

CHRISTMAS TREE RETAILERS **HOW-TO-MANUAL**

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INTRODUCTION

This Christmas Tree Retailer's How-To Manual is designed to give "first timers" and "old timers" alike ideas, directions and what-to-dos, as well as generate the flow of enthusiastic juices. It is in outline form to be as brief as possible. There are several other more in-depth publications (listed in Appendix F, Further Reading) on retailing that are most worthwhile perusing. These suggestions and pages may be quickly referred to and used as a list of "To Do" each year. You can personalize the outline to suit your own needs.

It is the desire of the Pacific Northwest Christmas Tree Association to assist you in presenting the best product to your potential customer in the most professional manner with a sincere, Christmas spirit.

Good Planning makes for Good Luck!

Many thanks and my deep gratitude to the following PNWCTA Retailer Committee members for their time and suggestions toward getting this project to completion:

Betty Malone, Chair
Paul Battaglia
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It takes a lot to stay awake during the lengthy hours of proof reading, straightening out thoughts and "Now, what have I forgotten?" The shared "war stories" of Christmas tree saleslot entrepreneurship put the frosting on the cake, or should I say, the flocking on the bough.

Special thanks go to my husband, Harry, for his contributions and encouragement all along the way.

Rosemary R. Hurdle, member
PNWCTA Retailer Committee

SECTION 1

General Market Survey

An *on-site*, careful survey of the prospective market will prove to be well worth the time, effort and expense. This is the first step in the necessary business plan for a successful retail Christmas tree saleslot operation.

- I. Investigate potential sites a year prior to sales**
 - A. preferably start during summer or early fall
 - B. carefully during Christmas retail saleslot season
- II. Lot location - note advantages and disadvantages**
 - A. local - run from home base
 - B. away - set up headquarters away from home
- III. Locate current retail outlets**
 - A. permanent lots, ie; chain stores, food stores, nurseries
 - B. seemingly temporary, ie; seasonal saleslots, equipment rental yards
 - C. note the following about traffic patterns
 1. amount of traffic going by
 2. speed of traffic
 3. type of traffic
 - a. bound for work, airport, etc. (won't be willing to stop)
 - b. on the way to shopping (in the mood, ready and able to buy)
- IV. What is the current demand at each potential lot for:**
 - A. tree specie
 - B. tree quality
 - C. tree sizes
 1. consider house size and height of ceilings in average home of market area
 - D. price range
 1. estimate income level of customers in market area
 2. determine how many other tree saleslots in area
 3. determine current prices at other saleslots in area
 4. calculate your overall expenses getting trees to market
 - E. flocked trees

V. What related items are selling

A. wreaths, boughs, holly, fresh garland, etc.

B. stands

1. wooden, with or without water reservoir

2. water stands

C. tree decorations

1. lights

2. ornaments

3. tree skirts

4. tinsel and garland

5. stockings

D. flame retardant

1. may be required for trees in public buildings

2. may need permit/license to apply chemical

E. tree preservative

F. flocking

VI. Be aware of market fluctuations

A. in many locations the market may alternate from good to bad seasons every two to three years

B. attempt to determine pattern in your potential markets

VII. Sources of market information

A. local Chamber of Commerce

B. zoning commission

C. city streets commission or county roads division

D. local street map (usually available at Chamber of Commerce)

E. local gas station operator/owner

F. city/county planning commission

G. yellow pages under "city of" and "county of"

SECTION 2

Saleslot Location and Acquisition

Now that the general market area has been carefully investigated, the tasks of selecting and securing a specific location are begun.

- I. Check local legal restrictions / requirements / codes**
 - A. state and city licenses**
 - 1. time requirements to obtain licenses (may take days, weeks, or months)
 - B. fire code**
 - 1. fire retardant treatment requirements
 - 2. water hoses, fire extinguishers, etc.
 - C. site conditions**
 - 1. covered, ie. blacktopped, etc.
 - 2. properly zoned
 - 3. sanitary facilities
 - 4. traffic department requirements such as set back
 - D. existing signs**
 - 1. do they obstruct clear view of prospective saleslot location?
 - 2. are they very distracting?
 - E. saleslot signs**
 - 1. size restrictions
 - 2. placement to avoid driving hazards
 - F. agricultural preparations**
 - 1. insecticide/fungicide pretreatment requirements
 - a. pine shoot moth, brown snail, gypsy moth certification, etc.
- II. Desirability**
 - A. do desired customers live close enough to patronize this location?**
 - B. easily accessible for customers**
 - C. adequate parking space on lot**
 - D. check street traffic pattern for:**
 - 1. direction of flow i.e. home or into city
 - 2. main thoroughfare
 - 3. left turn lane for ease of entry into lot by oncoming traffic

E. corner or mid-block

F. neighborhood

1. commercial, e.g. shopping mall, grocery store

2. residential

G. is site easily seen, i.e. no obstructions on either side?

H. check future availability of lot to determine possibility of becoming established and build a year-after-year clientele

III. Size

A. square footage - adequate for:

1. tree display

2. tree storage

3. customer parking

4. security

5. amount of frontage on main thoroughfare

IV. Appointments (physical plant)

A. water

B. access to electricity

C. graveled or blacktopped, etc.

D. wide driveways

E. night lights (street lights, etc.)

V. Locating saleslot

A. begin process during time of market survey, spotting 10 or 12 desirable/possible sites year ahead (then two may actually be available) - considering sites of current saleslots

B. contact commercial real estate agencies

C. personal scouting for lot location

D. possible locations:

1. empty lot (if for sale, may be rented on short term)

2. currently unused facility such as a gas station

3. space in shopping mall

4. store parking lot

5. local zoning/codes

6. already established lot location - may need new retailer

VI. Rent

A. price - what are rents on comparable saleslots

B. length of time, e.g.: 1 month, 6 weeks, etc.

C. when to tie up lot, e.g. Jan.?, Feb.?, Sept.?, Oct.?, one year ahead?

1. may want to pursue several locations in case most desired property becomes unavailable or if owner of most desired location is unwilling to tie up lot far enough in advance to assure location

D. conditions of rental - agreements typically include details about:

1. ability to fence
2. operator live on or night security guard facility
3. additional surface treatment needed such as sawdust, etc.
4. owner imposed restrictions
5. liability protection for lot owner as well as lot renter
6. local zoning/codes, who is responsible for permits and licenses
7. availability of water and electricity
8. cleanup at end of season

E. basic sample rental agreements at stationery store

VII. Keep records from year to year

A. will be useful as a refresher for next year. Hindsight is usually fraught with wisdom

1. expenses: motel, food, gas
2. persons contacted including public officials and employees
 - a. addresses and phone
 - b. map of prospective saleslot
 - c. dates

B. see Appendix E - Record Keeping

SECTION 3

Funding

"How much money can you afford to invest/lose?"

Many businesses are begun on the proverbial shoestring and are immensely successful, but we all know the shoestring is broken easily if it is not strong enough at the beginning. It is very important to calculate the amount of working capital necessary to get this venture off the ground.

- I. Cost of presales year investigation**
- II. Inventory**
 - A. trees
 - B. tree stands
 - C. tree display equipment
 - 1. lights
 - 2. fencing
 - 3. small tools - see page 19, #III
 - 4. supplies - see page 19, #III
- III. Tree freight to saleslot**
- IV. Labor**
 - A. check for local hourly labor rates
 - B. estimate number of hours of labor needed
 - 1. social security tax per hour
 - 2. workman's comp per hour
 - C. availability of labor
- V. Saleslot expenses**
 - A. lot rent
 - B. insurance (liability, etc.) including owners, renters and landlords
 - C. fence rental and additional security if needed
 - D. tent(s) for display, tree storage, flocking, etc.
 - E. sanitary facilities
 - F. temporary electric power hook-up and power or on-site generator
 - G. water hook-up and water

H. local business licenses, fees and permits

I. sales tax permits and prepayment

J. signs

K. advertising and promotions

L. disposal of leftovers

M. lot cleanup

N. telephone

VI. Personal expenses

A. gas

B. food

C. lodging

SECTION 4

Stock Acquisition

While this section is specifically directed to the person who does not grow his/her own trees, the grower/saleslot operator *must* consider many of the same details.

I. Buying directly from grower

A. know the grower

1. reliability (lives up to terms of contract)
2. references

B. know the stock - personally cruise the fields if possible to check for:

1. disease
2. insects
3. too much grass or weed competition
4. tree quality

C. tree selection

1. order early to obtain desired stock
2. tag your own trees
3. grower tagged
 - a. understand system used
 - (1) size
 - (2) grade
 - (3) USDA Standards
 - (4) other

4. field run, entire field - no tagging

D. agricultural practices used

1. regular disease and insect control (verifiable/certifiable?)
2. necessary certification by required authorities for disease/insect free condition

E. growing location

1. conducive to good production of desired trees
2. does grower have equipment and know-how to get trees from field to shipping yard

F. shipping location

1. clean for processing and storing trees
2. enough room to accommodate semi-truck, truck and trailer
3. hard surface to accommodate heavy equipment

G. transportation of trees

1. type of transport

- a. truck: closed van, flatbed, refrigerated van, etc.
- b. railroad car or container
- c. boat container (overseas shipment)

2. type of transport will be determined by:

- a. distance of saleslot from fields
- b. anticipated weather during transport

3. insurance

- a. cargo
- b. liability
- c. workman's comp insurance
 - (1) for loading crew if not covered by grower (ask for policy number)
 - (2) for truck drivers if not covered by trucking company
 - (3) for unloading crew

4. hiring transportation

- a. whose responsibility
- b. when (how soon before loading)
- c. payment (cash or check due when)
- d. documented provisions of transportation responsibilities
 - (1) grower responsibilities
 - (a) deliver load on time
 - (b) leeway allowed, if any
 - (2) driver's responsibilities
 - (a) count and sign for number of trees loaded
 - (b) oversee proper distribution of load on truck
 - (c) request reload if necessary
 - (d) other, such as series of phone calls to allow buyer to track progress

II. Buying from tree broker/wholesaler

A. know the broker

1. references

a. reliability (lives up to terms of contract)

(1) the right trees on time

(2) how does broker handle complaints?

B. pick up at broker's yard

1. smaller quantities: higher price/lower risk

2. greater availability of

a. specie

b. sizes

c. quantity

3. potentially fresher trees

4. the convenience of no storage on your saleslot

C. trees transported to your lot

1. broker may have better access to trucking

2. rely on broker's experience to find the right trees

3. multiple deliveries of variable quantities

III. Sales contract - see Appendix A for PNWCTA sample contract

A. conditions of sale

1. trees

a. species

b. grade/quality

c. size

d. quantity

e. to be baled, drilled for stands, butt-tagged for size, etc.

(1) extra cost

(2) included in base price

f. price

g. payment

(1) total amount prior to harvest

(2) deposit and balance due

(3) dates to be paid

(4) payment form, i.e. cashier's check, cash, personal check

2. determine who tags trees

3. sample of ownership tag or identifying flagging if grower is selling to more than one buyer
4. state when trees are to be tagged
5. approximate date trees are to be cut (not before)
6. responsibility (\$ and bodies) for harvest and loading crews
7. loading date
8. loading location
9. location of litigation if it should prove necessary
10. bill of lading to include necessary state department of agriculture inspection certificates for pine shoot moth, brown snail, gypsy moth, as well as insecticide/fungicide pretreatment, etc.
 - a. may be required by:
 - (1) state in which trees are grown
 - (2) state to which trees are being shipped
 - (3) any state crossed en route to final destination

SECTION 5

Personal Attitudes / Skills Merchandising Techniques

Wise, indeed, is the Christmas tree saleslot operator who looks in the mirror and evaluates personal attitudes, selling skills and presentation. Some of us are customer/manager oriented. Others of us are best at managing only and will drive customers away with the anxious or insecure countenance.

I. Saleslot operator - attitudes

A. *willing and able to work cheerfully* 16 or more hours a day during the season in all kinds of weather and customer attitudes without a day off

B. positive and confident (bound to succeed)

C. appreciates the customer

D. holiday spirit

E. friendly

F. ability to handle people

1. customers

2. associates

3. employees

G. project the desired image to the customer

1. honesty (value for value received)

2. observation of the Christmas traditions

H. personal appearance

1. clean and neat

2. appropriate dress (not over dressed nor too ragged)

3. no use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco during open hours

II. Sales personnel

A. all of the above

B. plus honesty (can be trusted not to rob the owner)

III. Saleslot operator - merchandising techniques and skills

- A. creativeness (something unique), i.e. to create desire in prospective customer to stop at saleslot - "The customer who drives on by because you haven't given him the incentive to stop, is someone else's customer whose dollars could have been in your pocket." "What message can be sent to a potential buyer driving 35 MPH?"
 - 1. colorful tent
 - 2. saleslot layout - see Appendix B for saleslot layout samples
 - 3. signs
 - a. business name
 - b. motto
 - c. logo, etc.
 - 4. uniforms, or distinctive clothing
 - 5. decorations
 - 6. ease of recognition by customer from year to year
 - 7. desire of customer to return year after year because of:
 - a. quality of trees and other products
 - b. service at saleslot
 - c. saleslot personnel attitude
 - d. neat and tidy saleslot
 - e. greet customer by name
- B. build credibility with local business community, i.e. project image of a legitimate business operator not "fly-by-night"
 - 1. prominent display of membership in professional organization, e.g. PNWCTA or other tree association
 - 2. Chamber of Commerce
 - 3. police department
 - 4. fire department
 - 5. radio and TV stations
 - 6. newspapers
 - 7. city management
 - 8. churches
 - 9. schools
 - 10. local charitable organizations

SECTION 6

Advertising

How will the entire community or potential customer area know that you are *the place* to buy the items for customers' observance of the Christmas tradition?

I. Off saleslot advertising

A. what to include in ad information: The five "W"s and "H"

1. who: significant identification piece
 - a. company name and logo
 - b. "living tree motto", etc.
2. what: tree species and related items in inventory
3. where: saleslot location
4. when: dates and hours open
5. why: "promotional specials"
6. how: to purchase with coupon: bring family

B. where (research sales locality to ascertain which format is most used by consumers you want to reach)

1. shopper
2. newspaper: which sections
3. TV
4. flyers: in store windows, on cars in parking lots
5. radio
6. commercial mailer
7. your mailer

C. when

1. date to begin ad
2. frequency (how many times to run ad, etc.)
3. time of day ad is run

D. how much information in relation to size of ad

E. advertising budget allowed and number of repetitions

F. coordinate with National Christmas Tree Association Real Tree program or similar current campaign of PNWCTA

G. promotional ideas

1. free trees to businesses, churches, etc. (could include a discreet but attractive sign: "Donated by _____")
2. visit local schools with free seedlings for class studying trees or seasons, etc. with accompanying pamphlet on the care and feeding of and "Donated by _____"
NOTE: check with the school superintendent or principal and teachers first
3. mail or include coupons in ad copy
4. free candy canes, tops, pens, Polaroid pictures, balloons
5. free ornament with each tree purchased
6. free tree disposal bag imprinted with your business name for each tree purchased

H. evaluation: "Was the ad campaign successful/cost effective?"

I. vary the ad approach from year to year

II. On-saleslot advertising

A. signs visible inside saleslot

1. quality, price and species of Christmas trees for sale
2. company name identification and year established
3. follow off saleslot ad design and/or promotion
4. tree keepability information
5. tree stands or other items for sale
6. safety/hazard warnings

B. signs visible outside saleslot

1. lettering large and clear enough to be read at traffic speed
2. company name
3. species
4. special promotion

C. handouts

1. tree keepability brochure (available from PNWCTA) to each customer (see Appendix D)
2. flyer describing tree farm or saleslot owner
3. National CTA brochure "Folklore and Farming"
4. coupons from merchants who are nearby

SECTION 7

Setting Up the Saleslot

The preceeding sections and part of this section are devoted primarily to your business plan. Actual implementation of THE PLAN can begin only *after* a solid foundation is laid.

I. Securing the saleslot

A. pay deposit or entire rent

1. mid-December payment date allows time for accumulation of capital
2. early deposit secures agreement

B. buy insurance (liability extremely important)

1. sufficient coverage for individual needs
2. both property owner and saleslot operator should be named as co-insured if property owner requests
3. purchase ASAP, sometimes difficult to obtain (check with PNWCTA and NCTA)

II. Plan ahead on paper as soon as actual saleslot location is secured

A. saleslot physical attributes

1. size
2. perimeter shape, maximize frontage on main thoroughfare
3. surface, e.g. bare ground, gravel, black top
 - a. may need temporary treatment such as sawdust or gravel according to local weather conditions, availability, permit from lot owner, local code, etc.
 - b. if using sawdust, etc., consider the cleanup necessary at the end of business and saleslot close-up
4. driveways and adequate area for customer off-street parking
5. availability of electricity
 - a. illuminate saleslot for after dark sales and decoration
 - b. security requirements
 - c. accommodate on-lot living facility for operator
 - d. may want to use a portable generator
6. availability of water
 - a. tree keepability (considering local weather conditions and recommended procedures for maintaining tree quality)
 - b. see Appendix D - Keepability Brochure for appropriate climate
 - c. accommodate on-lot living facility for operator

7. availability of toilet facility for customer, labor and lot operator (may need to consider a rent-a-potty)
- B. space for and placement of:
 1. off-street customer parking and drive loop for easy pickup
 2. display and sales area
 - a. tree display considerations
 - (1) tree stands with water reservoir
 - (2) tree stand without water reservoir
 - (3) frame to lean trees against
 - (4) display area under cover
 - (5) wire supports between pipes or stakes
 - (6) visual appeal for potential customers driving by
 - (7) visual appeal for customer as they approach saleslot entrance
 - (8) keep clean and safe
 - (9) able to withstand local weather extremes
 - b. tree keepability - important to keep trees fresh in storage or on display
 - (1) weather conditions - extreme hot or cold will ruin trees unless precautions taken
 - (2) have National Weather Service phone number handy for storm information
 - c. customer safety
 - (1) around display equipment
 - (2) around support equipment such as cut-off saw
 - (3) wide, clear aisles between trees
 - (4) disclaimer, warning signs (discuss with your attorney)
 3. fencing and gates
 4. power pole
 5. signs visible from street and on saleslot
 6. stock storage area - see Appendix D for storage suggestions in hot and cold climates
 7. over night security/on-lot living facility for operator
 - a. rent-a-potty
 8. tree butt trim saw, baler, special functions
 9. cashier's booth
 10. flock booth - see Appendix B for saleslot layout samples

III. Prepare ahead of saleslot setup

A. signs

1. identification of stock
2. sales information
 - a. hours open
 - b. pricing structure (consider competition's prices as well as your expenses)
 - (1) all one price
 - (2) \$ per foot, for all or each specie
 - (3) each tree individually priced, according to specie, quality, and/or size
 - (4) \$ per ribbon color
3. business identification and credibility (professional membership PNWCTA and NCTA)
4. set "Christmas spirit" in sales tone
 - a. decorating
 - b. music
 - c. Santa hats
 - d. a sincere smile

B. gather equipment and tools

1. saleslot set up
 - a. saws
 - b. hammers and nails (16d sinkers, 8d)
 - c. saw horses
 - d. wire, rope and twine
 - e. 6' or 8' ladder
 - f. gloves
 - g. pliers, socket sets
 - h. screw drivers, straight and phillips
 - i. electric extension cords, 3 prong for outdoor ground
 - j. carpenter apron to keep small tools close at hand
 - k. lights (illumination and decoration)
2. stock set up
 - a. clippers with holsters; Note: if issuing to employees, may want to sign out - notify *in writing* of amount of pay dock if not returned intact at end of season
 - b. water hoses with appropriate nozzles and "Y" connectors

- c. tags and price marking equipment
 - (1) price tags
 - (a) preprinted
 - (b) blank
 - (c) paper, plastic or ribbons - see Appendix D for sample tags
 - (2) permanent felt markers
 - (3) staplers
- d. flocking equipment, disposable face masks, turntable, tree mover, etc.
- e. tree display equipment
- 3. saleslot maintenance
 - a. rakes or brooms depending on lot surface, dust pans
 - b. trash receptacle - consider renting "dumpster"
- 4. sales equipment
 - a. cash register or secure wallet and change holder
 - b. tape calculator
 - c. adequate currency and coins for making change
 - (1) will depend partly on your pricing structure and whether sales taxes must be collected (If you don't collect it from your customers, it will come out of your pocket later.)
 - d. deposit slips, night drop bags, rubber stamp for check processing
 - e. sales record sheets, inventory control sheets and daily accounting sheets - see Appendix E for record keeping
- 5. accounting for sales taxes collected
 - a. may be required to pay deposit in advance on a projected sales basis according to state law
 - b. paid according to actual sales the month following the sales
- C. consider load sharing with other retailers
 - 1. two or three small loads, delivered at strategic intervals
 - a. multiple deliveries of fresh trees greatly increase tree keepability
 - b. allow better control over stock
 - c. trees harvested as needed
 - d. supply different species and sizes as needed
 - (1) which specie keeps best in your area - bring in first

- 2. cooperation with other retailers can provide vital help
 - a. adjust quantity of:
 - (1) trees - size or specie
 - (2) stands
 - (3) flocking materials
 - (4) other equipment and supplies
- D. tree keepability: consider weather at lot location and means to protect stock while in storage and on display until sold to customers
 - 1. need protection from:
 - a. sun/heat
 - b. wind
 - c. cold - particularly fast freezing conditions
 - d. combination of the above
 - e. lot surface; asphalt, dirt, etc. may be hazardous to the keepability of your trees
 - 2. on-lot protective measures
 - a. portable shade house (sun protection)
 - b. portable plastic house (wind, cold protection)
 - c. tent (protection from all elements)
 - d. trailer
 - e. tarps and pallets
 - f. water
 - 3. off-lot protective measures
 - a. garage
 - b. warehouse
 - c. may require additional security
 - d. consider the additional handling and transportation necessary

IV. Putting business plans into action

- A. start set-up process at least several days earlier than necessary
 - 1. allow time, money and extra manpower for the unexpected and/or emergencies
 - remember Murphy's Law and plan/work to outwit it
- B. keep lines of communication with tree and other stock suppliers open
 - 1. harvest and transport on schedule
 - 2. *accurate* time of arrival set (day and hour)
 - a. extremely expensive for loading crew to stand around and wait for truck
 - b. some trucking companies charge standby time while waiting to be unloaded

3. arrange for a series of phone calls to allow you to track your tree shipment in transit
 - a. upon leaving farm
 - b. midpoint
 - c. two hours before delivery (allows time to gather unloading crew)
 - d. anytime there is a problem or delay
- C. personal accommodations if saleslot is located away from home
 1. stay with friends/relatives
 2. motel
 3. self-contained unit on saleslot
 - a. built-in night security
- D. securing city, county business permits/license
 1. plan to devote a day, *minimum* - sometimes a very slow process
 2. may have some changes in code or process since initial investigation or last year
- E. set up local business checking account (if located away from home)
 1. easier to do business with local merchants
 - a. most bounced checks are numbered between 100 and 200
 - b. check with local bank for bogus money or checks being currently circulated
 2. can run checks received for trees through quickly and follow up if some are bad
 3. considering the location may wish to deal "cash only"
 - a. need signs to inform customer of that condition of sale
 - b. will probably result in more lost sales than bounced checks
 4. know how to identify counterfeit money, checks and travelers' checks
- F. hire unloading crew and other needed labor. NOTE: hiring labor directly entails paying not only salary but workman's' comp, taxes, Social Security and Fed INS "I-9", etc.
 1. local employment office, etc.
 2. local acquaintances
 3. local high school or college
 4. local temporary services company (they do nearly all paper work)
 - a. one check to temporary services company will include:
 - (1) workman's comp
 - (2) taxes
 - (3) work permits (Fed. INS "I-9")
 - (4) salary

G. fencing

1. provide your own
2. contract to rent
 - a. look in yellow pages under "fence" or "rental service stores & yards"

H. connect necessary utilities and phone

1. plan ahead - utility companies may not perform on schedule
2. may prefer to connect to neighboring establishment for water and/or electricity for an agreed upon fee or a tree
3. may prefer to use personal generator for electric power

I. set up lights

J. set up signs

K. unload truck

1. *supervise* - don't try to save money by helping
 - a. make sure the job is done as you want
 - b. stock is placed where and how you want
 - (1) quality control can be maintained if you watch and control the manner in which the trees are handled (avoid leader breakage, etc.)
 - (2) nobody except you and the customer really cares about quality!
 - (3) insure that safety rules are followed - unloading can be very dangerous

L. set up stock display according to plan

M. mark or tag trees for price according to planned price structure

N. avoid creating hazardous conditions (exposure and risk) for the customer (libelous conditions for the property owner and you) such as:

1. "rebar" or other types of tree stands sitting about empty
2. light cords or extension cords
 - a. nongrounded extension cords
 - b. extension cords on ground
 - c. hanging too low
3. saws or other tools
4. water puddles
5. boughs or trimmings on ground
6. baling twine or Vexar
7. beware the "attractive nuisance" for children or dogs
8. allow no running or horseplay

O. OPEN FOR SALES AND SELL LIKE CRAZY!!

SECTION 8

Unique Features (optional)

The potential customer expects to find the basics, such as Christmas trees, at each retail Christmas tree saleslot. But what, besides the customer's ideal specie, quality and size of tree will make that person stop at your lot?

I. Making your saleslot more attractive than all the rest in town

A. super tree quality or right price

B. trees displayed in water stands

C. services

1. tree shaker to remove loose or dead needles

2. hand Vexar or string bailer

3. fresh cut on tree butt

4. delivery services, perhaps including free delivery for senior citizens or handicapped

5. after-season tree pickup or mulch program

6. salesperson who can use sign language to communicate with the deaf

7. salesperson who is bilingual in the second predominant language spoken locally

D. other products

1. flame proofing

2. flocking

3. tree disposal bags

4. tree and house decorations

a. lights

b. ornaments

c. green garland

d. boughs

e. wreaths

f. tree skirts

g. Christmas stockings

E. promotions

1. Santa, snowman, etc. (alive or giant balloon)
2. give-aways (may be imprinted with your company name)
 - a. keepability brochures - see Appendix D
 - b. candy canes
 - c. tops
 - d. pens
 - e. coloring books
 - f. balloons
 - g. tree disposal bags
 - h. tree ornaments
3. eye-catching uniforms
4. attractive lot decorations
 - a. flags
 - b. banners
 - c. bunting

SECTION 9

General Saleslot Operation

After all of the planning and preparation, now comes the nitty-gritty of the day-to-day retail saleslot operation.

I. Non-sales hours responsibilities

A. depending on climate

1. water trees night and early morning
2. check stock - rotate, etc.

B. make nightly bank deposits - keep only enough cash on hand to make change - DO NOT ACCUMULATE CASH on the business premises or motel

1. process checks (very time consuming)
2. will need more than one deposit bag to enable multiple weekend night deposits
 - a. check night deposit keys annually *before* beginning use
3. organize for the coming day

II. Organize and schedule sales hours responsibilities

A. refer to prior years' records for lists

1. available employees
2. jobs assigned
3. wages earned

B. tasks

1. show trees
2. sell and make change (guaranteed - you will run out of needed coins and/or currency at the busiest time - remember Murphy's law?)
3. keep displays full
4. if using an individual stand system that includes a spike, be sure emptied stand is immediately stored completely out of the customer area **** EXTREME HAZARD****
You, the lot operator, are liable for any injury to persons, including employees, on your place of business, *whether you were directly at fault or not.*
5. keep entire area neat and clean
 - a. helps to protect customers and employees from injury
 - b. projects a positive image

6. use electric or hand saw to give fresh cut on trees as sold
 - a. saw not to be used by customers (potential of injuries)
 - b. secure well out of reach of curious children
7. loading and tying down purchased trees for customer transport
 - a. make sure trees are securely fastened ** NOTE: if the tree is not properly secured to the vehicle you could be liable for injuries to other persons or damage to vehicles caused by a flying tree on the freeway.
 - b. use vehicle trunk when possible
 - (1) quicker
 - (2) more protective from drying or freezing conditions

SECTION 10

Closing Down the Saleslot

The time to count your money and play "Midas" comes only when the final chores are accomplished, the season is over and the saleslot is closed down.

I. Closing down

A. clean up immediately * LEAVE THE AREA IN BETTER SHAPE THAN YOU FOUND IT

1. discard all left over trees, limbs, trimmings, etc.
 - a. contribute salvageable trees to churches, hospitals, etc.
 - b. take to dump, if allowed by local code
 - c. rent a grinder (mulch maker) distribute according to city code
 - d. rent a "dumpster"
 - e. include a clause in shopping center contract to allow you the use of their dumpsters for sweepings for a fee or trade for a tree

B. have utilities turned off and pay bills

C. have fence removed

D. if planning to return next year, leave checking account intact (one less thing to do next year)

E. pay state and local sales taxes

F. start revising your business plan for next year while it is all fresh in your mind and you remember the things that you wish you had done differently. (Remember - that's what this manual is for, write in/on it, between the lines, in the margins, etc..!)

II. Take a well deserved rest!