

Human Resources

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FOR INDEPENDENT RETAILERS AND STORE MANAGERS

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from **staff** to *manager*

Transitioning top
employees into
management

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New Managers: Ensuring their Success

Taking the time to transition top talent amongst staff to management roles can prove to be challenging, but essential to the future health of your store.

There's little doubt that floor level staff do much of the vital work in any retail operation. But in any successful store, you find behind these associates the guiding hand and keen vision of a great manager. Great managers, however, are not easy to come by. They must be sought out through active recruiting and from among the ranks of floor-level employees, and must be trained so their natural leadership ability is shaped for the needs and interests of the retail environment. And today's retail environment is a dynamic one, resulting in the role of manager becoming more of a multi-faceted and complex job than ever before. The manager of today must be more than just a good businessperson. They must face numerous challenges like transitioning from a top performing employee to management; being in a position where they're suddenly leading former colleagues; arriving at an understanding of the business demands, viewing them from a brand new perspective; and simply learning a whole new set of skills while on the job.

That's a lot to handle for new managers attempting to settle into their role today.

In order to ease the transition from top performing employee to store manager, here are some key areas

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By implementing a thorough succession training plan, store managers will also develop the skills they need to be successful on the job long before they make the transition to management, readying them to hit the ground running.

In addition, as part of the new manager training suggested by Graff, and in maintaining the consistency of the brand, your new managers will benefit from learning how to properly engage staff to get the most out of them, increasing efficiency and store productivity. But, just as coaching skills are important, Graff points out that the implementation of effective coaching 'systems' that provide a structure and framework for the manager to follow to ensure proper coaching of staff takes place, may be even more important.

Training your new manager for the rigours of the job and helping them become accustomed to the many nuances of their new role will get them off on the right foot, and will likely prove to be the most beneficial thing you do for them, your staff and, indeed, your store.

Store Operations

"While potential managers would be well advised to concentrate on

to focus on to ensure that your new manager will be as successful as possible, as soon as possible.

Easing into the Position

New managers, whether they are promoted from floor staff or are newly hired, take time to transition into their position. In an ideal world, the transition is flawless, rapid, and trouble free. But as we all know, the world is far from ideal, and the transition period can be difficult on staff, store operations, and of course the new manager.

To alleviate these difficulties, store owners should ensure that they develop well thought out, step-by-step training processes for preparing new managers.

Kevin Graff, President of Graff Retailing, recognizes this, but also encourages retailers to take the training processes a step further to include a far more forward-thinking approach. "Retailers would be wise to develop a succession training system that identifies and develops full-timers into Assistant Managers, and Assistant Managers into Store Managers," he says. "When an effective succession training system is developed and executed well, not only does it create a more comfortable work environment, a retailer can also suddenly start developing their own talent internally, resulting in

building leadership skills, they should also develop solid analytical skills, so they are able to translate their financial information into store operation processes and organization," explains Ryerson's Frances Gunn, noting that one of the most important jobs of a manager is to ensure that the store remains competitive in the retail segment in which they operate, ensuring that they earn healthy margins.

In many retail environments, store operations take a backseat to merchandising, leadership and customer service. After all, managers typically spend far more time on the sales floor, focused on the immediate needs of the store, than they do in an office taking a more long-term approach to business operations. But you'll want to make sure you're your new manager learns to set aside some time for key planning decisions, whether it is on a departmental or store-wide scale.

You'll also want to ensure that your newly appointed manager avoids some of the difficulties that many new managers come across in the transition to thinking broader.

Chances are, because of the time spent on the floor in the past as a sales associate, your new manager may have the tendency to want to dive right into certain situations with the intention to 'do it themselves' rather than delegating, or coaching, their staff to address the

situation instead. This is one of the more crucial elements of a great manager, and something that you'll want to instill in your new manager. Developing a mindset of 'managing' as opposed to 'doing' will enable them to stay focused on the business elements that they need to pay attention to to succeed.

Time spent on the sales floor, however, will aid immeasurably in these business decisions for your manager, as it gives them fantastic insight into the effectiveness of the current store model, whether their observations involve pricing, layout, aesthetics, or any other matter that affects the customer experience.

Stressing the importance of effective team building

"Ask any manager what the toughest part of their job is and they will tell you it's dealing with the staff," asserts Kevin Graff, President of Graff Retail. But while undoubtedly challenging, it's also the most important part of any manager's job. Without a motivated sales staff a manager's vision is just that, a vision.

Ensuring that your new manager has the skills required to motivate staff will be fundamental to the success of your store. A highly motivated team will make an immediate impact on sales, and will be reflected in productivity. And yet, the importance of leadership is often overlooked.

"Managers are typically promoted or hired due to fundamental expertise in retail, but we don't

Your manager will benefit from getting to know your staff's individual backgrounds and interests, and their values and perspectives.

This way they'll be better positioned to recognize the unique sets of talents and strengths that your staff possesses.

According to Buahene, the biggest danger facing new managers, in particular those who have been elevated from among the floor staff, is the notion of 'cloning'. "Cloning is the institutional mindset that there is only one way of doing things because that's how it's been done for such a long time. In terms of leadership, often times people lead or manage based on how they were led, or how the establishment says one should lead," she explains. "Some of the best managers think outside the box, so it's important for new managers to think independently and for retailers to allow room for independent thought. As a matter of policy, retailers should do evaluations to ensure that their prevailing management style engages the employees."



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Help your new manager find their own managing style; one that suits the culture of your organization and the environment of the retail industry. The sooner they're able to cultivate and tap into their own leadership abilities, while adhering to processes and

think too much about leadership," says Adwoa Buahene, Managing Partner of N-Gen People Performance Inc. "That's an oversight because managers are the frontline of the store and most of its success rests with their ability to motivate and lead employees."

The workforce of the 21st century is a diverse group, comprising people of multiple generations with their own unique perspectives on everything from loyalty and commitment, to interpersonal relationships and values. As a result, there can be no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to leadership; how a manager handles a Baby-Boomer would by necessity differ from the way they handle an employee of Generation Y. That's why ensuring that your new manager has the people skills necessary to engage staff, and to get to know them is crucial to the success of your store.

guidelines specific to your store, the sooner they'll be equipped to affect positive change on staff, operations and sales.

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Hiring for a management position is an important step for any retailer. Elevating the right employee from floor staff to management can improve the efficiencies of your store, and benefit the career of your newly promoted manager. However, it can also present countless new challenges that must be met before both your new manager and your store can enjoy the positive results of this move. It's important to remember that hiring promoting or hiring someone for management is the easy part. Far harder is the task of properly training your new manager to enable them the opportunity to succeed. If you do this for them, your store will be better off for it.



Resources **for** Managers

Retail Council of Canada's *Retail First Level Manager* is a designation program, which includes training concerning standards developed by the industry. The developed standards address key skills your new manager must possess to succeed on the job. Some of the key areas of skills development that you'll want your new manager to focus on include:

Professionalism

Your store manager will be expected to exhibit demonstrated professionalism through appearance, knowledge and action. They must work ethically through their treatment of customers and staff, promoting high standards and practices which protect the credibility of the company and set a positive example for others. And in addition to managing staff, your store manager will also be required to manage their own time and stress effectively to maintain a comfortable and enjoyable work environment and staff productivity.

Communication

Effective communication must be exhibited by your manager to adapt easily and positively to the many different communication styles of staff. The development of active listening skills is also required — understanding the appropriate time and place to listen, and to hear the message stated — to provide the basis for improved customer service, decision making, teamwork and productivity. Managers must

Operations

Your new store manager will also be responsible for managing workplace safety, developing emergency preparedness plans, completing and maintaining accurate safety records, and ensuring the proper maintenance of the workplace facility and equipment. Maintaining the organization of stockroom and storage areas and ensuring the proper management of inventory is also important. Overseeing loss prevention and in-store security, and responsibly responding to shrink are other aspects that you'll want your manager to become familiar with.

Marketing

Assisting in the store's marketing initiatives to increase sales and profit is a key skill for management. This could include regularly conducting effective marketing promotions based on inventory and sales targets. Developing healthy community relations by engaging customers and communicating product knowledge to them is another vital skill required of your manager, and will ensure a positive brand image, increasing the traffic to your store.

Sales

Your new manager will also need to possess the ability to effectively monitor, promote and increase sales, justify budget costs, help reach sales goals, and to react quickly to changes within the market. Skills related to organizing

also be able to speak and write effectively, and to follow-up on their communication to ensure the documentation of agreed upon commitments of staff. The facilitation of communication amongst employees is also an important skill for your manager to acquire in order to ensure the consistency of service and staff morale. Conducting productive staff meetings to promote teamwork and communication is also invaluable.

Leadership

New store managers should possess the ability to develop and communicate a vision that excites and motivates others. Facilitating effective change, delegating tasks to staff, promoting teamwork and a positive attitude all contribute to a productive store and a results driven staff. Exhibiting cooperation with other managers at the store will also ensure consistency amongst staff, while promoting a commitment to the company.

Human Resources

Successful store managers always display the ability to attract, develop and retain quality people. Your manager will be required to review and update job descriptions on a regular basis, eliminating any possible confusion concerning roles, aiding in your manager's interviewing process to ensure that they hire the right candidate with the right skill-sets for the right position. Proper and thorough follow through of position training and company orientation once a hire has been made is another crucial step your manager will be required to

the presentation of product and maintaining the integrity of in-store displays to maximize the use of inventory and gauge customer reaction and response is another sales skill that all successful managers possess.

Customer Service

There's a whole range of customer service skills that managers need to focus on to be successful. Providing quality in-store service by determining the needs of the customer and informing them about services offered, closing a sale and providing after sale service, and being able to provide exceptional customer service both in person and over the telephone to provide the most enjoyable shopping experience possible are abilities highly sought after in new managers.

Administration

Most store managers are also required to carry out administrative duties, such as maintaining staff records, scheduling, and processing payroll. Your manager will also be required to understand and comply with legislation and contracts to reduce legal and liability risks.

Planning

It will also be a huge benefit to your store if you ensure that your new manager is well-equipped to create and execute effective business plans. Developing a budget to control costs and maximize profit, matching costs to sales, keeping track of variances, and forecasting sales to achieve budget goals is a skill that can set any manager apart from the rest.

complete. Consistent performance reviews, conducted often, is also a key component of their job. The ability to encourage ongoing professional development amongst staff, address performance problems of individuals, and to dismiss employees for a range of infractions is also a quality you'll want your manager to possess.

Want to download a free copy of the *Retail First Level Manager Standards*? Just visit [click here](#). Use them to develop job descriptions, interview questions and to identify new areas for training.