

Retail Spotlight

Dealer Chooses to Go Concept Route

BY RAY KEENER

Bill Ruffner, owner of what was then ST Bicycles in San Jose, California, had a problem. He and his brother John had taken over the store their parents started in 1975. They wanted to be more successful, but their parents resisted change.

“This was when the only Trek store was in Madison, Wisconsin,” Ruffner said. “Paul Moran [now Trek’s national sales manager] came to San Jose in 2003 and helped us take a hard look at our business. We went to Madison and looked at what Trek was doing. We liked what we saw and decided to take the plunge.”

Ruffner and his brother, who is now out of the business, had two concerns about becoming a Trek Concept Store.

“First, would we lose our identity and



Bill Ruffner

our independence? And second, by putting all our eggs in Trek’s basket, what would happen if there were product shortages?”

Six years later, as Trek Bicycle Store of San Jose with 11 employees, a 3,600-square-foot sales

floor and sales approaching \$2 million, Ruffner’s concerns are in the past.

“We have had really only two shortages,” Ruffner said. “Last summer, there were no hybrids. And a couple Christmases ago, there were no 20-inch pink girl’s bikes. Otherwise, we’ve always gotten what we needed.”

As far as the loss of identity, Ruffner feels the Trek name has been a huge plus for the store. “We didn’t really understand how strong the Trek brand was until we put the name on the front of the store,” he said.