Jim Wright,
CEO, Tractor Supply

Retail has the quickest cycle time from idea, to implementation, to assessment and refinement of any industry. The pace is exhilarating. In the stores feedback is instantaneous; customers buy or not, they are pleased or not and team members can have an immediate impact. Even at senior levels the feedback is real-time.

I enjoy the people side of retail. More than most industries the opportunity to mentor and develop young team members is limitless. As I look back over my career there are numerous examples of cashiers who became store managers, store managers who today are in multi-unit management, merchants or operating executives. A true joy has been in discovering bright, hard working and dedicated people and giving them a chance to build a career. For those who step up to the opportunity the results are very rewarding for them and their mentor.

I began my retail career working part time in a Kmart Auto Center while in college. Full time, Asst. Manager and Store manager positions followed while still in school. My career with Kmart progressed to District Manager, national operating position and several buying positions. I left in 1988 to become a V P of Store Operations for Western Auto and enjoyed several promotions before leaving in 1996 to become the CEO of an under-performing turn-around company, Tire Kingdom.

After we successfully completed the turn around, I sold the company and considered a number of opportunities. I wanted to stay in retail, to be involved in a growth company that had a solid foundation of mission and values. Tractor Supply proved to be a great fit. The foundation was solid, the niche defined and the skill set I had acquired over the previous 30 years proved to be applicable. Our team has built the business from $759 million to over $2 billion in the last 5 years. Tractor Supply Co. (TSCO) is the leading farm and ranch store chain in the U.S. Our target customer is a do-it-yourselfer involved in the rural renaissance. They tend to own land, pick-up trucks, dogs, cats, horses and some live stock. We also serve suburban home owners, small contractors and municipalities.

While the growth potential was attractive, the values and mission were even more appealing. Every decision we make is based on our values and mission statement, which you can see at our web site. Everyone in our company carries a card with these guiding principles and every office has a copy on the wall. When I meet our new employees at the store support center each Monday morning, the first thing I talk about is our values and mission statement. A lot of companies have these types of statements, but at TSC, we walk the talk. We believe being a great place to work enables us to be a great place to shop and invest.