

**SAULT STE. MARIE DUTY
FREE OUTSTANDING
INNOVATION
AWARD SUBMISSION:**

*Humanizing the
Sault Ste. Marie Duty Free
Store*



strongandfreecanada • Follow
Sault Sainte Marie, Ontario



strongandfreecanada Today's Instagram feed is dedicated to our friends at @dutyfreessm

The Sault Ste Marie Duty Free location has fully embraced what it means to be **#strongandfree!**

We are delighted to have you as retail partners, and love your staffs enthusiasm and passion!

Cannot wait to visit your location and see the awesome sea of Strong and Free you have created.

Forever grateful for your partnership!
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37 likes

1 DAY AGO



HUMANIZING THE SAULT STE MARIE DUTY FREE STORE

Our strategy in 2019 was to look for ways to connect with and enhance our day to day customer base by focusing on personalizing our store. Social Media has helped us grow our audience and attract many new customers to the store by keeping our name in the public.

This year we looked for innovative ways that social media could make us more relatable, interesting, and most importantly human. One approach we used to connect with customers and personalize our marketing was humour on our social media platforms. Incorporating humour into our strategy helped give our store a more human side, which benefited our store as it helped us build a bigger connection with the online community. We try to keep our humour relevant to everyday current trends or posts that our audience can easily relate to, to make our store's personality come out. This method has helped us attract thousands of new followers and has successfully transformed the way people view our store. We feel humour worked on our social media by evoking emotion and laughter. Laughter brings people together, so when a post creates memorable, humorous content, it can easily open the door to more interaction from people. Each time a follower shares, comments, hashtags, or tags someone on the humorous posts gives the store more exposure and many new customers. It is a fun way to make memorable content on social media and cause a laugh or two by making someone's day.

This year we upped our game with new partnerships with local businesses. By teaming up with local businesses on social media and events, we are able to cross promote each other's businesses to target a wider audience. During our Customer Appreciation Event this year we gave away home-made, yummy ice cream and pizza from local businesses which customers truly enjoyed and appreciated. Photographs of customers, products, events and staff played an important role in our marketing plan by allowing us to share our story, and experiences to show our more personal side.

We also engaged our staff to promote store merchandise and events in photos to give us a more relatable feel. Visual marketing has positively impacted our store by connecting in a genuine, approachable, human way. Everyone likes to feel like they are a part of something, so when we interact with our audience on social media, we give them a sense of belonging. By sharing our store's personality on a human level, we have been able to connect and build genuine relationships with people. We give customers a reason to follow, and support our store by becoming a living, breathing human being.

Our innovation provided value to our customers by focusing on different promotions, products that attract customers to the store. Our marketing strategy targeted some of our bestselling ideas and incorporated some new ones to bring more attention to our store.

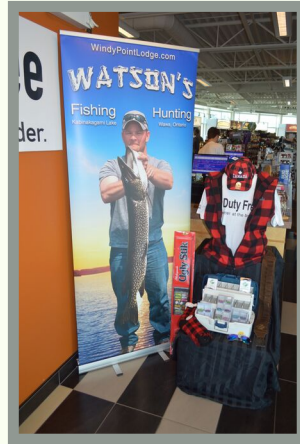
Giving back to the community is very important to us and our involvement gives us the opportunity to meet lots of new people. One example is our support of the Local Lung Association at the Festival of Trees, in which we were able to showcase our products to a large audience outside of the store. We also continue to reach out and support the Fowler Family whose 6-year-old son Kayge battled DIPG (a rare pediatric brain tumour) and unfortunately passed away earlier this year. Our hearts were truly broken, and we wanted to help the family bring awareness DIPG to find a cure so other children may be helped. The family had started a travelling rock campaign to bring awareness to DIPG, and with their permission we started the “Building a Bridge of Hope to end DIPG” at the store. We partnered with a local business (Lemieux Composting) who graciously donated rocks for staff members to paint in Kayge’s memory. A display was set up in our rock garden at the front of the store and customers were encouraged to take a rock with them on their travels to spread awareness of this terrible cancer who takes away precious children. On the underside of the rock a website address was painted so that we can track the rocks on their travels around the world. It is so rewarding to the staff to continue to keep our “Forever Six” Superhero memory alive by continuing to raise awareness in his name. Our community involvement has increased awareness to our store by keeping us visible and allowing the store to have a generous, trustworthy image in the public eye.

Last November we came up with a new innovative idea to generate more revenue targeting our Fragrances. We held a Christmas tree “Pick a Tag Fragrance Sale” where customers could pick a numbered tag from our tree which corresponded with an envelope that held savings of either \$15, half-price or free. It was fun exciting way to interact with customers, bring awareness to our selection of fragrances and generate a lot of sales.

This year in collaboration with Canada Customs, USA Customs and the Bridge Authority we participated in the annual International Bridge Walk, which gave us the opportunity to connect with consumers, showcase and promote our store in a favorable light. Our committed, diligent, fun-loving staff boasted their “Do better at the border” shirts while participating in the walk and handed out water to the thirsty participants. As a result, we were able to leverage the assets around us and gain free media attention, raise awareness to the store and had a great day where staff interacted with customers and potential customers and promoted duty free shopping.

Our continued partnership with Kinross Speed Park, sponsoring a race car, donation baskets and advertisement was again a successful strategy this year. This year Kinross Speed Park hosted the Hot Shoe 100 which brought in many racers and fans from across North America and many new faces and attention to the store.

Watson's Windy Point Lodge Fishing Lodge fishing trip draw was once again a huge success! Our ideas and collaboration continue to benefit each other. Together we have built a powerful relationship that has driven sales and built up each other's customer base.



Another initiative this year was to implement a plan to engage and target the younger retail consumer. We were so excited about the introduction of the Strong & Free Canadagear in the duty free industry, and how it could benefit and build a valuable identity for the store. True growth comes from looking inward first. That being said, we gave Strong & Free Canadaa prime floor space in the front of the store and a “store within a store” was born! Utilizing this prime floor space energized the store environment and increased the number of customers drawn to the area, as well as giving the store a fresh new look! Canadians and international visitors love the quality of the clothing line and the fact that it is “Made in Canada” is truly a selling point. Our staff was super excited and truly embraced the brand “Strong & Free” and became Fashion Brand Ambassadors wearing the gear inside and outside the store to promote awareness. To achieve our goals from awareness to engagement to drive in new customers our enthusiastic staff modeled the fashion gear which allowed our store to humanize the brand and aided in meeting our target audience.

The store also held contests on our social media platforms to bring awareness and spark excitement in the youthful demographic and other age groups. Strong & Freegear definitely gives people a reason to come into the store. Personalizing and humanizing the Sault Ste. Marie Duty Free Store whether by having an online presence, advertising, partnerships, exceptional customer service or our community involvement has definitely had positive impact the way the public views our store and on revenue. We feel we were able to market our store by using creative and unique channels that has definitely rolled out the red carpet to our customers and promoted sales growth by double digits and innovation.

BACK TO SCHOOL



CONTEST!



Sigh . . . there goes
another summer, Snoopy!

