

# Bloomingdale's Expands Men's Footwear Dept.

By JOCELYN ANDERSON

**NEW YORK** — Bloomingdale's Big Apple flagship is ramping up its commitment to men's footwear.

The newly renovated men's floor on the lower level of the store boasts a major expansion of the shoe department, which opened late last month. The department moved locations to a higher-traffic area and increased in size from 14 chairs to 40-plus chairs.

"We view ourselves as having an opportunity to really develop the men's shoe business," said Dan Leppo, VP of men's furnishings, shoes and sportswear at Bloomingdale's. "We feel we are underpenetrated in it and we have an opportunity to bring something special to the floor and bring a different point of view than any of our competitors."

In addition to adding square footage, the

retailer also enhanced its offering. "We increased the selection of almost every brand on the floor," said Leppo. "We also increased the average depth of every SKU we were carrying. It's an investment. We are really trying to build this business."

Along with its classic mainstays such as Bruno Magli, Bally and Zegna, Bloomingdale's recently added other brands to the mix, including Gordon Rush, Sutor Mantellassi, Narriate, Paraboot and A. Testoni.

The retailer also introduced Ferragamo's ultra-high-end line, Tramezza, as part of its combined Ferragamo sportswear and shoe shop-in-shop — the only one in the U.S.

"It's our largest men's shop-in-shop in terms of shoes," said Tony Costello, SVP of men's sales at Ferragamo. "We basically wanted to communicate our brand identity more effectively as [Bloomingdale's] high-end resource for footwear."

So far it's working, said Leppo. Ferragamo sales have been up by more than 50 percent since the reopening. Such figures provide high hopes for what is sure to be a tough holiday season.



**Bloomingdale's revamped men's shoe department.**

"Anybody who doesn't think it's going to be a little bit of a challenging holiday season is putting their head in the sand," said Leppo. "But I think we've built a floor that will convert our customer. As long as we give them excite-

ment and events and products, we will have an OK Christmas."

The store plans to hold events once a week to boost excitement. Adam Derrick, creative director and designer for To Boot New York, recently hosted a trunk show there. He said Bloomingdale's has doubled the SKUs of his brand and given it increased prominence.

"It's like night and day," said Derrick. "Actually, now it's day because it's so bright, open and airy there."

Bloomingdale's revamped sneaker department bowed in January 2007, along with the No. 59 Metro men's sportswear and denim department on the subway level. Leppo said Converse by John Varvatos, Puma Black Station and Nike have all been bestsellers there.

The finished sportswear section on the lower level is scheduled to open in January, and the shirt, tie and accessories section on the main floor will open in June.