



Stepping Up to Supervision

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The current workforce is a daunting place for retail staff, especially young staff. They have already spent much of their fledgling careers in an overtly pressurised and stressful work environment due to the effects the global economic crises and, in doing so, been forced to learn the value of being nimble, adaptable and committed – the hard way. But with a wave of impending retirements, a high employee turnover rate, and widespread adoption of the recession's mantra of "do more with less", a new challenge is on the horizon. Stepping up to supervision.

The step up to manager has always been a big one, especially in the retail industry. Retailers often spend time, money and resources training employees to quickly develop the skills required for the shop floor but few lavish the same attention on preparing staff for management, a role which requires an unequivocally different skill set. On promotion, many new managers are therefore understandably ill-equipped to succeed, and overwhelmed with pressure and insecurity.

The New Realities of Management

It's easy to understand why the excitement of a promotion might be tempered by nervousness and insecurity. After all, employees transitioning to managers in today's retail environment must adapt to a diverse and increasingly frustrated workforce, constantly changing job duties, increasing demands and mounting processes. So how can retailers prepare their staff to tackle the modern challenges of management?

The following three hallmarks are most critical to first-time managers. Retailers should proactively champion these and help their employees build them into their skill-sets:



Hallmark 1: Building Personal Credibility

Personal credibility is neither an attitude nor quality. It's a perception others form of you, based on their assessment of your actions over time. Once an employee steps up to management, everything they do and say is carefully noted by members of their team and others in the organisation.

To earn respect, new retail managers must learn to show respect – a daily effort that builds trust and supports long-term collective efforts. When they admit that they don't know everything, leverage the experience of their team, follow through on their commitments, and work hard to remove obstacles, their credibility will thrive.

Hallmark 2: Activating Team Commitment

The lingering financial pressures from the global economic crisis mean retail organisations cannot succeed simply by maintaining business as usual. Creativity and extra effort is required on the part of every employee. Successful managers know how to activate their team's energy and dedication.

An effective new retail manager inspires their team by setting goals that team members see as worthwhile and showing them how their work fits into the bigger picture. They also not only delegate simple tasks but include employees in idea-generating and decision-making – letting them feel a sense of ownership of the collective work.

Hallmark 3: Engaging Senior Management Support

It's natural for novice managers to focus on their teams. Successful managers, however, know that without a solid relationship with their senior managers, they can't count on the support they need to achieve results. Managing upward is therefore vital to supervisory success.

New managers can achieve this bond by ensuring that they understand what's important to their senior managers and actively supporting it. They should also – wherever possible – make a concerted effort to



go to their managers with solutions, not just problems, and proactively keep their manager up-to-date on any current or potential issues.

A Foundation for the Future

Retail organisations in 2011 need employees at all levels who can work independently. As long as change, whether positive or negative, continues as a dominant theme managers will need to rely on the three hallmarks of success. These will give first-time retail managers the traction they need to hit the ground running without losing their balance.

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