



FACTSHEET 4

Open All Hours?

John Lewis Oxford Street

Opening hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday,

Saturday: 9.30 am to 7 pm

Thursday: 9.30 am to 8 pm

Sunday: 12 noon to 6pm

Angie Gibson recently started work at the John Lewis department store in London's West End. Her mother Shelley and grandmother Maria both worked at John Lewis and often talked about the great advantages of being a Partner.

Above all, they both loved having a big say in decisions. Every single branch of John Lewis has a staff council which can make decisions on local matters, including opening times.

Angie is a seller in the female fashion department, but hopes to work her way up to a management position. She studied Business and Economics at Essex University where she was also a member of the university debating society.

In October 2001, the staff council at John Lewis, Oxford Street agreed to extend the store's opening hours to 7pm, Mondays to Saturdays (8pm on Thursdays). A year later, the council agreed to Sunday opening all year round. Before those two decisions, the store closed at 6 pm every day, and only opened on the eight Sundays before Christmas.

Now there is a proposal to stay open until 8 pm every day. Angie studies retail management at college two nights a week. If she had to work until 8 pm she would miss the first 30 minutes of her class. That's why she will argue the case against later opening hours at the staff council meeting.

However, some of the other Partners disagree. And for lots of different reasons.

Using the For or Against cards provided by your teacher, you will take part in a class debate on opening hours. After the debate the whole class will take part in a vote - that's exactly the same way John Lewis Partners make decisions about important issues.

For opening until 8 pm:

If the shop opens later, John Lewis will make more money. Every Partner gets an annual bonus related to profits, so the higher the profits, the more money in salary bonuses for everybody.

Later opening hours give people who work in other shops the chance to do their shopping at John Lewis after they finish work.

That extra hour will be quieter than the rest of the day - great news for customers who prefer to shop in a more relaxed atmosphere.

Some of the other department stores in London are planning to open until 8 pm, and John Lewis needs to compete with them.

John Lewis Oxford Street has a great cafe, so our customers can have a cup of coffee or a snack before going to the cinema or theatre.

The extra hour will be useful for Partners who want to try on new John Lewis business dresses.

The shop is really busy on a Thursday between 7 and 8 pm - that proves customers want late shopping.

A survey by management shows that 72% of regular customers would like later opening hours - and the customer is always right.

Even Partners who were against the extra opening times back in 2001 now agree that it was a good idea - and nobody is giving their extra bonus back!

John Lewis offers flexible working hours and also employs part-time staff, so Partners can choose if they want to work the extra hour or not.

Against opening until 8 pm:

Partners who live outside London will get home very late if they don't finish work until 8 pm.

The John Lewis philosophy is about quality not quantity.

The last 30 minutes will be very quiet, and the cost of keeping the shop open (electricity, heating, etc.) will be higher than the extra profit.

Oxford Street after 7 pm is full of drunks and pub-goers, not shoppers.

Not everything is about money - lots of Partners would prefer to finish an hour earlier and have a slightly smaller annual bonus.

Lots of people will come to the shop to kill time before going out for the evening - they won't actually spend any money.

Partners who drive to work will have to pay more to park their cars.

People who work at other shops don't need to shop at John Lewis during the week - they can come on Sundays.

Partners who are working mothers will hardly ever get to see their children - and toddlers will be in bed by the time they get home.

We have to draw the line somewhere - or eventually John Lewis will be open 24 hours a day!