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Winter 2008

**Unique Concepts**

**International Spy Museum Uncovers Effective Retail Strategy**

By [Dan Rafter, Claude Solnik and Emily Lambert](#)

*For author bio, please check out our Author's Page by clicking on their name.*

A unique museum in Washington, DC turns to specialty retail to increase brand visibility, attract visitors and generate revenue.

Officials at the International Spy Museum had several goals when they launched a new retail program last summer in some of the busiest US airports, selling spy-themed merchandise from a cart and a partner retailer's in-line stores. They wanted to increase awareness of the Museum in Washington, DC, encourage travelers to visit the only public museum in the US dedicated solely to espionage, and boost sales of the Museum's spy handbooks, gadgets and apparel.

The new retail outlets have already accomplished all three goals, says the Museum's director of retail, Jodi Zeppelin. Visitors to the Museum have told her they found out about the attraction when "they stopped by one of our locations in the airports—that shows me that it's helping to promote the museum."

Because museums and tourist attractions are ubiquitous in DC, the International Spy Museum needed to be innovative and proactive if it wanted to attract its fair share of attention, she says. "For us, this [retail] expansion has been all about providing branding . . . and promoting the Museum. It's about getting that name recognition."

In addition to opening its own branded cart in the bustling Washington Dulles International Airport in Virginia, the Museum also partnered with AMERICA!, a retailer that operates airport and mall in-lines selling Americana and regional products. Through the partnership, Museum merchandise is sold in AMERICA! stores in special spy-themed sections where "agents on-the-move of all ages, interests and sophistication levels will find gifts to spy for that are high-tech, cool and fun."

The spy centers are now located in nine AMERICA! stores, including those in Dulles, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Virginia, Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey and Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport in Maryland. Iris Messina, division specialty leasing manager with Westfield Concession Management, which manages the concessions programs at Dulles, Ronald Reagan and Newark, says the partnership between AMERICA! and the Museum is mutually beneficial.

"Matching up the two combines both of their strengths," she says. AMERICA! "knows how to operate in an airport," and the Museum's retail concept is "very exciting." The Museum's cart location in Dulles gets a lot of attention, and its product line appeals to the flying public, she says.

"As a traveler, you're looking for something unique to bring back to someone else," Messina says, adding that when it comes to unique products that airport shoppers will notice, the International Spy Museum's espionage gear certainly fills the bill.

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