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News

Research helps retail efficiency rise

24 October 2012

Woolworths is investing nearly \$1 million over the next three years to fund research into innovation in retail.

The investment is funding a position at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) for award-winning business systems design expert, Professor Jan Recker.

As Chair of Retail Innovation, Professor Recker leads research in developing new ways of identifying innovation potential in retail. He will also play a significant role in shaping the strategy of QUT's Information Systems School, a leading national research institute in information systems research.

Professor Recker focuses particularly on people, process and technology, and aims to improve the experience of customers as they set about their supermarket shopping.

The initial research streams in this unique collaboration will improve fresh food operations from a customer perspective, improve store logistics processes and involve Woolworths' staff in ongoing innovation activities.

Professor Recker said the research group aimed to identify the characteristics that made some fresh food outlets more successful than others and then develop 'best practice' policies for implementation across all Woolworths' stores.

"We've been looking at innovations in bakery processes and also at new technologies and processes that enable stores to replenish shelves more efficiently - a move expected to result in significant cost savings but also in more time for store staff to engage with customers," he said.

"We're finding that by developing best practices in both areas we are simplifying processes, enabling operations to run more efficiently and effectively and allowing stores to spend more time dealing directly with consumers.

"We expect to have initial research results available by the end of 2012."

QUT Science and Engineering Faculty Executive Dean, Professor Martin Betts, said the research move by Woolworths would help shape the future of retail.

"Woolworths is to be congratulated for recognising that research is crucial to finding better and smarter ways to shop," he said.

"This mutually beneficial arrangement will position QUT at the forefront of retail innovation research while at the same time providing Woolworths with cutting-edge ways of using IT to develop their brand and customer base.

"While the research itself will be publicly available, trials of new technologies, processes and systems are being developed with Woolworths, giving them a competitive edge."

Professor Recker said shopping had the potential to be vastly different from what it was today.

"We expect to pre-empt the demands of customers and work with designers to develop out-of-the-box creative models fit for the future," Professor Recker said.

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Chair of Retail Innovation Professor Jan Recker leads research that will make shopping more innovative.

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QUT acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands where QUT now stands.