

# Workplace observation paper



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Wal-Mart uses its Connect portal for its employees to sign in and keep up with the latest news in the company. User and password are required to access the site.

The Netscape logo that appears upon arriving at the sign in page suggests that this site

Would be best viewed using the fairly unpopular browser. Others are compatible to a

point, as some functionality of the site may be limited. The portal does indicate an

attempt to increase employees' sense of belonging. Wal-Mart previously did not

encourage employees to speak out about their working experiences with the retail giant.

Walmartfacts. com is now available for employees to post their positive experiences.

Where Wal-Mart fails in communications is in addressing the negative issues, the

subjects that have brought about all the negative headlines. The retailer is still reluctant

to meet with union leaders in communities where it has proposed new store locations.

Edd Snyder, executive director, corporate communications, at GM, offers advice that

counters avoidance of opposing groups. " You must find some common ground. The idea

is to bridge [differences] and talk and be in constant communication with the

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other

organization. Find common threads” (Frank, 2005).

The corporate culture at Wal-Mart is very different from the individual cultures

In each store location. Every community has its own set of values or standards. Some

are more blue-collar oriented, while others are more white-collar with higher levels of

education. The low cost strategy, which many critics believe has ignored environmental

and human rights issues does appeal to those who are price conscious. Wal-Mart’s

mission statement includes “ our first responsibility is to provide all consumers (1) the best

products and services with guaranteed satisfaction under one roof” (uwstout.edu).

Wal-Mart follows through on this promise, by providing securing relationships with low

cost suppliers and manufacturers.

Wal-Mart’s mission statement includes phrasing about providing equal opportunity

For everyone. Yet it has been named in a class action suit due to possible sexist

promotions activities, in which women rarely become managers. Even though I live in

a mid-sized city with residents of many different races and ethnic

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backgrounds, I rarely

see employees of any race other than Caucasian. Not only is Wal-Mart criticized for its

failure to promote qualified women, it fails to show how diverse its workforce can be. I

have visited four Wal-Mart locations within fifteen miles of my home. I have yet to

deal with or witness a manager who is not a male caucasian.

Failing to promote women and hire minorities is harmful to the workplace environment. Not only does this send a message to employees that the retailer does not

value diversity, it can create a hostile environment for minority customers as well. The

unspoken message can generate fear, hatred and unfair or unwelcoming treatment. Even

if racist or sexist words or language are not used outright, the attitudes may still be

encouraged. Dress at Wal-Mart is casual with the blue aprons worn by many customer

service employees. Even those working in electronics wear the blue shirt at minimum.

This does foster a sense of belonging or teamwork, though it also ignores the individual employee.

Wal-Mart uses the latest information gathering programs at checkout, to obtain

demographic information of its customers. Even though zip code is the only information typically requested of customers, the system tracks which products are purchased, which helps reduce overstock and streamline supply chain activities. Wal-Mart online stores offer similar products to those in the traditional stores. At times, it offers more selection, with special pricing for online purchases. Wal-Mart takes advantage of current computer technology, including shopping cart, to bring its customers the lowest prices. In one way, it encourages the purchase of house wares or household items online over in-store purchase. However, grocery items and lower priced products such as office supplies are less costly to purchase offline, as shipping costs add quite a bit to the price of such products. It almost appears as if the retailer is attempting to create two different and distinct groups of shoppers. One is the group of technological or web savvy shoppers purchasing larger ticket items, whom the retailer would rather not deal with in person. The other is the grocery and sundry shopper who enjoys the one stop shopping convenience.

## References

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