

## I'm Just Sayin'

Written by Darci Tomky

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### Enough is enough



Shoppers are always looking for great bargains and that amazing sale of the century. It gives us a thrill to show off our new \$100 coat that we practically stole from the store for \$20. We clip coupons like nobody's business.

I'm all about good sales, so hearing the news about JCPenney's new sales tactics has me wondering if Penney's is really going to help me save my pennies.

Their commercials say, "Enough is enough." We've had enough one-day-only coupons, enough confusing sales, enough 4 a.m. doorbusters and enough flashy marketing schemes bombarding our lives.

In JCPenney's new "fair and square" pricing strategy, they are offering an everyday low price. That means merchandise starts out at a fair price, instead of bumping up that price tag to ridiculous prices so stores don't lose money during sales.

JCPenney has permanently marked down all of its merchandise by at least 40 percent. It's almost like everything is on sale every day! I'd say that's fair.

Last year, JCPenney spent \$1 billion on 590 different sales, and I'm not sure it really did them much good.

So now they're cutting back. Way back. Each year they will have 12 promotions. Yep. Twelve.

In place of sales and coupons, the store will offer select merchandise at a "monthly value" price.

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Claiming to be in sync with the rhythm of customers' lives, these products will actually be things you can use. Swimsuits will be on sale in June, instead of in December.

On top of that, clearance-type items will be sold at a "best price." There's a catch here, though. The "best prices" are only available on the first and third Fridays of each month.

They are also reinventing their physical stores by replacing old, outdated merchandising fixtures with a "Main Street of Shops" to showcase trend-right brands and experiences with 80 to 100 boutiques. Each brand will get its own little store within a store.

A "Town Square" will also give customers a series of services, like complimentary ice cream in the summer.

Whether they consciously acknowledge it or not, customers are looking for that "wow" shopping experience when they hit the mall or shopping area. Is this rejuvenated JCPenney going to provide that wow factor?

Of course, everyone is looking for good value. The "everyday low price" is going to be a draw for some, but what about those people who are looking for that psychological thrill when they find that popular sweater on sale? What about the people who simply refuse to buy products when they're not on sale?

If a teenage girl finds a cute top, AND it's on sale, watch out because she's going to be ecstatic! That thrill's just not going to be there any more.

Price tags ending in 99 cents are a thing of the past. JCPenney's prices will only end in zeroes, a price tactic that generally conveys quality, as opposed to the value the 99-cent prices convey.

I also hear JCPenney products now have only one price tag. So even if it's a "monthly value" item, customers won't be able to see all the money they're saving. What will be the incentive for

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me to buy that product? Besides, it'll be there all month! What's the rush?

However, I must say I'm glad the you-must-use-this-coupon-during-these-hours-on-this-day sales have gone out the window. When one lives in the middle of nowhere, they must count their lucky stars that they get to go shopping at all. Chances are I never get to go shopping on the big sale days anyway, so I'm convinced these month-long value prices could be a perk for us country folk.

Another big part of my "wow" shopping experience is the environment/atmosphere of a store.

I want to feel like I'm entertained while I'm on a shopping trip. Why do you think so many people eat at places like Rainforest Café and Planet Hollywood? It gives them a wow factor they just don't find at any ol' hamburger place up the street.

I'm excited about this idea of a "Main Street of Shops" and "Town Square." Even if we're shopping at JCPenney for the low prices, we want to feel like we're shopping in expensive boutiques. It's all about the visual appeal, the eye candy.

So will JCPenney's fair and square transformation change the way consumers shop in the future? Will other stores jump on board this new sales strategy? We'll just have to wait and see. Until then, grab your purse, because we're going shopping!

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