

Tokyu Hands

A New Approach to Department Store Purchasing

Imagine a department store dedicated to the idea of making things with your hands and staffed with people knowledgeable in almost every conceivable field of craftsmanship from woodworking to bicycle maintenance. Tokyo has such a store, it is called Tokyu Hands and it will either spark your desire to make something or leave you overwhelmed by the variety of tools and materials at your disposal. What makes the store so uniquely appealing are completely novel approaches to hiring personnel and purchasing stock.

A quick trip to Hands to pick up some mounting board for photographs can easily turn into a two hour browse after you get sidetracked in the kitchenware section on your way to pick up the extra spokes for your bicycle you suddenly remembered you needed. Why the peculiar fascination? Hands really does have almost everything you might want for things you do with your hands. It has it all under one roof and the store's staff can give intelligent answers to questions about the products they are selling and solutions to problems. This rare combination is a result of the original Hands concept.

The guiding philosophy of Hands holds that with the advance of civilization, people have gradually lost the pleasures of working with their hands. They must be given back the tools and materials they need to make things on their own and 'regaining the hands' is the lofty guiding principle of the Tokyu Land Corporation, the owners of Hands.

Regaining the Hands

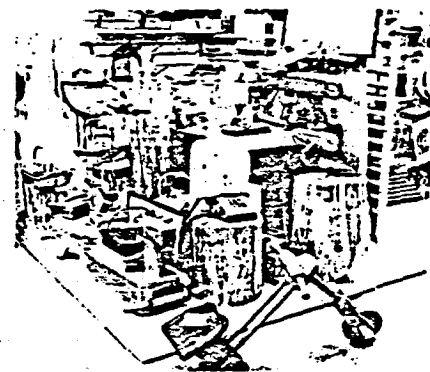
They came up with the idea for a craft department store in 1972 when the company was looking for something new to do with some land they possessed in the Shibuya area of Tokyo. After discarding thoughts of building a conventional shopping center or hotel, they began to toy around with the idea of a completely new kind of 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) shop. Before plunging ahead, they opened stores for DIY and a variety of other products in the Tokyo suburbs of Fujisawa in 1976 and Futagotamagawa in 1977. Confident of success, they opened the Shibuya store in 1978 with five product lines: DIY, home improvement, craft, hobby and 'variety' — a kind of a catch-all section for interesting products of notable design. The company believed that there was a society-wide trend away from simple home improvement towards a desire for the rediscovery of the pleasure and goodness of making things with your hands.

What makes Hands different is their staff. By hiring people with an interest in the area that they are working, Hands creates sales staff that are keenly interested in providing answers to customer questions or as they say at the store, 'spending 30 minutes explaining a 50 yen item'. Customers appreciate the attention but the Hands difference doesn't stop there.

Hands Will Have It

Hands is so well-stocked that most of its loyal customers feel that if they need something for a particular job, even if it's an unusual item and not very profitable for a store to carry, Hands will have it. A thorough and efficient purchasing department? Just the opposite - Hands doesn't even have a purchasing department.

The store's sales staff are responsible for selecting stock, ordering, keeping track of inventory and setting up displays. As a result, the abilities and



Unique products provide key to success