

Our Coop Store Initiative

Challenge

Maintaining our traditionally high occupancy rates has been a challenge in recent years due to the economic climate in some of our key markets. In particular, small and medium size businesses have faced significant challenges, squeezed by low levels of consumer spending and reduced access to affordable finance. In this context it is all the more important that we support smaller retailers and offer a diverse and stimulating range of shops and products to entice visitors into our shopping centres.

Solution

To address this, in 2013 we launched our 'Coop Store' initiative to foster entrepreneurship and encourage the emergence of new brands and concepts in our shopping centres. Coop Stores was built on our successful 'Flash Store' concept to take advantage of unoccupied space within our shopping centres and give local businesses an opportunity to reach a wider customer base. Vacant shops are leased to a collective of small businesses and entrepreneurs on a flexible and affordable short term basis for up to six months. By teaming up with like-minded business partners who share an enthusiasm for high quality, locally produced, specialised products, potential tenants can share the associated costs and from opening a new store while significantly expanding their reach. Successful tenants are selected according to a number of criteria including their proximity to each shopping centre, the strength of their business model, their ability to broaden our product offer and the potential to scale up their business if it proves successful.

Results

The first Coop Store opened at LoureShopping in the 4th quarter of 2013. By the end of 2013, the initiative had attracted a broad range of positive publicity with over 20 mentions in local and national media reaching more than 2.3 million people, and was named "Product of The Month" by Marketeer magazine. We plan to rollout Coop Stores across our other markets in 2014.