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## D.M. employees get big charge out of battery company's bonus

BY DONNELLE ELLER • [DELLER@DMREG.COM](mailto:DELLER@DMREG.COM) • MAY 16, 2009

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Debbie Haws plans to shop Friday until she sees dots. Yellow dots, preferably at Younkers, indicating large discounts.

"I'm shopping smart," said Haws, one of 140 Interstate Batteries employees in Des Moines who will hop on three buses Friday and head to Jordan Creek Town Center.

Haws and her co-workers will all have \$500 in their pockets, thanks to Interstate Batteries, after pushing sales 10 percent higher from January to April.



RODNEY WHITE/THE REGISTER

Brian Kirkle of Des Moines mans the carousel Friday at Interstate Batteries' warehouse in Des Moines. The company is giving 140 of its local employees \$500 gift certificates for meeting a sales goal for the first four months of 2009. Workers had to increase Interstate Batteries' sales 10 percent compared with a year ago.



RODNEY WHITE/THE REGISTER

Hoang Pham has some money burning a hole in his pocket. The team leader at Interstate Batteries is among 140 Des Moines employees of the battery company who will receive \$500 gift certificates and a half-day off from work for a shopping spree next week for meeting a company sales goal.

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While other companies are laying off workers, Interstate Batteries will give its employees a half-day off from work and extra money to spend.

"The sales goal was aggressive, so the incentive had to be big, too," said Brian Weber, the company's sales director.

The operation at 1700 Dixon St. houses sales, a warehouse and some manufacturing. Interstate Batteries' family-owned parent is in Dallas.

Weber said the company provided a similar incentive last year but took only the sales staff. This year, Interstate decided to up the ante, taking the entire north Des Moines work force if each department met certain goals.

Haws, a sales team leader, said meeting the sales goal was difficult, especially during a recession.

"It's been hard on everyone" - from Interstate Batteries' mom-and-pop customers to big corporations, she said.

Working for the incentive helped boost morale, though, when the economic news was depressing, she said.

"Everyone has something negative in their lives," Haws said. "It gave us something else to think about."

Haws and Lynette Johnson, a sales trainer, said they have come to expect cool incentives and events from Interstate.

The company gives away trips, holds an employee appreciation day and puts on other events for workers and their families.

But spending \$70,000 on an employee shopping spree beats them all, workers say.

"Can you believe getting paid to shop?" Johnson said. "And they're giving you the money to shop, too."

Johnson said she plans to buy gifts for her grandchildren and her husband. Her family may get a tent for camping.

"I've changed my mind several times," she said.

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Weber said the sales event helps employees and the economy. Mall retailers are planning raffles and special discounts for company employees, an encouragement to spend their money Friday but not a requirement, he said.

Some employees will buy big-ticket items like TVs, Weber said. Others plan to buy necessities they may have put off since the recession began a year ago.

Haws, 36, will do a little of both. She's hoping to buy a camcorder and discounted clothes for her children for next fall and winter.

Seeing other parents lose jobs has helped her appreciate more Interstate Batteries' growing business.

"Nothing is recession proof. But everyone needs batteries," Haws said.

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steff777 wrote:

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