

Talents in Retail Store Operations



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Abstract: This study is an initiative to understand the role of talents engaged in retail store operation. An attempt has been made to understand the process involved in managing the sales force. It tries to reveal the efforts involved in getting the right people for the right job to face the customers to deliver the customer's expected services.

Keywords: talents, retail store operations, customer facing talents

Objective

1. To Understand and identify the talent management in retail store operations.
2. To study the various roles played by the retail store personnel.
3. To understand the processes in managing the retail store personnel.
4. To study the opportunities in career growth in retail store operation.

5. To understand the supply and demand of the retail customer facing talents.

Introduction: Retail plays an important role in improving the economy of any country. Retail stores are the last point in delivering the products and services to the end consumer. The cost of goods and the entire overheads of retail are realized from the customers who visit the retail stores. This important job of converting the goods and services in to the form of money is done by an efficient team of talents employed in retail stores. Retail is considered to be the second largest employing industry next to agriculture. This is approximately 8% of the total employment. Retail is instrumental for the growth of GDP of the country. The retail customer facing talents require a special skill. Those who have the passion of serving the customers can only sustain in this industry.

Retail has many store formats and non-store formats. Product categories are huge in numbers both in food and

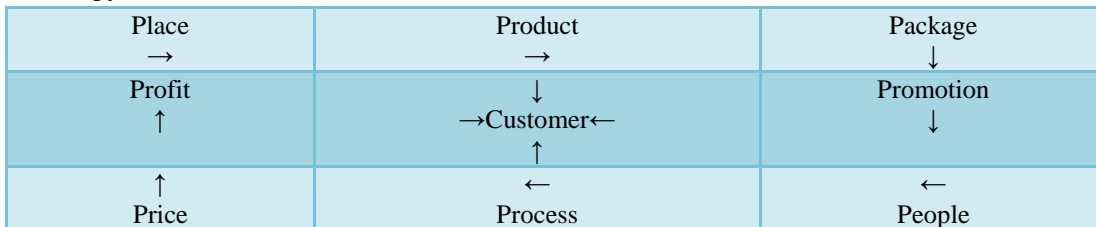
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lifestyle. Every customer is different from the other and required to serve the customer with utmost care. Knowing the customer and understanding the customer are the prime task in serving the customer in any store. Creating an excellent customer experience in a retail store is in the hands of trained skilled store personnel. Delivering the customer satisfaction is a science and art. This science and art is taught through a structured selling process.

Research methodology: Primary research was done by visiting, meeting and interacting with the leading sixty-two modern retail store personnel in the geographical area of Mumbai. This helped in collecting required information on retail store operations. The author reviewed number of literatures, research journals and articles through internet.

Retail store operation talent management analysis:

Study the Retail Store Strategy: On the basis of the vision & Mission of the retail organization, the retail store strategy is created. The retail store



Design the organization: On the basis of the retail store strategy every retailer should design their organization keeping in mind the various requisites of business process. To minimize the cost and maximizing the results for consistent

strategy should define the Store operation Mix of Identifying the target customers. On the basis of the target customers, the right store location and site (Place) selection has to be done. To achieve the desired results the right Product mix has to be decided. The product should have the attractive Package having the right brands with assortments. There should be a well-structured Promotion to support the store activities. Enough efficient store Personnel should be deployed to carry out the entire operation successfully. The Price of the products/services should fulfill the perception of the customers. Ultimately the entire Process should bring Profit to the store with in the stipulated Pace. This can be understood from the following figure.

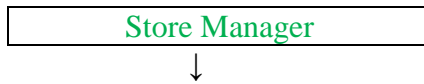
growth in the short and long term plan is the expected outcome. The above Process has to be designed looking at the trend and industry environment.

Create the organization chart

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Every retail store is managed with a team of store personnel. The store manager is responsible for the store management. He is assisted by the floor in-charges who manage the individual floors. There are departments to carry out various processes. The departments are created as per the size & need of the store based on the volume of business. The store personnel are expected to have

multi talents and are expected to play multiple roles. The success of the store is in the integrated process carried out by all concerned with the common objective to satisfy the customers need. The responsibilities are shared among the store personnel as per their job title and job description. The core objective of every store personnel is to serve the customer.



HR manager	Buyer	Floor In-charge	Marketing Manager	Merchandiser
Customer care associate	Cashier	Customer Service desk	Visual Merchandiser	IT-in charge
Maintenance	Housekeeping	Security	facility	Shop Assistant/Packer

Define the roles and responsibilities: Every employee should be clearly defined with their role and their responsibilities in carrying out their job. This has to be made clear at the time of their joining the organization.

Job description and job profile:

Store manager: Will have the overall responsibility to look after the entire management of the store for day to day operations and act as a custodian of all the assets of the store. This includes the fixture, furniture, inventory, finance. His key role is to deliver the targeted sales and results with the highest quality of customer service. His parental approach should motivate every store personnel to contribute the best. He should be made responsible for any shop shrinkage. He

should possess the quality to manage and retain his customers and employees of his store. He should maintain the hierarchy to manage his team effectively. It is the prime responsibility of the store manager to make the store productive and profitable.

Floor In charge: The floor in charge should be made responsible to run the floor efficiently in the capacity of a store manager. He assists the store manager and act on behalf of the store manager for that particular floor to run the process smoothly and report the store manager about all happening.

Merchandiser: The success of the store depends upon the proper planning of merchandising. The seasonal merchandising plan is made in advance

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before the commencement of every business season considering the past sale, future trend of business with proper forecasting. This will help the buyer to source the right merchandise. Identifying the right merchandise to supply at the right time, in the right quantity quality, at the right price is the major task of the merchandiser. The ultimate result is to reach higher stock turnover and minimizing the markdowns.

Buyer: On clearly understanding the merchandising plan made by the merchandiser, the buyer should identify the right vendor to source the merchandise. He should ensure the profitable deal for the store by his efficient negotiations. Needless to state that the right product mix reach the store well in time to achieve the targeted sales. The buyer should periodically review the order and supply status with the Open To Buy plan to balance the buying plan. The buyer should follow the ethics.

HR Manager: The secret of success of a retail store is in the hands of the store personnel. They are the store brand ambassadors. They are the first contact with the customers. Hence selecting the right store personnel, training them, motivating them as and when required, compensating them and finally retaining them are the major task of HR department. Giving every employee the job satisfaction by periodical appraisal will help in minimizing employee turnover. Retail employees are different from the other industries they are to be treated differently. Since the jobs are of

repetition in nature it requires a high moral. Being an integrated process method the unity to deliver the common objective of serving the customer has to be maintained at all time.

Marketing manager: Though there is a marketing department for the company to plan for the overall chain of stores, the marketing department of the retail store should promote the store as a whole. Planning promotions as per campaign, new launches, event management, brand promotion, celebrities participation, creation of POP, Effective visual merchandising are the major role of a marketing department in a retail store. Effective communication to the customers for a higher conversion rate is the prime task of the marketing department. They should ensure a good loyal customer base for the store.

IT (MIS): Retail is in detail. Every bit of information helps in improving the performance of a retail store. Every important management decision is on the basis of the data shared by every department. This information helps in improving the customer relation, supply chain management, store design, employees scheduling, finance planning, and merchandising management, safety & security of the store. With the fast changing technology it is expected to achieve higher results in retail stores by employing MIS tools with higher efficiency.



Visual Merchandisers: Customers romance the store because of its presentation. The bright store, attractive product displays, welcoming windows, colorful atmosphere, well communicated stores, are the contribution of the visual merchandisers. The innovative creative store ambiance makes the customers to take quick positive decisions in making their purchases. Understanding the five sensory effects of the customers to build the image of the store is in the hands of the visual merchandisers. Well-designed stores thoughtfully done visual merchandise always pull high traffic in the store. The footfalls are converted with higher conversion rates due to great VM effect. Every store is differentiated from their competitors by effective store design and visual merchandising. Store should interact with the customer and act as a silent salesman.

Customer Care Associates (CCA): They are the nerve system in retail store operation. They are the link between

customer and retailers. They are the first link to get the customer's feedback which helps in serving the customer better. Having good appearance, Possessing high product knowledge, clear communicating skills, sincere and honest in their deal with the customers are the expected qualities of the customer care associates. The ever smiling CCA add value to retail and act as an image builder for the store.

Cashiers: fast and accurate billing in the checkout counters, helps in minimizing long queues. The first few seconds the moment customer entering a store by greetings to recognize them and the last few seconds while the customer leaving the store to thank them are very important to retain them forever. This is taken care by the ever smiling cashier at the billing counters. They are the custodians of the POS with full of data. Every bit of statistics can be derived from this touch point which helps every department to perform better.

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Customer Service Desk: This is the most important point of the store where the customer gets every solution of his dealings. Listening to customer queries, grievances, complaints, feedback, suggestions, exchange, refunds, returns, guarantee, warrantee, Loyalty and all settlements are dealt by this desk. Since this desk reflects the quality of the store, this has to be handled very carefully with utmost courtesy and politeness.

Shop Assistant & Packer: Fast and accurate deliveries are done by these talents. Ensuring the right deliveries, helping the customer to reach their purchases and belongings at their vehicle etc. are remembered by their customers for ever. Their services like assisting the senior citizen and taking care of the kids during customer's shopping are sincerely appreciated.

Security: In the growing rate of security threat, it becomes essential to take care of the shoppers and their belongings. Manual and technological security measures are needed to protect the interest of the customers. Security plays an important role in maintaining peaceful shopping. Well trained skilled security personnel win confidence of the customers. Shop shrinkage can also be minimized by proper vigilance of the security.

Facility/Maintenance/Housekeeping personnel: They are the people who help in creating a shopping experience by their outstanding contribution in maintaining the store neat, clean and

hygiene. They help in creating the customer's WOW effect in the store. They help to maintain the store in order all time.

Talent Hunt: Where and how to get the right talents for the retail stores? Reference from the employees working in the stores, advertising in the media, visiting the campus can help in finding the talents. Sometimes retailers try to poach the talents from their competitors. It is not possible to have the full time employees always. Retailers can have part time employees as per requirement for selling occasions. At times the retired people and senior citizen may also be a good help who can be hired for the peak selling occasions.

Induction training: Ensure that every new entrant in an organization should be given with an induction training program. This will help the new employee to know understand the organization, its culture and their style of functioning. This will make the new employee to serve the store better.

Performance observations: Every employee of the store has to be observed on their performance. Every contribution of excellence has to be appreciated. Every lapse has to be discussed in detail to correct them. All help and guidance has to be provided for their improvement. Periodical assessment has to be conducted to know their progress. Proper training and necessary motivation will help the employee to improve his role better.

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Identifying the SWOT: Make a SWOT analysis of every employee and discuss with them individually. Make use of their strength for a higher output .Find out and suggest the way to overcome his weakness. Let him know his threat and opportunity for his improvement. SWOT of every personnel is different from the other. Let there be a customized treatment to get the optimum results out of him.

Grooming & specializing: Grooming and specializing an employee is very much essential. There are plenty of job to be carried out in a retail store operation. Each of the jobs warrants special grooming. A planned approach in specializing the employees in grooming him will benefit the organization in a long run.

Training & development: Every organization should have various training program developed to train their talents. Various development trainings like, visual merchandising, Store operations, Supply chain management, warehouse operation management, customer service and selling skills are some of the key areas to train the store employees. The training module, course contents, venue, duration, number of participants and trainers are to be carefully planned for a successful training. Before and after training of the personnel has to be evaluated to know the effect of training. Proper feedback has to be obtained from all concerned.

Motivation: Very effective tool for a higher productivity and profitability of an employee is timely motivation. Understanding the individual this has to be applied. Simple ideas like change of job, transfer, promotion, flexible working hours, Monetary benefits, holiday with family, Having tea with higher-ups, Joining on a lunch are some of the ways to motivate the employees. Participation in management will make them feel better and proud. Appreciating on a gathering, making them to lead a group are some ways to motivate. Sharing their pains and happiness, celebrating their birthdays or important days will motivate them better.

Compensation & rewarding: Every employee is a human and bound to expect their pay equaling to their output. Hence while fixing their compensation it has to be worked out properly. Annual increment, timely promotion (when they qualify themselves). Rewarding additional bonus etc. (when they contribute above their targets) are some of the points to be considered.

Feedback & appraisal: Every improvement can happen when an employee is done with his appraisal as per schedule. This has to be planned in such a way in a good atmosphere with pre appointment of the employee. The entire performance of the employee has to be reviewed. This interaction should build the confidence of the personal. Proper feedback has to be given to the assessee. This feedback should help the

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personal to improve his future performance.

Retention: The quality of the organization is rated by its talents turnover. It is better to retain the existing talents than searching for a new one. Getting a new employee is six times expensive than retaining the existing experienced one. It is always good to listen the cause of exit from the employee who wants to leave the organization.

Building leadership for tomorrow: Every employee should be molded with leadership quality. This helps in strengthening the organization. Each of the employees should be made to hold higher responsibilities to take decision of their own areas of function. Right delegation with proper empowerment will make the store personnel to do the right things .In store training will help in excelling the employees for a better performance.

Assigning higher responsibilities: it is always good to groom the store personnel with higher responsibilities as and when occasion arises. Every store talent should feel that they are responsible for the growth of the store. This certainly will give opportunity to prove themselves with their own ideas and innovations.

Conclusion: Managing the store talents is just developing them. Getting the trained skilled talents is very difficult to get in the current retail scenario to

operate the stores successfully. There is plenty of hidden skill with every store personnel. Identifying their strength and utilizing them is the best way to benefit mutually. Understanding every employee and guiding them in the right direction is the major task of the store manager. There are hardly any institutions which produces the right store personnel. Each developer is doing it in parts. The store personnel always learn from their customers. Though India has huge population but getting the right talent for the retail store operation is still a tough task.

Finding & Recommendations: India has a high population and 60% of the population is young with in the age of 18-40.This is the major advantage for Indian retail industry. This young energetic enthusiastic population has to be converted in to skilled work force for the retail. They can easily be molded with the advantages of advanced technology. But looking at the current retail industry status we are short of skilled personnel to manage various key roles. All stake holders should take enough initiative to full fill this.

1. All retail corporate should have a clear HR policy and identify the talents required and create strategy to develop such talents.
2. They should have their own in-house training center to develop an ongoing training process to conduct training for their various level talents.

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3. These retail companies will develop different modules suit to the various training program suitable to the need of the industry.

4. Governments both central and states should create talent development policy for the retail industry to develop skilled personnel by setting up retail talent development schools.

5. Every educational institution should design various retail talent development courses to conduct short term and long term courses consulting the need of the industry.

6. There should be rural retail talent development cells to identify and develop rural population to create employment opportunities.

7. There should be more practical training development workshops to prepare and supply the talents for visual merchandising, store operations, warehouse management, IT, Merchandising etc. areas.

8. Should set up a panel incorporating the government statutory body, retail corporates, and educational institutions to plan short term and long term plans to develop required talents and develop them as per job profile.

9. Quality standard policy has to be laid to maintain the performance standards of retail personnel in all retail stores across the country.

10. Government should ensure the pay packages for the employees employed in the retail stores.

11. Global retailers entering Indian market should source and develop more talents to create career opportunities.

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