment? Consider putting these questions on the survey to find out if customers/owners are interested in this solution.
- Consider increasing the equity payment or asking for early delivery of equity payment. Asking people who can afford to skip the discount to not utilize it.
- There was much agreement in letting people choose whether or not to use the discount and give owners the option to forgo it, especially if folks know the store is in a precarious financial decision.

Next steps:

- Discussion with the Board RE: volunteer discount

Other ideas:

- Membership drive (Owner's Month?)
- Ask for early payment of equity payment
- Increase cost of equity payment
- Asking customers if they "need" their discount (suggesting they skip it)
- Consider raising the age of the access to Senior discount to 65 (and grandfathering current discount users in?)

- Option to donate their discount to a fund or back to the store (ie not use it)