

The best mall managers

Who makes the ideal mall manager? The first generation of mall managers were owners. Now that malls in India are moving on to the next level, here is the required skill-set.

After the first few giddy months of its inauguration, a mall is only as good as its managers. Owners go a long way to ensure that the mall is peopled by the right candidates – one who is as well-versed in hospitality, as in crisis management; one who is alert to changing demographics and to the opportunities that come from being a part of a community.

A good mall manager starts from scratch – taking care of the issues such as positioning, retail mix, infrastructure facilities, desired environment and finance management. He can work as a perfect link between builders and retailers.

India has come very far in a short span of time when it comes to mall management. Successful malls in India, started by real estate developers and retail chains have their own mall management divisions or have contracts with international consultants. Revenue sharing is a relatively new concept as well and affects mall management. The next step in market development is establishment of independent service lines for mall management. There are very few mall management companies in India at present and third party management is virtually unheard of.

An expert managing a mall can spell the difference between a retail centre and a mall which is a brand in itself.

Facilities management is the first part of mall management. A mall manager keeps in mind people, places, process and technology in the shopping centre to provide an optimal experience. Infrastructure, ambience and traffic management all come within his purview. The Great India place provided repairing facility to the retailers within the mall. Mall management includes keeping both, safety and comfort, in mind. Infrastructure management includes risk management issues such as essential safety measure, asset liability and environmental audits as well as emergency and evacuation training.

On the other end of the spectrum comes **ambience management**. A good manager will ensure that the mall is not just a place to shop but a place where people spend their leisure time.

Traffic management includes managing foot traffic into the mall and parking facilities. A good manager will ensure that areas in front of one store are not crowded compared to others. Removing bottlenecks from the system can be an ongoing job.

Finance Management means monitoring and controlling cash receipts and collection of income, including rentals, service charges, car park receipts. It covers electricity and other utility

income; developing accounting systems to track ageing of debts, payment delay patterns, bad debts and payment of all invoices and expenses; developing standard financial templates so that a detailed annual property budget is prepared.