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Retailing Careers

REVISED EDITION

ROSLYN DOLBER

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0-07-142672-8

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DOI: 10.1036/0071426728



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FOREWORD

MY FEET STILL throb whenever I think about the rock-hard terrazzo floors I encountered on my first job in retail. This was back in high school, when I admittedly was less interested in a retailing career than in saving enough of my paycheck to buy the world's coolest prom dress. Yet for years after, whenever I gave a fleeting thought to retail, that first painful experience and those unforgiving floors were the boundaries of what I recalled.

Which only goes to show how little I knew about anything.

A career in today's fast-paced world of retailing can take you in countless different and exciting directions—far and fast. From merchandising and buying to systems and logistics . . . from store operations to store planning and design . . . from credit management to data analysis and processing . . . from marketing and promotions to E-commerce and strategic planning. The range of career opportunities in retailing today is virtually unlimited, as are the challenges that await someone who's looking for a career track that bypasses the ordinary.

Few professions come with more individual responsibility right from the outset than does retailing. It's not unusual, for instance, for an assistant buyer with less than a year on the job to be managing his or her own multibillion-dollar business—making decisions that have a direct impact on the company's bottom line. Nor is it extraordinary for an executive trainee in a store's organization to be managing a sales department inside of six months, or running a store inside of five years. Success can come early in retail, and there are as many opportunities to move up into the ranks of management as there are paths to get there.

A career in retailing may not be for everyone, of course. Certainly, it's not for the faint of heart. Nor is it for those who prefer predictability, because if there is one constant in retailing, that constant is change.

Retail companies and managements change. Customer preferences change. Popular brands and vendors change. Retail demographics change. Trends and styles change. Technology changes. The economy changes. Manufacturing and distribution channels change. Marketing and sales promotion strategies change. The look and design of store interiors change. The competitive environment changes. Whichever way you look, the retail sector is awash in a constant sea of change. Yet that's what keeps it vibrant and makes it exciting and challenging—anything but boring for those who have enough vision, gumption, and confidence to see the unprecedented possibilities a career in retailing has to offer.

At Federated Department Stores, we spend a lot of time on college campuses looking for the next generation of retail leaders—the merchants and managers of tomorrow who will be running our Macy's, Bloomingdale's, Bon Marche, Rich's, Lazarus, and Goldsmith's stores, as well as our merchandising/product development,

credit, and systems and operations support divisions. We do this because it won't make any difference if we have the best merchandise in our stores or offer the best values if we don't also invest in the best people—and then give them the opportunity and support they need to do the best job.

There's a whole world of career options opening up before you. Take the time to investigate those that appeal to you. Decide what you want to get out of your working life, and what you want to put into it. Choose carefully because in all likelihood you'll be living with your decision for a long time. But above all, don't rule out any career options based on what you *think* you know. When it comes to a profession such as retailing, there's a good chance you may not know the half of it!

Carol A. Sanger

Vice President/Corporate Communications and External Affairs
Federated Department Stores, Inc.

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INTRODUCTION

CAN YOU IMAGINE yourself in a career that is exciting and challenging? In an industry with enormous prospects for growth? One that will reward your skills, creativity, and imagination? Would you like to be part of a multibillion-dollar industry that requires long-range planning and daily involvement with people, technology, and merchandise? Are you eager to learn about forecasting, pricing, advertising, management, and computer operations? Are you able to work and communicate with others and use decision-making skills? Would you also like to be able to see the results of your efforts every day?

Then be sure to learn more about the business of retailing, the nation's second-largest industry and one that will allow you to put your knowledge and experience to work just about anywhere in the world. Retailing is a people business, and it is one of the most labor-intensive industries in the country.

Retailing is the sale of goods or services to customers through retail stores, catalogs or mail-order services, TV, and computers. The retailer is the intermediary between the producer of the goods

and the purchaser. Manufacturers rely heavily on retailers for the sale of their merchandise. It is often said that retailing simply means having the right items at the right price at the right time.

The typical flow of merchandise is from the manufacturer (and sometimes the next step is a wholesaler) to the retailer to the customer. Retailing is an industry that changes rapidly in response to the needs of its customers. These days many of the old stores and familiar names are gone, casualties of the mergers and acquisitions of the 1980s. Yet new types of stores have sprung up to keep this industry alive and well. It's harder than ever now to divide stores neatly into specialty shops and department stores. The lines are somewhat blurred, as some discounters go upscale and many department stores reduce prices.

The field of retailing is in a state of constant change because of the flow of new products and the exciting new ways of presenting these products to the public. Shoppers can make their purchases in stores, through catalogs, via websites, or by watching TV. There are a great many career opportunities for you to learn about in retailing. Promising futures can be found in organizations of all sizes and all kinds—department stores, specialty shops, buying offices, variety stores, TV merchandising programs, catalog houses, direct mail, and online operations. There are firms selling all kinds of goods from apparel to fashion items, furniture, food, and automobiles. There are careers in retailing for those who want to be their own boss, want to be involved with the latest technology, want to work in a large firm, want to perform any variety of tasks, and want to become specialists. Many diverse careers are available. Marketing and sales jobs will grow 24 percent by the year 2005, and the majority of those jobs will be concentrated in the retail world. Retail employers will need two million more workers for

retail careers. Now that a large segment of our population—the baby boomers—is well into its peak earning years, demographics indicate an increased demand for retail services. A wide choice of career opportunities is in place to offer rapid career growth and advancement.

You may be interested to learn that more than half of the people employed in retailing are female. A high percentage of women are employed in buying and selling and are moving up more swiftly than ever to management spots. Salaries and benefits compare favorably with other industries. Women have traditionally enjoyed the flexible hours the industry has offered, especially if they prefer part-time or holiday season schedules. And the world of retailing has long offered opportunities to all, regardless of sex, race, or background.

In the past, it was not unusual for retail employees to work extremely long hours, sometimes up to sixty- or sixty-five-hour schedules each week, often working late nights and Saturdays. Fortunately, retailing employment practices have changed dramatically. Many retailers have adjusted the typical workweek to thirty-five to forty hours, with fewer evening hours. Do keep in mind that it is now common for retail stores to be open on weekends, so working on a Saturday or Sunday is considered typical, although weekend schedules are frequently rotated among employees. However, middle-management and management executives generally work more hours than those employees who are hired on a precise weekly schedule, such as stock or sales workers.

Learn about every kind of opportunity that is available and consider the wide range of exciting choices before you decide where you may fit. Remember that once you are trained as a retailer, you can move from one type of retail operation to another, find job

openings in other parts of the country, or even open your own retail business. And retailing is never dull—it is alive with change.

Fashion Retailing

If you would like to become one of the fast-moving and enthusiastic workers who choose the fashion items that we will all be shopping for in the coming seasons, consider the world of fashion retailing. Such jobs are available in the thousands of stores located nationwide. You might find a job in a boutique, department or specialty store, or in one of the many buying offices and discount shops that sell apparel and fashion-related items. Jobs can also be found in firms that produce catalogs and fashion bulletins, as well as on TV networks and websites that offer all sorts of merchandise for sale. The growing focus on fashion has created a huge need for men and women with an interest in the fashion field. Retailers large and small are more involved with fashion merchandise than ever.

The retail field offers an enormous array of opportunities for ambitious workers. Beginning sales associates can move into career paths such as:

- Buying and merchandising
- Regional and corporate management
- Inventory control
- Distribution
- Finance
- Marketing
- Sales promotion/public relations
- Human resources

- Information systems
- E-commerce

Because retail outlets are so plentiful throughout America, beginning career opportunities are readily available. Merchandising activities are the heart of retail stores, and the principles of merchandising can be learned. Aside from any required specialized training, other qualities also are necessary for a successful career in retailing. For example, it is important that you are outgoing and enjoy working with a great variety of people. Energy, stamina, and the ability to work under stress are essential traits, as are good leadership abilities and self-confidence. Having a facility with numbers and details and being well organized are further requirements for the person eager to enter this world. In fashion retailing, excellent grooming and a keen interest in fashion are mandatory.

You may have to work long hours, but your hard work will not go unrewarded. You will be recognized for your efforts and have a chance to see the direct results. Your benefits will be career advancement and financial compensation that matches your productivity. And if you are willing to consider relocating, you may have additional opportunities in retailing. Indeed, if you are unwilling to consider a move, chances are you'll remain in a "holding pattern" at your current job title until the person above you moves on, thus opening a spot for you. Retail opportunity will be found in every region, in urban and suburban centers, throughout the United States and even abroad.

Are you generally interested in fashion—from the newest trends in clothing to cosmetics to home furnishings? Are you flexible and easy to deal with? Do you enjoy working with people every day rather than working by yourself? Are you able to communicate

well and do you enjoy public contact? Do you find constant changes and trends in fashion exciting? Does adventure appeal to you? Would you enjoy exploring new market items? The retail world operates at a fast pace, so those in it need to think and move quickly. If you feel prepared to work hard and tolerate long hours, pressure, and deadlines, the dynamic world of fashion retailing may hold a career for you.

The retailing industry in America has always been imaginative and innovative. American retailers dreamed up shopping malls and discount stores, catalogs, and television and E-commerce merchandising. And in the twenty-first century, we can expect America's shopping malls to become leisure and entertainment centers, as well as major retail centers, in an effort to attract more and more shoppers. Stores already have more flexible business hours, offering late-night and weekend shopping to accommodate working people.

You might have thought retailing simply meant keeping the shelves well stocked and waiting for customers to come in and select the desired items. Well, retailing has come a long way from that concept. The high-tech invasion has already begun. In fact, many large retailers now own or lease their own satellite communications systems. They handle inventory and pricing with lasers and run their businesses with high-powered computer systems. Retailers have upgraded their technology so they can serve customers faster. Firms such as Eddie Bauer, J. Crew, Lands' End, and L.L.Bean have sophisticated websites for customers' purchases. Retail employees with information technology skills will be in demand.

Electronic retailing will allow us to shop in the luxury and privacy of our own homes. And with the population growth contin-

uing well into the twenty-first century and millions of two-income families with more disposable income than ever, it is predicted that retailing will remain one of the nation's top growth industries. Retailing is big business, and it is modern business.

The retail industry currently employs more than twenty million people, or one out of every five American workers. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, retail employment is expected to increase to twenty-four million workers by the year 2005.

The excitement, the challenge, and the careers are there for you.

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HOW IT BEGAN: A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RETAILING

IT'S HARD TO imagine that cave dwellers of the Stone Age were involved with trade, but experts on early cultures tell us that it is so. It was probably as simple as trading one kind of animal skin for some food or a piece of flint to be used in hunting. However, that might have been the very start of retailing. We know that trade in ancient marketplaces existed in early Greece, Egypt, and Rome thousands of years ago.

The Indians of North America used their own barter system successfully—exchanging furs they trapped for food and liquor or other needed goods. The simple barter system of olden days has become very different and very sophisticated. In 1668 Canada's Hudson's Bay Company searched for new sources of beaver pelts and began the North American idea of merchandising. American retailing has not always been as vast and diversified as it is now. It has grown dramatically in the last few hundred years and has changed with the major forces of modern technology, communi-

cations, and cultural ideas to become the important career field that it is today. Simply stated, retailing is the delivery of goods or services to consumers. Let's take a look at how the world of retailing developed.

The Early Years

With the coming of the Industrial Revolution in the late 1700s, goods could be manufactured in ample quantities to satisfy the increasing demand of our young and growing nation.

Development of the cotton gin and the steam engine gave jobs to many, making it possible for more income to be spent on new goods. Soon factories sprouted up to replace the traditional small shop where items were made by hand. Mass production of goods began. The development of the railroad aided in the growth of towns and cities in the West; and, of course, the merchandise followed the settlers. Retailing has always grown rapidly in the most heavily populated areas. Marketplaces were developed to handle the flow of the merchandise. There is no doubt that retailing played a vital role in our early system of trade.

As retail trading centers expanded, merchants discovered the importance of assigning the buying duties to someone else to allow the retail store owner to concentrate on other tasks. Thus the buyer of merchandise became responsible for selecting what and how much of each item to buy and at what prices the items should be sold. The buyer became the specialist whose primary job was getting the merchandise to the customer.

As the United States expanded westward, the trading post was the ideal place to trade goods and also information. Wagon trains

needed the goods and news of the frontier, and trading posts were sought out by the wagon trains as they made their way westward.

The forerunner of today's road salesperson was the Yankee peddler, a person of great importance to the frontier people. The peddler visited less-populated frontier settlements, bringing a wide assortment of much-needed merchandise to pioneer families by wagon, boat, or horseback. The peddler's offerings sometimes included such luxuries as bits of laces and trims or fancy pins and hair combs, as well as staples. Goods were often traded as well as sold.

The General Store

The development of the general store provided customers with a wider assortment and wonderful variety of goods. Everything from farm equipment and tools to gunpowder, whiskey, food, and even eyeglasses was offered for sale, often on a credit basis. Most of the settlers' basic needs could be satisfied in the general store, and that included hearing local gossip, news, and politics. General stores served an important function as the local gathering place as well as a center of trade. In fact, general stores still exist in rural areas of the country, performing the same functions as their earlier counterparts.

Specialty Stores

By the middle of the nineteenth century, more sophisticated retail stores were developing as the size of the country and the population grew. The Industrial Revolution had reached our shores. Retailers became interested in specializing in certain kinds of goods

rather than stocking the haphazard assortment of items offered in the general stores. With the growth of cities it became necessary to stock more specialized merchandise. The larger towns and cities began to have a collection of specialty stores. These shops offered customers only one line of merchandise, such as shoes or hats, or one service, such as delivery or gift wrapping. The specialty store soon emerged as the major form of retailing, and stores cropped up next to each other, forming downtown centers. Merchandise and services were now available to the customers within blocks of each other. With the help of public transportation, shoppers were now able to ride downtown and take care of all their shopping needs.

During this expansive period, many of the great retailers began the operations that established the basis of American retailing: Sears Roebuck and Company in Minneapolis, J. L. Hudson in Detroit, Filene's in Boston, and Abraham & Straus in Brooklyn.

Modern Retailing

The retail world has experienced a great deal of change and growth, particularly in the types of stores that have surfaced. A description of these stores follows.

The Chain Store

In the late nineteenth century, the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (A & P) and F. W. Woolworth Company were among the first to introduce retailing to the nation on a grand scale. Buyers for these great chains purchased merchandise for several stores, rather than locating goods for just one retail unit. As you might imagine, in the early days of retailing, the buyers for these chains dealt with the difficulties of limited production of goods, very

unpredictable deliveries, and manufacturers who were not really able to mass-produce items with ease.

By the turn of the century, ready-made women's apparel finally started to appear in stores, along with the already popular children's and men's factory-made clothing. Women's ready-to-wear was launched as chains placed large orders for garments and were able to sell them at very affordable prices. Ready-to-wear items became very popular and were no longer considered to be for the lower classes, who could not afford to have custom-made clothing. To this day, fashion apparel and accessory items account for a significant percentage of retail sales, and they remain an exciting and ever-changing part of the retail industry.

The Resident Buying Office

With their mass purchasing power and main offices headquartered in the heart of the market, the strength of the chain stores became apparent. It seemed logical that an organization was needed that could supply its members with current market information, represent member stores in dealing with manufacturers, and pool several orders to get the lower-price benefits of mass merchandising.

Resident buying offices developed in the early days of retailing in New York City, the most important market. The resident buyer would visit the central marketplace and make merchandise selections and purchases for the store owner, who could not leave the store. Placing orders for the store owner was the major job of the resident buyer. As the number of product lines increased, the retailer had a harder time keeping up with the new advances in fibers and fabrics and manufacturing techniques. It made more sense to rely on the resident buyer for expertise in market trends and new developments, as well as for placing orders.

Before long, resident buyers established themselves as important links between the manufacturer and the retailer, who might only occasionally visit the central marketplace. The resident buyer became the representative for the retailer and acted as the retail store's advocate. In addition, the resident buyer's ability to purchase merchandise in volume became an important feature of the buying office. Most retail operations could not compete with the vast purchasing ability of the store chains without pooling their purchasing power. Volume buying by the resident buying office allowed them to take advantage of lower prices.

Resident buying offices have become very important to the member stores they serve for the wide range of services they offer, including their original function of placing orders for the retailer.

The Department Store

A new and departmentalized type of retailing surfaced in the late nineteenth century, as more and more people began to live in or near large cities. These developments heralded the emergence of the department store, in which a wide range of apparel and non-apparel items was sold. Although all the goods were sold in one large store, each department was run by its own buyer. It was as though customers had many different specialty shops all in one building, offering much more than a general store could. It was now possible for customers to shop for clothing, furniture, tools, and fashion accessories under one roof. An important feature of the department store was the provision of services: credit, tailoring and alterations, wrapping and delivery, and layaway plans. Some of the early department stores of the nineteenth century are firms you may be familiar with: Wanamaker's, Macy's, and Marshall Field's.

Department store retailing became popular, growing considerably after 1900 and expanding even further with the concept of branch stores. Today just about every American city, large and small, can boast a department store or branch store. The period from 1920 to 1945 was one of great prosperity and growth for department stores.

With the end of World War II and the trend of migration to the suburbs, department store growth slowed, but smaller branch stores cropped up in the new centers of population. The main store, or flagship store, was still responsible for the greatest assortment of stock and the greatest volume of sales. It was quickly observed that small inadequate branches would not do for the shoppers in the suburbs. They, too, wanted the full range of items the main stores carried. So large and modern branch stores were designed and built across the country, often generating sales greater than those of the main store. And today's department stores still offer individual "departments" and sell a wide variety of merchandise, from apparel to furniture to gourmet foods.

The Supermarket

The concept of the supermarket grew out of the Great Depression of the 1930s. With money scarce, supermarket owners lured in the public with low food prices, in contrast to the higher prices and smaller selections offered in the neighborhood food shops. Supermarkets were mainly self-service operations, where customers were able to buy many kinds of goods in one store. Meat, dairy, and vegetables were available, as were drugs and beauty aids, hardware, and small home improvement items. The supermarket was like a department store for food and related merchandise, offering self-service selections and low markup to the public.

Suburban Shopping Centers

Millions of Americans moved to suburbia shortly after World War II. The growth of the suburbs was dramatic. As retail centers followed the population, it was only natural that suburban shopping centers became part of the retailing picture. The 1950s brought American shoppers this major retailing development.

The suburban shopping centers offered stiff competition to the downtown shopping areas. Wise downtown retailers opened branch stores in the suburban centers, anticipating the trend away from downtown. With vast parking areas at no charge, new and exciting stores—even restaurants and movie theaters to attract customers—the suburban shopping center certainly reflected the tastes of suburban American families.

Discount Stores

As mentioned above, a great shift of population from the cities to the suburbs occurred when World War II ended. The young couples who were now new home owners needed everything for their homes: large and small appliances, furniture, lawn and garden equipment, and tools. The idea of a discount style of purchasing—buying items at less than retail prices, usually with few or no extra services—was an immediate hit.

Discount store owners were able to keep their costs down by doing business in low-rent, low-maintenance locations and by trying to reduce the cost of sales help and markups. Suburban consumers quickly accepted these “no-frills” settings in an effort to save money on every purchase. And the idea of shopping at discount became as acceptable as buying groceries in the cut-rate supermarkets.

Mass Marketers

The development of mass marketers has changed the face of retailing. Indeed, stores like Wal-Mart and Target now account for a huge percentage of all the mass retail volume in the country.

Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, with sales of more than \$191 billion in 2001, seems unstoppable. Its strength at one time was in hard goods and consumables, rather than in fashion items, but that has changed. Because of the volume it commands, Wal-Mart can undercut just about any other retailer on the prices of basic products.

Sam Walton, Wal-Mart's founder, began his career as a management trainee at JCPenney. Just five years later, in 1945, he opened his first Wal-Mart store. Wal-Mart's growth has been remarkable, as just a decade ago the firm was ringing up a mere \$4.6 billion in annual sales. The firm now operates more than four thousand stores under a variety of names: Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, Hypermarket USA, and Byd's Warehouse Outlets, with branches in Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, Mexico, and Puerto Rico.

Target stores are often called the "discount stores of tomorrow." They offer great presentation of timely fashion merchandise. What sets Target apart from other discounters is an upscale image and a focus on trendy merchandise, comparable with specialty stores like the Gap, Limited, and moderate-priced department stores, rather than with traditional discounters. This thirteen-hundred-plus store chain, owned by the Dayton Hudson Corporation, also offers hard goods, but its real strength is in home and apparel items. Target's presentation of merchandise is clean, and the stores have wide shopping aisles with clear signage for easy shopping. Moreover, customer service is one of Target's main attractions. The employees refer to the customers as "guests" and treat them accordingly.

While the impressive names of Wal-Mart, Sears, and Target stores often dominate retailing news, the discount store has been gaining an enviable share of the market. Surveys indicate that the typical off-price shopper is between eighteen and thirty-four years old and is generally a working woman with children. Most of these shoppers believe they find good value with low prices at the discount stores, and they are contributing to their growth.

Since World War II the number and size of discount stores have grown considerably.

Franchise Operations

Although they first appeared as early as the 1890s, franchise operations became quite popular in the 1950s. A franchise operation is a business (or sponsor) that allows a franchisee to have operating rights. You are probably familiar with many of the service franchises that are popular nationwide such as Dairy Queen, McDonald's, Holiday Inn, and Hertz Rent a Car.

A strong working relationship exists between the sponsor and the franchisee. The franchisee pays a fee up front to the sponsor and then continues to pay the sponsor royalties based on sales. In return the franchisee gets the product, training, and an extensive local or national advertising campaign. The advertising and marketing benefits alone can make this sort of venture very profitable to the franchisee.

The McDonald's Corporation might be one of the best-known food franchisers of all time, with more than ten thousand individual retail stores worldwide. Today starting a franchise with McDonald's would cost in the range of \$500,000. But there are hundreds of other franchising operations to consider. You can get started in some of these businesses with as little as \$10,000 start-up money.

In some situations, sponsors may even lend you part of the start-up fee.

Boutiques

Boutique stores cropped up in London in the 1960s. These small shops featured unique kinds of items, often handcrafted or one-of-a-kind pieces, in attractive settings that lured customers with their special ambience and decor.

It did not take long for boutiques to become established in this country within larger stores, such as Macy's or Henri Bendel in New York City, conveying the charm and unique feeling that the boutique atmosphere provides. This concept charged the retail environment with an excitement that still holds strong today. Many new businesses and entrepreneurs have blossomed in the boutique trend. An entrepreneur is someone who starts a new business, such as a retail store, and is responsible for the store's profits as well as losses. Enterprising men and women took advantage of their entrepreneurial skills to bring to the customer innovative merchandise and a high level of service.

Hypermarkets

Beginning in the late 1980s, we got a glimpse of the future direction of retailing—hypermarkets. Hypermarkets are giant supermarkets and discount stores all rolled into one great shopping adventure. Long popular in Europe, these sprawling “malls without walls” are now popular in the United States. American and European retailers are betting that shoppers will like the low prices and the chance to find just about everything under one roof—and a huge roof at that. Customers are lining up in stores the size of five

football fields with two dozen checkout lanes to purchase their garden supplies, TV sets, groceries, and clothing. The blend of food, apparel, and general merchandise is important to the future growth of retailing. The new American hypermarkets, mainly in the South and the West, are also offering shoppers restaurants, beauty salons, oil changes for their autos, and supervised playrooms for their toddlers.

In the last decade, Wal-Mart has opened Hypermart USA and Kmart has launched American Fare. These hypermarket businesses offer lower prices because they have the ability to make larger and more frequent purchases of merchandise. And they are counting on the business of price-conscious customers who are not able to resist the blend of good prices and good services.

Warehouse Clubs

Shopping clubs are another destination of choice for consumers making their weekly or monthly stock-up shopping trip. Wholesale clubs, which charge a fee for membership to the general public and to small businesspeople, have become a real trend. Clubs like Costco and Sam's Warehouse are the fastest-growing retail segment in the country. It's generally a self-service environment without delivery service, advertising, or amenities. With an annual membership, shoppers have access to national brand names at low prices.

The warehouse club environment is quickly reshaping how consumer goods are packaged and sold. Many shoppers are learning that they can easily do without the frills. "Value" is the operative word, and retail analysts believe that warehouse retailing is here to stay, as shoppers show their loyalty to operations springing up around the nation.

Concrete floors, stacked displays, and bag-it-yourself checkout counters have not deterred shoppers, and no-frills shopping is not only acceptable, but trendy. In the 1990s Americans were in a discount mindset, where it was considered appropriate to be frugal. Shoppers realize that they just don't need the extras. The clubs offer price and value—an unbeatable combination.

Market research has shown that higher-income and larger households shop the clubs most frequently. And grocery-related sales make up more than half of the warehouse club sales. A recent opinion research study indicated that shoppers thought clubs were “a fine place to shop.” Somehow, the warehouse environment has managed to avoid what plagues most supermarkets—the sense that this is a boring place to spend your dollars.

Specialty Superstores

The specialty superstore features a selection of goods at very low prices in just one product area. Toys ‘R’ Us is a wonderful example of such an operation, and it is growing rapidly all across the United States. The most popular categories of specialty superstore tend to be in the areas of toys, health and beauty aids, children’s apparel, consumer electronics, and office supplies.

Malls

Millions of visitors, in addition to millions of shoppers, travel from the world over just to get a taste of these exciting retail destinations. Some of these malls are modest in size, with just a few dozen retail stores. Other malls, however, boast hundreds of stores, offering a spectacular number of choices. For example, Grapevine Mills has 1.1 million square feet of shopping and is one of the major

tourist attractions in Dallas. Sawgrass Mills, with 1.9 million square feet, draws twenty million visitors each year to Fort Lauderdale and is the second most popular tourist attraction in Florida, after Disneyland. And the largest of U.S. malls, the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota—with more than five hundred specialty stores, four department stores, fifty restaurants, fourteen movie theaters, and more—welcomes forty-two million guests each year!

Retailing on the Internet

The Internet, the world's largest computer network, is becoming retailing's best marketing tool and has become one of retailing's fastest-growing areas.

In many ways, the online explosion has changed the way we make our purchases. This new trend in electronic commerce (or E-commerce) is opening many doors for new and exciting job opportunities. E-commerce, also referred to as E-tailing, came into its own in the 1998 Christmas season. Sales skyrocketed and, in many cases, exceeded expectations. Electronic commerce shows no signs of slowing.

There will be jobs for workers who can build websites and manage the distribution of merchandise for profitable online sales. Currently, many traditional buyers have the responsibility for buying goods for websites, but more and more, the industry searches for applicants who specialize in *online* retailing and can create seamless paths between websites and support systems. Anyone with an interest in information technology will be sought after.

Traditional retailing continues to bring in huge amounts of consumer dollars, but E-tailing, or electronic retailing, offers overwhelming opportunities.

Retail stores (brick-and-mortar) are certainly here to stay. But “click-and-mortar,” which is a blend of online and traditional retailing, is new. Click-and-mortar retailing involves retail stores and E-tail sites. Macy’s, J. Crew, and Toys ‘R’ Us are some examples of operations that have both retail units and E-tail sites.

The projection for 2003 is that online retail sales will grow to \$108 billion. For most shoppers, convenience is the big draw for online purchasing, perhaps more than price.

Amazon.com, the major online bookseller founded and run by Jeff Bezos, has now become the biggest music retailer and has moved into toys as well. Amazon.com set the standard with its early online experience.

When Web retailing surfaced, many in the industry thought shoppers would soon disappear from the stores. Instead, shoppers began to use the Internet for researching and buying products, but they also have continued to shop in stores and to order from catalogs.

Research by Shop.org found that shoppers who use multiple channels—stores, online, catalogs—spend more. It’s now impossible to ignore the impact of the Internet. Online retailing is growing up and has proven itself for millions of shoppers.

Retail Kiosks

An outstanding industry projection is that by 2006 twenty-three million shoppers might be buying goods and services through retail kiosks.

Merchants such as Crate & Barrel, the Gap, Staples, and Barnes & Noble have started to assist shoppers with kiosks. With advances in technology, highly reliable kiosks are now becoming available to consumers.

Younger shoppers are most familiar with kiosk technology. Studies show that 90 percent of six- to seventeen-year-olds have computer access, so these tech-savvy consumers are perfect customers for kiosk use.

Vans, a California-based retailer of clothing, footwear, and accessories, aims for the young in-line skater and skateboarder market. In addition to its E-tailing, Vans touch-screen kiosks give information on athletic events, tours, contests, and any news of interest to the average Vans customer—a fourteen-year-old male—thus providing yet another channel or source of information for the shopper.

Successful retailers must stay on top of consumer trends: past, current, and future. This is particularly important for retailers of fashion items, where styles and trends are constantly changing from season to season. Small independent store owners can keep up-to-date on fashion changes by reading fashion magazines and trade and business journals. By determining as closely as possible what customers will want to buy, retailers can satisfy shoppers' needs and be profitable. Those profits can also go a long way in contributing to the success of the retailer and the community the retail store serves.

The Next Phase

Many in the industry predict that M-commerce, such as through wireless phone lines, will be the next phase that shoppers will be introduced to, as more brands announce plans to boost their sales with the use of mobile technology. Smart marketers who can see the benefits of this technology will be ahead of the game.

Of course, retailers must reflect current trends, regardless of the type of merchandise that is sold. Window and counter displays,

along with advertising and store promotions, let the customer know the type of merchandise being offered and that the retailer is aware of the latest styles. Retailing in America has grown from a simple system of trading to a multibillion-dollar industry that employs millions of workers. This past century has brought about dramatic changes. However, the uppermost goal of the retailer still remains the same: to meet the needs of the all-important customer. Shoppers now have the luxury of a mixed approach to making their purchases, and retailing still remains a question of finding the most desirable items and selling them at the best prices.

Customers and Consumers

We are all customers and consumers. We are in and out of all types of retail stores each day searching for basics that we need or looking for some new and different luxury that we don't need, but want.

At the start of the 1950s, there was a major emphasis on the consumer in the field of retailing. This emphasis has continued. The concept of consumerism is centered on the idea that the needs and desires of the consumer are of great importance. As a result of sensitivity to this kind of thinking, most retailers offer us products for sale along with some kind of service for those products. Whether we buy a small appliance, such as a radio or VCR unit, or something as large and as costly as an automobile or a refrigerator, we expect to have those items serviced when necessary. Some major retailers are well known for their outstanding ability to provide service for their products, such as Sears or JCPenney. Smaller retailers that cannot afford to offer extensive service operations must rely on the manufacturers to handle the servicing.

Most stores are very interested in building strong customer relations, and toward this end they maintain customer service depart-

ments. These units handle a number of conveniences for the customer, such as gift wrapping, layaway plans, deferred payments, and delivery of merchandise, in addition to the servicing of merchandise purchased at the store.

Major manufacturers, particularly of household appliances, often insert a return-by-mail postcard in their products. Users are asked a variety of questions about how and why they decided to buy a particular item and what their reactions to it are. These candid responses offered by consumers after they purchase and use the product are valuable to the manufacturer.

Kinds of Customers

Most customers want to be first with the newest trend or fad, whether in clothing or cars. But each one of us shops quite differently, and it is helpful to understand what kinds of customers might be in retail stores. Here is a breakdown of categories of shoppers. (Note: the *customer* is defined as the purchaser of goods or services, while the *consumer* is the person who actually uses those goods or services. In this book, the words are used interchangeably.)

Innovative Customer

This shopper wants to be first with the newest product. He or she enjoys being a trendsetter, being the first to wear the latest fad item, or owning the most advanced appliance or auto.

Comparison Shopper

This shopper spends time checking prices in various stores. He or she will also compare the quality of the products, seeing what the name brands offer. Comparison shoppers are concerned with getting the best buy for their money. If good prices and good services

are offered, the comparison shopper will probably return to make the purchase.

Impulse Buyer

This shopper makes a quick decision to buy items. These are often fairly inexpensive items rather than “big-ticket” or higher-priced items. Supermarket checkout counters are the ideal location for such impulse merchandise. Think about all the racks of magazines, candies, gums, and other novelties that are stocked right near the cashier.

The Follower

This shopper usually buys the established bestsellers. Such customers make their purchases with care and generally need to feel quite satisfied with their choices before they will actually buy them. They often rely on the recommendations of family or friends.

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2

CAREERS IN RETAILING

A CAREER IN the retail world calls for a competitive person with a range of qualities:

- The ability to get along with coworkers and to develop an understanding of customers' wants and needs
- The ability to adapt to the constantly changing global marketplace
- The ability to be self-motivated and a self-starter; to be decisive and make quick, calculated decisions
- The ability to analyze data, predict trends, solve problems, and be technically current
- The ability to work well under pressure

Large retail organizations have several areas you need to learn about. Although the exact positions may vary from store to store, you should familiarize yourself with these retail job titles:

Sales and Marketing

Personal shopper
Sales associate
Sales manager
Department manager
Special events director

Operations

Stock clerk
Operations coordinator
Associate store manager

Concept and Design

Visual merchandiser
Display director
Store planner
Technical designer
Product developer

Buying and Merchandising

Buyer
Merchandiser
Divisional merchandise manager

Administration

Personnel or human resources manager
Information technology manager
District manager
Store manager
Divisional merchandise manager
General merchandise manager

Elements of Retail Operations

Regardless of the size of a retail store, keeping it afloat requires certain basic operations. The same responsibilities handled by two or three employees in a small store will be handled by a greater number of workers in a larger store. But these tasks will differ in quantity only, not in kind. So regardless of the size of the retail store, there are five important functions of retailing that are essential to all retail operations. They are:

1. **Operations/store management**—providing services for the customer, maintaining the store's appearance and arranging for the receipt, storage, and delivery of merchandise
2. **Sales promotion**—designing and creating means of selling the goods and encouraging customers to shop in the store
3. **Personnel or human resources**—selecting, training, placing, evaluating, and promoting employees
4. **Finance or control**—keeping tabs on profits, losses, and all other details of the financial area
5. **Merchandising**—planning, buying, and selling the goods

Good work experience in any of these areas may lead to a specialized career for you in later years. Each of the five areas offers interesting opportunities. What follows is an overview of each segment. Consider how well you might fit into any of the areas described, including the support areas that would be part of any large retailing firm.

Operations/Store Management

The store management function is responsible for maintaining the store's physical plant, warehousing and delivering merchandise,

operating and maintaining the store's supplies, providing various customer services, and maintaining store security.

A successful store operations executive is generally interested in organizing, supervising, and directing people. Store operations workers attempt to ensure the smooth running of every department. An understanding of systems and procedures is necessary, in addition to a real sense of service to the organization.

Sales Promotion

The promotion division incorporates talents in writing, drawing and graphics, window and store display, and publicity. Every retail firm needs to promote itself and does so by communicating with customers in a variety of ways. Advertising, publicity, special features and events, and even the creative use of window and interior displays can provide information, generate excitement, and establish a strong reputation for a store.

Large operations use their advertising or promotion departments to design events, fashion shows, or themes that the entire store can get involved in. Getting the message out to the public about the merchandise or the services of the retailer is important to keep the customer interested in and aware of that firm.

Promotion generally includes the advertising department, which is responsible for advertising in all forms. Its function is to get customers to shop in the store. Advertising can be done through newspaper or magazine ads, radio and TV announcements, or special promotions. On the advertising staff you might find copywriters, artists, or direct mail specialists.

Retail stores sponsor many events and community activities. The public relations department usually handles these. It attempts to get as much free publicity for the organization as possible, which

might include sponsoring fashion shows or events for charitable causes.

The display or visual merchandising department makes sure the windows and interior and exterior of the stores are attractive, and that all merchandise is presented in the most appealing manner. This unit also has responsibility for the signs, decorations, or any other visual items that any department might require. Imagination and creativity in addition to specific talents in writing, drawing, and illustration are needed, as well as an interest in putting ideas into shape. The sales promotion area offers exciting, creative opportunities to men and women.

Personnel or Human Resources

This division has the responsibility of locating, interviewing, selecting, training, placing, and promoting workers, as well as keeping accurate personnel records. The selection of workers must be efficient, particularly during peak periods, such as the Christmas season, when many extra workers need to be hired and trained. Training programs for all new workers are designed and implemented through the personnel unit. It is also responsible for employee activities, benefits, and welfare information, such as details on retirement plans, dental and medical insurance, and pension and profit sharing. Labor-market relations and wage and salary administration are other tasks performed by personnel workers. Many large operations have employee counseling available to assist workers with health, personal, and family problems that can affect their productivity on the job.

The size of the personnel department is generally determined by the size of the retail operation: volume of sales, number of departments or stores, and services that are offered.

Finance or Control

The treasurer's or controller's unit is responsible for the organization's assets and for ensuring financial soundness. A close check must be maintained on monies coming in and expenditures paid out. Workers in this department tally vital statistics that indicate the firm's financial position. They set up systems for use in the stores, calculate payrolls, determine taxes due, and maintain essential records for the organization. As keepers of the store's resources, control workers must work with great accuracy and precision.

More than half of the sales made in department stores are handled on credit. The credit and collection workers are important to the operation of this department. They interview applicants, check credit ratings, recommend various types of charge plans, bill charge customers, authorize deferred payments, and handle collection of overdue bills.

The recent computerization of many areas—payroll, inventory, sales, customer invoicing, credit and collection—has eliminated much of the tedious and time-consuming reporting. Anyone with an interest in computers should be aware that men and women with a background in this area are in demand.

To be successful in the financial area, a worker needs facility and training in math and accounting principles, understanding of financial reports, and the ability to interpret economic data. An ability to accurately perform detailed work is important, as is being a well-organized and careful worker.

Merchandising

A successful retailer must buy and merchandise goods effectively. The buyer is the key person in this important process.

The Buyer

The buyer must be aware of the customer's needs and search out and purchase those items, making sure they can be sold at a profit. The buyer also has to be aware of new items and trends in styles and design. And the buyer must always motivate the sales force to sell more and more goods. The goal always is to top the record of the past season.

The buyer's job requires spending time away from the store to visit various markets and search for merchandise to sell. These may be traditional markets such as New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles, or more exotic ones like India, China, or Sri Lanka. Travel is a large part of the job for most buyers.

The candidate with good organizational skills, math ability, a high degree of enthusiasm, energy and stamina, good decision-making skills, and an interest in anticipating what the public will want can have excellent opportunities in merchandising.

The Merchandise Manager

The merchandise manager, as the head of the merchandising function, establishes policy and sets goals. Being upper management's representative to the buyers, the merchandise manager holds a position of great importance that includes a very close working relationship with all buyers. Buyers rely on their merchandise manager to alert them to current business trends, give them advice about various departmental problems, help with future planning and forecasting, and suggest effective sales promotion and advertising strategies. Merchandise managers should be well informed on the contents of each buyer's reports to try to spot future trends or weaknesses in the merchandise collection. And they must coordi-

nate the efforts of all of the buyers in the organization, so that a uniform image is presented to the customer. As always, the merchandise manager keeps his or her eyes open to spot unusual talent for promotion, help the growth of the business, and provide an incentive for all workers. This top executive position requires a great deal of background and experience in the retail field.

The merchandise manager may have several divisional merchandise managers as assistants, each of whom is a specialist in a particular kind of merchandise.

Retail Technologies

Technology has become an important part of the daily functions of a retail business. Every sale represents a series of technology-supported processes that previously were done manually.

State-of-the-art information systems technologies help retailers cut costs, reduce inefficiencies, and enhance sales. They also allow retailers to use databases that contain details about customers' shopping preferences.

Retail technologies have streamlined the ordering and delivering of goods to stores. New hardware and software technology has improved all aspects of business; from planning and ordering to cash and credit processing, new technologies have changed the way retailers do business.

Retailing and information systems may seem like an odd combination, but it is vital to retailing's future. Managing and analyzing data from sales is critical to setting up departments and stocking the right merchandise. Efficiently moving goods from the supplier to the warehouse to the retail store is critical.

Retailing Career Path

The following positions and estimated salaries will give you a good idea of a possible career path in retailing.

Position	Salary Range	Description
Management Trainee	\$26,000–\$32,000	A chance to learn store operations, product mix, and the basics of merchandising
Assistant Manager	\$32,000–\$37,000, plus bonus	Responsible for a specific department or a combination of several areas
Store Manager	\$37,000–\$85,000, plus bonus	Responsible for all operations and departments in the store
District Manager	\$70,000 and up, plus bonus	Liaison between the store and regional groups; responsible for a group of stores in a particular area
Regional Manager	\$90,000 and up, plus bonus	Manages a group of stores in a geographic region, often crossing several states
Divisional Vice President	\$150,000 and up, plus bonus	Title is generally found in a large retail organization, such as a department store; usually responsible for certain types of departments within the stores, such as hard goods or children's lines

Support Services

In large department stores, there are several service offices that assist the buyers in a variety of ways.

Testing Office

Large, profitable chains, such as JCPenney or Sears, can afford to staff a testing office. Some stores maintain their own laboratories,

but many other organizations use independent testing services when necessary. A buyer may wish to examine a product before deciding to purchase it. In some areas testing may be considered a standard procedure. Many shoppers rely heavily on the claims made by the testing department for products ranging from clothing to appliances. The tests set specifications and standards for the items being tested, eliminate defective items, and help inform consumers of the benefits of certain products. For example, rugs that are stain and mildew resistant or fabric that won't fade or deteriorate in the washing machine have all been tested strenuously before being sold to the public with that particular claim. As customers are paying more and more attention to their consumer rights, this area appears to be expanding and more important than ever before.

The Fashion Office

This kind of office is often found in larger department stores that focus on the sale of fashion apparel and accessories. As fashion becomes more important to the consumer, almost every retail sales department has a fashion interest. Having the right color of toaster or microwave oven in stock is as critical to the appliance buyer as the right color of hosiery is to the accessories buyer.

The efforts of the fashion office begin with a prediction of the next season's trends. This requires researching the current market and forecasting the next year's styles, as well as having a solid understanding of fibers, fabrics, leathers, and furs. Information that the fashion coordinator, the head of the fashion department, collects while visiting markets is then passed on to buyers. Hem lengths, silhouette, and color combinations are reported as early as possible to assist the buyers with their decisions. It is important

that the sales force, which has contact with the customers, be well informed of the latest fashion news. The sales force can learn about fashion happenings in group meetings, by reading bulletins or newsletters, or by attending fashion shows. The fashion office plays a major role in coordinating those shows, from selecting the merchandise, writing the commentary, and staging the fashion show. Fashion-minded retailers know the importance of having a sales force that is knowledgeable and up-to-date in fashion information and is able to help increase sales by suggesting complementary accessories to customers.

The fashion coordinator is responsible for the coordination of all fashion merchandise in all departments and for staging fashion shows to help keep the store's personnel informed and current. He or she must also create a coordinated fashion image for the entire store.

In this way customers are presented with a single fashion message, which helps them coordinate their own purchases in every department. A customer buying a suit in one department should also be able to buy matching accessories with the appropriate style and color in other areas of the store.

Control Office

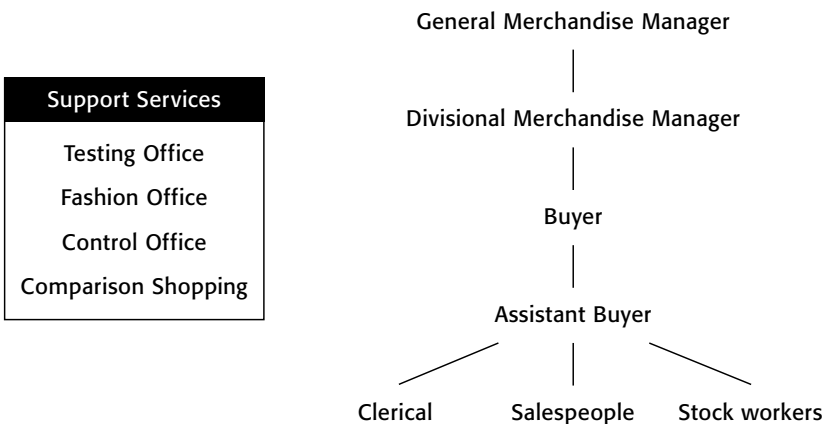
Workers in this office gather information from the stock inventories and sales figures and supply the buyers with daily details about up-to-the-minute inventories, sales, purchases, and other vital information. This gives the buyer and upper-level executives useful data to help them make merchandising and buying plans. In small stores, the buyer is often responsible for gathering and tallying these kinds of records without the help of the unit control staff.

Comparison Shopping

This office has a staff of shoppers who compare the merchandise, assortment, prices, and services offered to customers with those of the competing stores. They also study the competition's advertising. Results of these comparisons are then reported to the buyer. Sometimes comparison shoppers are able to buy and bring in unique and unusual merchandise that other retailers are offering, or an item of similar quality that is priced lower than at their own store. They have the authority to purchase the item and bring it back to the store for review. Comparison shoppers must operate with a shopper's point of view in the best interest of the consumer. The quality of the store's services is also checked by comparison shopping unit members. They make note of the attitude and manner of the sales staff and may pretend to be customers to assess the quality of the store workers.

This information is all very helpful to the buyers. In smaller organizations, an assistant buyer may perform some of these tasks.

Here is a breakdown of the typical division of responsibility in a large retail organization.



Room at the Top

The demands of a retail organization are extremely varied, and so are the qualities needed for success in the field. You should be aware of the following characteristics that retailers say are essential for beginners to have:

- Ability to communicate well, both written and spoken
- Ability to deal with many people
- Enthusiasm
- Creativity
- Willingness to accept responsibility
- Ability to supervise and have leadership potential
- Physical and emotional stamina
- Ability to tolerate pressure

There is always room at the top of the retailing career ladder for ambitious workers, as the retail field offers countless opportunities for hardworking and dedicated men and women. People are truly the most important feature of this industry. Good workers can make the difference between a successful or failing retail business.

Retailing today is undergoing more changes than ever before. The industry is clearly responding to the needs and demands of its customers—and retail shoppers are savvy shoppers. They know that they have many choices, from superstores to more personal boutiques, from specialty chains to discount stores. Currently retailers generate excitement to attract men, women, and children of all ages. The retail settings of today are a world away from the retail stores of a generation ago. No matter which aspect of the retail world appeals to you, you can be sure that challenge and excitement await you.

There are few industries that are as important to our country's economy as retailing. The strength of the retail sector is one of the primary measures of our business health. You are wise to consider a career path that contributes to our nation's strength and provides great personal rewards as well. In fact, the retail sector is one of the major sources of jobs in the U.S. economy, representing more than 20 percent of all jobs.

A note of caution: anyone interested in pursuing a retail career should be aware of the severe limitations that face those with a record of shoplifting.

Retail organizations keep detailed security records for many years. This does not mean that you are a risk only if you have a police record, as you may be part of a retailer's own security file. Because shoplifting has caused such a major loss of income for stores, this crime is treated very seriously. When applicants apply for retail positions, security records are carefully checked, often going back for as many as six or seven years. You are considered a security risk if your name is on file for any sort of security reason.

If this presents a problem for you, be sure to discuss your situation openly with a placement counselor so that he or she can give you more information on how to deal with this.

3

EXECUTIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS

IT TAKES A great range of skills and an assortment of very highly motivated workers to keep America's retail world on the go. And, of course, this means a broad range of possible careers for anyone with an interest in retailing.

In general, larger retail operations may offer more executive and supervisory opportunities. In smaller stores, the owner and one or two employees may be responsible for all operations—planning, buying, receiving, pricing, advertising, display, and selling—even the handling of inventory accounts and credit records. However, in a retail firm employing hundreds of workers, specialized departments take care of the wide array of tasks that are needed to run the stores. Executives and supervisors are important in their roles of directing and delegating work in each area. Most large retailers offer an executive training program for men and women with college backgrounds to groom them for executive positions.

In the retail industry, top-level executives are responsible for setting policies and establishing objectives. Mid-level managers are responsible for carrying out these policies.

An Opportunity to Learn

Each retail firm has its special method of training new workers. Generally the more formal training programs are found in larger retail organizations. Executive trainee programs typically last anywhere from two to twelve months in most organizations. Trainees are usually exposed to the full gamut of retailing, from buying to security. At JCPenney, for example, the training covers logistics, presentations, advertising, marketing, sales leadership, and human resources. Whatever type of program is offered, the goal is to give the beginner enough information and direction so that he or she can eventually take on the duties of an assistant buyer. In some instances, trainees move into other areas that will be described later. The training is a wonderful introduction to the techniques and principles of the executive retailer's world, and every effort is made to enable the trainee to be productive as early as possible. The training is offered in several ways:

- **Formal training program.** This type of training simulates a classroom situation where training experts give assignments to the trainees. Generally classroom sessions are held in the morning, with an opportunity to be on the sales floor or in the receiving areas or stockrooms of the store in the afternoon.
- **On-the-job training program.** In this situation the trainee is assigned to a suitable entry-level job, and all learning takes place on that job. The employee, under the guidance of senior workers, learns through actually doing tasks—very much learning by hands-on experience.
- **Job rotation program.** In a program like this, the trainee is assigned to one job for a particular period of time and

then is moved on to other assignments. This ensures that the trainee gets a broad view of the overall operation, while also having a chance to actually experience working in each area.

Whatever type of training program is used, it will surely start with information about the company's policies and goals and then go on to discuss store organization and management, buying procedures, sources of supply, and basic merchandising math. The next step is actually assigning trainees to store departments, so that it is possible for them to see the flow of merchandise and begin to understand how important "the sale" is to the total picture of retailing. Major department stores offer this very demanding, but very desirable, entry position as part of the executive training program. Those who acquire one of these competitive spots have been selected because of their potential executive ability. Most executive trainees are groomed for careers in merchandising or operations.

Getting a Trainee Spot

The retailer who hires you for the executive training program will want to prepare you in all aspects of the retail operation to develop your management skills. Those hired for executive training programs are carefully selected from community colleges, four-year colleges, and graduate schools offering degrees in retailing, merchandising, or business management.

While competing for positions in executive training programs, candidates are closely scrutinized by retail recruiters. Frequently recruiters interview students on college campuses and then invite the students of their choice to visit their stores for second interviews with other store executives. Applicants are assessed on their

communication skills, how well they present themselves, school and work records, extracurricular activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, level of energy and enthusiasm, and how much interest they are able to express about a career in retailing.

The Trainee Program

Once hired, trainees are started on a rigorous program that may include evening or weekend hours. Each retailer has a different program, so the length of such activities depends entirely on the particular store. Executive training programs often start in the summer, right after graduation. Some stores add new training groups in September or February to handle midyear graduates.

Smaller retailers can add new workers in an informal training setting at any time of the year. Executive trainees work hard while they are part of the training program, earning a salary from the start.

During the first days or weeks in a program, trainees may be busy meeting members of the firm's management team, including the president of the firm. They may visit branch stores and learn all about the divisions in each unit. They will probably have the opportunity to listen to managers talk about how each division operates and how all of the areas of the operation coordinate their efforts. It also will be necessary to be trained in selling procedures and to spend time on the selling floor.

Once the trainee is assigned to a particular department, he or she has a chance to meet the buyer and the assistant buyer and observe how they do their jobs. Trainees may be rotated to several different selling departments, thus getting a full range of merchandise experiences.

Part of the training period will probably include spending time in the operations area working next to employees in the shipping department or the receiving room, or in the control unit observing the billing process or the auditing team. After six to twelve months, the trainee may be ready for an assignment as an assistant buyer, if he or she has a merchandising interest. Of course, assignments depend on the availability of such openings, and they may be in the main store or in a branch store.

During the entire training program, the personnel department evaluates the trainees. The training director and supervisor review each trainee's performance, and progress and productivity are noted carefully.

Although the goal of each executive training program is to prepare candidates for executive positions in the future and to help them develop managerial and leadership skills, each organization's policy varies. In some programs it is typical for a trainee to land a buyer's job two to three years after graduating from training. In other cases it may take longer. For example, the retail management program at Sears lasts for nine months and is set up on a rotational schedule. It is designed to offer about 250 trainees a hands-on experience in a variety of areas. After an orientation that gives details about their role as sales managers, the trainees are rotated through sales and support departments. They eventually get a taste of shipping, finance, visual merchandising, personnel, and customer service. Trainees learn at any one of the eight training centers Sears runs across the country. After this training period, the associates are assigned to manage a group of twenty to forty junior associates. Of course, promotions will always depend on individual performance and motivation.

Executive training programs offer a wonderful beginning to those with a strong interest in retailing. But they are not for everyone, nor are they the only routes to a retailing career. A good first step would be to pinpoint your area of interest. For instance, try to determine which type of operation attracts you the most: a larger or smaller store, a chain or a specialty store, a discount operation, or a more exclusive boutique. Learn as much as you can about each and decide what career opportunities they offer that appeal to you.

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THE BUYER: A KEY POSITION

BUYERS' JOBS ARE never really the same. The type of organization they work for determines their responsibilities. However, it is the responsibility of all buyers, and their assistants, to make wise buying decisions that will be profitable for their organizations. Some of the more common buying positions are discussed below.

The Assistant Buyer

The job of the assistant buyer is to help the buyer in every way. The duties of an assistant buyer are determined by each buyer, so the job can vary greatly even within the same retail organization. A solid working relationship between every assistant buyer and buyer is essential for success. Because the responsibilities of a buyer are so vast, a buyer for a large store or for several departments needs the help of one or more assistants. The assistant buyer can handle a variety of clerical details and free the buyer to handle duties such as visiting markets and purchasing goods. The assistant buyer is really an

understudy for the buyer. He or she learns to assume the managerial functions of the department when the buyer is not available.

The assistant also helps the buyer with many buying and merchandising tasks, such as merchandise control, handling customer service, supervising the sales force, assisting in buying selections, writing orders, receiving merchandise deliveries, and promoting goods. Working as an assistant provides a splendid opportunity to observe the buyer at work and learn the routines and responsibilities by helping to do them, as busy buyers frequently need to delegate authority to their assistants. Promotion to the buyer level typically occurs after two to three years.

In large retail department stores, most assistant buyers get their jobs as a result of completing the executive training program or on-the-job training within that department. This way, by observing the buyer and participating in all of his or her duties, an assistant can quickly learn about the major components of the retail business: selling, customers, merchandise, and the marketplace.

Sales and Salespeople

An assistant can help a buyer to supervise, instruct, and schedule the work hours for the salespeople in the department. He or she will consult with the buyer to determine sales quotas and then relay that information to the sales staff, motivating salespeople to fill the daily/weekly sales quotas. The assistant buyer will also inform salespeople about new items in the department and how to present that merchandise to customers, work closely with newly hired salespeople to introduce them to policies and routines of the department, and work with the more difficult customers if the salesperson needs such assistance.

Customer Relations

Assistant buyers can help buyers handle customer service problems, such as returns/exchanges; take responsibility for filling mail or telephone requests or special orders; and keep alert to what customers are buying and what they are saying about the merchandise selection in that department.

Merchandise

As for the merchandise itself, assistant buyers can help the buyer in a number of ways. They can be responsible for and keep records of all markups and markdowns of merchandise and suggest merchandise that might be considered for the department, commenting on colors, sizes, and styles. They will keep the buyer up-to-date on the status of stock and sales when he or she is not in the store. Assistant buyers also present new merchandise for display and coordinate that merchandise for promotional ads, supervise inventory counts of merchandise, follow up on merchandise to ensure proper deliveries, and review incoming merchandise as it arrives from the receiving department to determine that colors, sizes, quantities, and styles are correct. Additionally, assistant buyers will check merchandise for damage or defects and arrange to have items marked with the proper prices, have merchandise delivered to the selling floor or to the stockroom, and make sure that there is always adequate stock on the selling floor. Finally, they will handle items that need to be returned to manufacturers, make sure that all department displays are attractive and eye-catching, and review and analyze sales reports to alert the buyer to the fast and slow sellers in the department each day.

The Marketplace

The assistant buyer can also go with the buyer on buying trips to local or major markets, such as New York City or Los Angeles, or go alone to a market to review trends and report back to the buyer.

The job of the assistant buyer is generally the first of the middle-management positions in a retail store, and it is demanding and varied work. Some retail organizations have an associate buyer title for experienced assistant buyers who act as the right hand to the buyers in all aspects of the buying function. However, in many firms, the next level after assistant buyer is the position of buyer itself.

The Buyer

The buyer is a critical executive in the merchandising flow of any retail organization. The job of a buyer requires many unique and diverse talents, in addition to formal training. Years ago it was quite common to start out as a stock clerk and work up through the ranks to become a buyer. Today colleges nationwide offer well-established merchandising, retailing, or marketing programs that provide retail recruiters with an excellent source of trainees. A college education is a necessity for those seriously considering a career as a buyer. Many of the management and decision-making skills a buyer needs on a daily basis are taught in college programs, along with the basics of merchandising math, computer, and retailing skills. Courses in marketing, salesmanship, and personnel management are considered very important by retailers. Many retailers also consider strong liberal arts graduates to be excellent candidates. Although the trend is now clearly in favor of graduates of

four-year college programs, some recruiters will consider associate degree graduates. Usually, the candidate of choice is one with a bachelor's degree. Candidates with a master's degree in business or marketing are strong applicants.

Keep in mind that the job of a buyer is filled with excitement, pressure, and hard work, and it can bring a great deal of personal and financial satisfaction. This position is responsible for planning, sales, and inventory and merchandise selection, as well as writing orders and promoting the goods. It means working closely with manufacturers and, in some firms, handling online activities. Many retailers are convinced that the destiny of their organization lies in the hands of its buyers. Without the proper selection of merchandise, retail stores would flounder. The job of the buyer is a critical one, and buyers need to:

- **Be good communicators**—write clear reports and bulletins, conduct and/or participate in meetings, and interact well with bosses and suppliers and people they supervise
- **Have analytical ability**—handle figures easily and be able to think in numbers
- **Deal well with others**—command respect and motivate their staff, accept direction and advice from superiors, develop strong working relationships with manufacturers and wholesalers in the marketplace, and understand their customers
- **Be enthusiastic**—transmit that enthusiasm to coworkers and others on the merchandising team
- **Be alert and sensitive to changes**—keep pace with industry trends

- **Think creatively**—visualize how new and different kinds of merchandise and products can become innovative ways for people to deal with their problems
- **Have physical stamina**—handle the daily pressure, fast pace, competition, and frequent changes of the retail industry
- **Be flexible**—quickly adapt to changes and adjust to new and different work situations

Here are brief descriptions of the skills considered necessary for successful buyers to have and for you to think about developing.

Communication Skills

Buyers are always dealing with other people. They work closely with their assistants, manage and supervise their sales team, meet regularly with their superiors, and are routinely involved with manufacturers and wholesalers. They clearly present their ideas and feelings and must be able to fully articulate their views in many daily situations, including writing memos and bulletins. A most important quality is the ability to communicate; it is an ongoing job for the retail buyer.

Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is contagious. It can inspire trainees and motivate a sluggish sales force. It has been known to generate excitement for a product or an organization right down to the customer. The buyer communicates his or her enthusiasm to others and gets people to work together. Retail recruiters seek many qualities in candidates,

and enthusiasm is often very high on their list. Successful buyers have the ability to build a solid team of cooperative workers and foster enthusiasm.

Decision-Making Ability

Round-the-clock decisions are part of a buyer's typical day. Analyzing and assessing events and making judgments, often on the spot, require strong analytical and decision-making abilities. Buyers grapple with decisions about what styles or trends will be popular, what colors to purchase, from which vendors and at what prices to buy, when to reorder merchandise, as well as how to best promote the goods. Buyers are faced with endless decisions, and they must be able to anticipate what customers will want to buy months in advance.

Commitment

Buyers need to be totally dedicated to their job and to hard work. They work long and irregular hours in retail stores and often are away from home because of travel obligations related to their work. At Christmastime, a peak period in the world of retailing, they may work many late nights and weekends. Only genuinely determined and committed buyers can handle these pressures.

Delegating Work

Buyers can become successful managers of people if they understand how to delegate tasks to others. Deciding who should be assigned to do a particular job is critical to the smooth operation

of a busy department. Care must be taken to select the right person for the assignment, so that each worker's talents and experience are maximized. A sensitive buyer will choose the best worker for the assignment and then continue to train that worker for additional responsibilities. Clear and specific instructions need to be given so that the worker understands all expectations. The competent buyer allows time for questions and is available to teach the methods and routines of the store. Of course, it is also necessary for the buyer to check on the worker's progress, offer suggestions for improvement, or even assist the worker in finishing a task. The retail buyer must be a master of good human relations.

Leadership

Supervising, managing, directing, delegating work, training, making decisions that involve hundreds of thousands of dollars—buyers learn to be leaders in their fields by attempting to be innovative, command respect, and be sensitive to others. The need for strong leadership potential is essential in the development of successful buyers.

The Buyer's Duties in a Large Retail Organization

It is clear that the buyer is a key person in retailing and has an important and responsible job. A successful buyer's time is filled with excitement and pressure, plenty of hard work, and satisfaction. Buyers for large department and specialty stores have the crucial role of selecting and buying those goods from the manufacturers for the main store and the branch stores, so that they will

be available to customers at just the right time. And this all takes place in a very organized way. The daily routine of a store buyer is as varied as researching a vendor to grooming new sales help. Besides the selection and purchase of goods, buyers have regular contact with each of the branch stores and are very concerned with the sales and profits of their departments. They must also pay close attention to advertising, delivery, and warehousing of stock, and attempt to find ways to lower losses due to damage or theft.

The tasks of the buyer will vary depending upon which kind of retail operation he or she works for. Nonetheless, all buyers are a vital part of the merchandising team and share the following responsibilities.

Planning

The buyer prepares a market plan based on his or her knowledge of market trends and careful examination of the sales for the past year for each department he or she is responsible for.

Buying

The buyer's goal is to purchase the correct merchandise at the right price for the customers once a buying plan has been approved. The buyer needs to research manufacturers locally and abroad and select the best-made items to be shipped to the store at the proper time of year. Buyers tend to spend the majority of their time handling this activity. They are very knowledgeable about what goods to buy, what colors and styles will sell well, and how much should be purchased. They then need to follow up with the manufacturers to make sure that the items will be delivered at the determined

time and in good condition. Buyers are responsible for offering merchandise that customers will want to buy.

Pricing and Profit

The buyer tries to get the lowest possible price for goods and then tries to sell them at the best markup so the department will make a profit. In addition, buyers mark down items that are slow sellers in an effort to help improve sales. Buyers make sure that stock records of merchandise are accurate and supervise the actual count of all inventories two times a year. They also ensure that salespeople as well as customers properly handle all stock within their department to lower the possibility of damaged goods.

Selling

The sales and sales force of a department are the buyer's responsibility. The buyer ensures that there is an adequate and knowledgeable sales staff, and he or she plans meetings to talk about new merchandise, appropriate sales techniques, and new trends that customers will be asking about, as well as new or unusual items that will be added to the department. The buyer must also be aware of the latest in displays for attractive arrangements of merchandise and pass on to the sales help information on how to set up and display goods.

Most stores have done away with selling as a buyer's responsibility. With the large numbers of branch stores that department and specialty store buyers must be accountable for, it becomes very difficult to supervise salespeople so far from the main store. A wise and effective buyer does not necessarily make the best sales supervisor. It may make good sense to hire an expert in each area. As

buyers spend more and more time in the markets to keep up with the fast pace of style and fashion changes, there is less time to devote to the selling function. The wide use of computers now allows buyers to speedily analyze customer demand, so direct contact between the buyer and the public may be of less importance today than it was in the past. This thinking will probably vary from firm to firm.

Sales Promotion

Buyers assist in the promotion of merchandise by carefully coordinating displays, choosing certain items to be featured in the store's windows or advertising, and, of course, making sure that all goods that are promoted are in stock in a wide assortment of sizes and colors.

Relationships with Vendors

The resources (the wholesalers and manufacturers) that buyers rely on for getting their merchandise are called vendors. It is important for the buyer to establish a strong businesslike relationship with all vendors so that issues and problems can be discussed promptly and candidly. Buyers often pass customers' wants on to the vendor, who can then try to be the first in supplying that buyer with an item that may be a big seller.

Branch Visits

It is very important for the buyer to visit the branch stores. Even though this is a time-consuming task, it is the only way the buyer can get a firsthand look at all stock and its display. There is also the

chance to talk with both salespeople and customers and to hear about their requests and complaints.

Receiving

The buyer is often in close touch with a store's receiving area, where all merchandise is delivered from the vendors. Buyers' orders need to be checked to determine if the proper styles, sizes, colors, and quantities have arrived. Buyers then authorize the financial department to make payments for the goods.

Difficulties can easily occur in the flow of merchandise from the receiving department to the selling floor. Therefore skilled buyers often develop strong relationships with receiving room workers to avoid in-store delay of goods.

Housekeeping and Stock Display

It is the buyer's duty to make sure that all merchandise is attractively arranged and placed conveniently for the customer. Items must be neatly hung or folded on clean counters, tables, or display fixtures. Signs and price tags must be accurate and easy for customers to read. Fitting rooms and the surrounding department area must always be neat and inviting.

As the head of any department, the buyer can always measure success in terms of how profitable that particular department is. Buyers constantly compete against their own sales and profits records and try to make the current season the best ever. But mistakes do happen. Markdowns and clearance racks are often evidence that buyers misjudged the merchandise they thought their customers would be eager to buy. Sometimes a special promotion or sale helps attract attention and move the merchandise. The last

resort of any buyer is to put the items on clearance, which means dropping the prices of the goods to encourage quick sales. This reduces the department's profits, but at least it is a way to make room for the new season's goods and bring some money into the department. As you can imagine, buyers try to avoid having too much merchandise on clearance racks. Skillful buyers also try to determine what went wrong with their merchandise and why the items did not sell so that they can avoid repeating the same buying errors.

Much of the stimulation of the buyer's job is gained from the diversity and challenge of each day's work. Buyers who are successful in small departments can often move into larger areas of buying responsibilities and thus increased earnings. Many buyers are responsible for several busy departments, gaining these additional responsibilities only after years of experience. Once again, the traditional route is from training to an assistant buyer, a position that can last from two to four years, depending on your own ability and potential and the policies of your employer. Once you have been promoted to a full buyer, you can be sure that your boss has confidence in your judgment and that you have demonstrated expertise in your area of specialization.

Small Store Buyer

Many men and women own and operate independent retail stores that keep us supplied with everything from groceries to hardware. You can see examples of this type of retailer everywhere from small rural areas to large urban settings. Buyers for small stores generally handle a wide variety of tasks. These might include the researching and purchasing of items; display, promotion, and advertising of items; selling; servicing the customer; and the hiring, firing, and

training of sales help. Often these people act as the store owner or store manager as well as the buyer.

Buyers for small, independent stores make visits to manufacturers in the local markets and major market centers. The buyer selects the assortment of merchandise—colors, sizes, styles, prices, quantities—and places the order with the vendor. The buyer then follows up on all orders to avoid possible problems and stay alert to the delivery dates of all goods. It is common for small store owners to hire the services of a resident buying office.

Department Store Buyer

In a department store, the buyer works very closely with a merchandise manager for guidance in selecting the appropriate goods for the department. The buyer also establishes a buying plan—often involving great sums of money—and converts that plan into units of merchandise that will be profitable for his or her department. It is essential for the buyer to keep a well-balanced assortment of goods in stock in the department. The buyer must also be keenly aware of customer preferences. Buyers in department stores spend time visiting markets, both local and foreign, and keeping on top of the very latest trends. They work closely with their branch stores and, of course, are responsible for the selling activity of their own departments.

Specialty Store Buyer

In small specialty-store operations, the duties of the buyer are much like those of the department store buyer. As all business in the specialty store depends mainly on the needs of local customers, the

specialty store buyer must be sure to meet them. Often a specialty store carries a very particular type of merchandise and the buyer concentrates on a specialized market, such as junior sportswear or children's and infants' wear. It is necessary to work closely with the manager of each of the stores to help establish the desired assortment of merchandise and price ranges. Specialty store buyers are truly experts in their specialized line of goods.

Chain Store Buyer

The chain store system is one of the most vital features of our retail economy. A chain store operation is an organization with several or even hundreds of retail stores that sell the same merchandise and are centrally owned and managed. Simply stated, it is the distribution of goods through more than one retail outlet.

This can include everything from a two- or three-store operation in your local area to huge retailing units of thousands of stores located throughout the nation. Examples of this type of organization are Sears and Toys 'R' Us.

After World War I ended in 1918, retail chains began to grow in importance, along with the country's population and the ability to mass-produce goods for the consumer. Chain stores followed the nation's move to the suburbs and opened stores in shopping centers. Many organizations developed throughout the country, building stores coast to coast. Others stayed within a particular region of the country or clustered around a major city such as Los Angeles or Boston. These chains are generally well known to consumers: JCPenney, Lowe's, Home Depot, and Crate & Barrel. To this day, retail chains account for a very important avenue of merchandise distribution.

Central planning, buying, and merchandising of all goods are the major features of all retail chains. The buyers for the chains are usually located in the main headquarters in a major central market, so they can be in close touch with vendors—the manufacturers and wholesalers. New York City is the home office of many buyers for retail chains. These buyers often work far away from the stores they buy for and have no selling responsibility for the goods they purchase. In this setup, the selling function is completely separate from the buying function. Buyers have little or no contact with the sales staff. The buyer for a chain store operation generally has no direct contact with the store but spends the greatest amount of his or her time in selecting and purchasing merchandise. Responsibilities such as inventory, reordering goods, and managing the sales help are the job of the managers of each store.

This represents a major difference between chain store buyers and department store buyers. In the chain store, the store manager, not the buyer, supervises the selling process.

Chain store buyers can place huge orders with vendors because they buy for so many stores. As a result these buyers are very important and powerful in the marketplace. They are essentially specialists in a particular market or category of merchandise, such as housewares, lingerie, or shoes. They spend a great deal of their time each day making sure their stores receive quick delivery of goods that have been ordered, handling stock fill-ins, and arranging for the lowest prices for the goods they wish to buy. Chain store buyers may develop programs with manufacturers to produce special lines of goods that will be manufactured for that chain alone, because of the vast number of orders that can be placed. This is known as *private label* or *private brand* merchandise. These

buyers must be very knowledgeable about their customers all over the country, because they might have the responsibility of buying the same item for people in Alaska as well as in Hawaii or Puerto Rico. Tastes, seasons, and climate must be taken into account for such a wide geographic range of customers.

Market and Product Knowledge

The chain store buyer is truly a specialist in a very specific kind of retail operation, and he or she needs very special skills to perform well. Unlike the department or specialty store buyer, the chain store buyer has no responsibilities on the selling floor, devoting instead the major portion of his or her time to the buying function. As a result, this buyer develops an expert knowledge of the market that he or she is purchasing for. Strong working relationships with vendors must be developed so that the most capable and flexible manufacturers are used to handle the great volume of merchandise that is ordered. Backup or substitute vendors are important to know about, so that reorders can be filled if the original vendor is unable to supply the buyer with additional amounts of goods as needed.

Buyers for large chains often work directly with the manufacturer and get involved in the styling and design of a product—even the design and selection of the fabric. Of course, this requires a great deal of knowledge on the part of the buyer, as well as a solid understanding of customers, wants, and preferences. Because buyers have no selling responsibilities, they spend the bulk of their time researching and learning about the goods they buy. They have the opportunity to really become experts in one or more fields of merchandise classification.

Communications

Even though the chain store buyer does not have the opportunity to be in close touch with salespeople or customers, it is essential that the lines of contact with the selling department be kept wide open. By writing bulletins that describe new merchandise, trends, sales techniques, or display ideas, the chain store buyer has a means of explaining to the sales department what department store buyers would routinely discuss in a weekly meeting. Not having this personal contact with the department does free up a considerable amount of time for the chain store buyer. However, it forces the buyer to convey all necessary information in writing that is simple, clear, and direct. The use of computers has been a great help in assisting buyers with their bulletins and reports.

Forecasting Trends

It is difficult to predict what large numbers of customers in a wide variety of geographic locations will want to buy in any season. Not having direct contact with the sales staff and the customers makes forecasting this information even harder. Chain store buyers purchasing staple or basic items can rely on the sales reports of past seasons and make predictions with ease. However, chain store buying of fashion merchandise is never easy. Often the buyer is aided by gauging the good-selling seasonal items in one region of the country. Certain kinds of summer clothing may be selling well in Atlanta in March. Buyers may conclude that the same big-selling items will be well received in New York City in May and June and place orders for that merchandise. The fact that seasons arrive at different times in different parts of the country can be a great help to the chain store buyer, although it is not a foolproof method of determining what will sell well.

Retailers learned a long time ago that central buying—having a group of buyers responsible for the buying for enormous numbers of retail stores—substantially reduces the cost of merchandise.

Benefits of a Career in Buying

In addition to the daily challenges and excitement that come with this career choice, a retail buyer can expect other benefits as well.

Personal Development

A job as a buyer offers men and women the opportunity to constantly interact with a wide variety of other professionals every day. There is the ongoing opportunity to deal with all levels of the merchandising and management team, as well as with a broad range of suppliers, manufacturers, assistants, and store personnel. This calls for the ability to get along well with many types of personalities and to think clearly and make accurate decisions involving large sums of money. It is said that no two days are alike in the life of a buyer. It is an exciting and fast-moving job.

Travel

A buyer always needs to know the latest in trends, product innovations, and sources. Buyers frequently travel to trade shows, fairs, and distant markets, both at home and abroad. For some, this need to travel may be burdensome, but for others it is considered one of the wonderful benefits of the profession.

Financial Reward

Salary is always an important factor in the choice of a career. A buyer's income is good, often above the average of comparable posi-

tions in other industries. The most important thing to bear in mind is that the buyer's salary is generally related to his or her level of achievement. Most often, it is based on the buyer's own efforts and is measured on the department's sales and profits.

Career Advancement

After mastering the demanding routines of buying for one or more categories of merchandise, you may be one of the talented people promoted to divisional merchandise manager (DMM). The DMM is in charge of a group of related departments and oversees and coordinates the buyers of those departments. This person works to see that the team provides quality and value to customers. Merchandise must be in keeping with the image of the retailer. Excellent relationships with the buying team are essential. In many ways DMMs act as consultants, teachers, directors, and counselors. They share the knowledge and expertise they have gained over the years with their group of buyers, who rely heavily on their advice and counsel. These merchandise managers have complete control over the amount of money their buyers will spend, and they therefore try to guide them to innovative and profitable projects. They work closely with the store's other DMMs and compete with them for a share of the customer's sales. As it is for buyers, surpassing last season's sales and profits is the goal of merchandise managers.

An innovative merchandise manager might push for new areas in the store or special departments that might add a different approach or a trendy new outlook to the division. For those who believe they can help make a division's business grow, it would be worthwhile to consider this position once they have completed the other required steps. An enterprising spirit and a keen business sense as well as an ability to direct and lead others are essential.

Merchandise managers work very closely with their buyers, helping them plan their visits to various markets and teaching them how to turn their purchases into profits. They need to be familiar with each of the departments in their division. They have to keep up with the many new manufacturers and suppliers and let buyers know about new items and trends that may be important in promoting sales within each department. DMMs always look for new and different sources of merchandise or services. This might mean devoting a great deal of time to travel and research. The demands on the DMM's time and expertise are enormous, but the financial rewards generally measure up to the effort put forth. Working as a divisional merchandise manager gives you the opportunity to run your division as if it were your own business. It enables you to develop a team of professionals, all working toward the goal of a profitable and exciting division.

All divisional merchandise managers report to the general merchandise manager (GMM), who has the authority for all merchandising operations in the retail store, typically oversees an average sales volume of \$25 million or more, and employs several hundred workers.

Keep in Mind

Most of the skills needed to succeed in retailing are needed to succeed in any industry. Retailers develop excellent skills in:

- Problem-solving and decision-making
- Teamwork
- Commitment to customer service
- Interacting effectively with various personalities
- Good work ethics

- Initiative
- Communication
- Cross-cultural awareness

The job of a buyer is a hard one. It is common for buyers to work long and irregular hours, be away from home because of travel commitments, and take paperwork home with them. They work in a pressured atmosphere, always trying to beat the sales and profit record of the last year. And, of course, being responsible for running a profitable department means being accountable for spending huge sums of the firm's money. A career as a buyer requires strong interest in business as well as in people. It is surely a demanding position, but one that also brings excitement, financial rewards, and great personal challenge.

5

RESIDENT AND CENTRAL BUYING OFFICES

STORES OFTEN UTILIZE the services of resident and/or central buying offices, which assist stores and their buyers in staying current with trends in the marketplace and maintaining adequate levels of stock.

The Resident Buying Office

A resident buying office is an organization that represents member stores and has its own group of buyers. Located in a major market, the resident buying office provides help to the buyers of its member stores, keeping them well informed with a steady flow of market information. The workers who represent the resident buying office are called *resident buyers* or *market reps*.

Resident buyers are buying specialists who act as assistants or advisers to the member stores. They are responsible for all aspects

of merchandising and promotion and become representatives in the market for the stores that use the services of the buying office.

Resident buying offices are both large and small. There are one- or two-person offices with just several store accounts. Others represent several hundred clients and support large staffs, with separate divisions for specific goods, such as children's wear, housewares, or coats and suits. Some resident buying offices work only for specialty stores that deal in a single kind of merchandise, such as furs, millinery, or shoes. Whatever the service provided, the resident buying offices offer retail stores the buying specialists and expertise that the stores could otherwise not have access to. New York City houses the largest number of resident buying offices, as it represents the major fashion market in the country for apparel, accessories, home furnishings, and appliances. Los Angeles is the second most important fashion market, and Chicago and Atlanta are also very important. The organization of the resident buying office usually resembles that of the member store. There are one or more resident buyers or market reps, depending upon the size of the market, for each classification of merchandise.

The resident buyer thoroughly investigates the entire market he or she is responsible for, looking for new sources of merchandise, visiting manufacturers, and providing the member stores with the information gathered. As you might imagine, the resident buyer needs to be on top of the latest fashions and aware of all trends and style changes.

The resident buyer and the store buyer need to work closely to determine what the current trends are and what the customers will want. They attempt to look into new sources of merchandise to locate unique and interesting items, as well as basic goods for their customers.

Resident buying offices save the store buyers time and money by performing the following important range of services.

Market Coverage and Reporting

Resident buyers regularly research and report on all new developments in the wholesale markets and issue special reports to describe their findings. This vital marketplace news saves the store buyers a lot of time and legwork when they arrive in the market. The resident buyers collect information about the newest and the best-selling items and send it to the member-store buyers. The data sent might include details of interest to management or fashion directors, as well as information for the store buyers.

Buying Clinics

Resident buyers arrange for the leading resources in the marketplace to be shown to all buyers at buying clinics. This provides a wonderful opportunity for all the buyers to share their ideas about the new lines being presented. Buying clinics also help stores select important fashion themes for each season.

Office Facilities

Clerical help is provided to store buyers who make regular trips to wholesale markets. Trade newspapers, such as *Women's Wear Daily* for women's fashion news or *Home Furnishings Daily* for the home furnishings industry, also publish the arrival of these buyers after the resident buying office assembles this information. This news alerts the manufacturers, who are always eager to know which buyers are in town on buying trips.

Buying for Member Stores

At the request of the member store, the resident buyer can order merchandise for the store buyer if the store buyer does not plan a necessary market trip.

It is considered quite routine for the resident buyer to visit manufacturers with the store buyer as often as necessary. This is a great service to the store buyer, who can then build on the good working relationships the resident buyer has developed with vendors in the market.

Group Buys

Arranging for group buying is a very important function of the resident buying office. It can help save member stores large amounts of money, as they can reap the price benefits from purchasing in quantity. It is also possible for the resident buyer to negotiate for better freight rates and delivery dates, free advertising, display materials, or even exclusive private-label merchandise as a result of placing a large group order.

Follow-Up Assistance

Resident buyers have ongoing contact with the manufacturer. They review the orders placed by the member stores and then follow up on prompt delivery schedules with the manufacturer. Resident buyers are also responsible for handling any adjustments or complaints that may arise between the stores and the manufacturer.

Fashion Office Services

The fashion director and the staff in the resident buyer's fashion office supply complete fashion information to store members. This

might include ideas for special events, themes for fashion shows, catalogs pinpointing seasonal events, fashion promotion kits with details about advertising, publicity, or ideas for public relations events. This is the same kind of fashion activity that any department store or large specialty store would use to promote its goods. Smaller resident buying offices cannot afford this sort of service, but fashion offices can be found in most of the larger resident buying firms.

The fashion office also stages the fashion shows, generally held during market weeks when the store buyers are all together. Current style and fashion details can be shown to buyers of fashion items. Fashion clinics are also provided to help the store buyers in choosing merchandise and planning special promotions. Current fashion news is relayed to store buyers in periodic bulletins that detail the latest in fabric, color, and style trends.

Foreign Market Purchases

Many of the larger resident buying offices have a foreign department to help with the flow of merchandise coming in from foreign countries. In addition to handling a range of buying and follow-through services, a foreign department can be helpful to store buyers, often assisting them in developing ideas for purchasing merchandise abroad.

Personal Services

The store buyers, who are usually visitors from out of town, may come to the central marketplace with requests for hotel, theater, and travel reservations. As a courtesy to its store members, the resident buyer or an assistant in the buying office arranges these personal items.

In summary, the major role of the resident buying office is to research the market, buy the merchandise (after obtaining permission of the member store buyer to do so), and help promote the merchandise.

The resident buyer must keep his or her store buyer apprised of what is happening in the market at all times. The resident buyer works with buyers from all over the country, helping them by informing them as well as assisting them in promoting the new merchandise.

Unlike the long hours involved in retail store buying, the work-week of the resident buyer is more traditional. He or she works five days a week, with Saturday and Sunday free and usually no late nights. Resident buying offices are generally organized in such a way that visiting store buyers work closely with a resident buying office representative who services all their needs.

The assistant buyer in the resident buying office usually begins with on-the-job training. By following up on a buyer's activities, the assistant buyer has a chance to place reorders and special orders, handle transfers of merchandise, and eventually open orders. In large resident buying offices, buyers may have one or more assistants. In smaller firms, an assistant buyer may report to and work closely with several buyers.

The services offered by a resident buying office are varied. The most important advantage is the time and money the store buyer saves. He or she receives a continuous flow of essential market information from the resident buyer regarding new goods and new resources at the best prices.

The Central Buying Office

A central buying office represents its own chain of stores and is responsible for centrally purchasing goods for each of its stores. It

is truly the center of the chain store operation. The chain's retail units have no opportunity to participate in that part of the merchandising process. There are some interesting entry-level spots for you to consider.

Distributor/Planner Trainee

This is an excellent start for people with strong math and analytical skills who are well organized and attentive to details. This worker determines the allocation of merchandise to the various branches of the chain. The trainee keeps track of thousands of units of merchandise and assigns varying amounts of stock to the stores, which may number in the hundreds. Generally this precision work is helped a great deal with computer printouts and unit control records, which indicate what is on hand and what is needed in each store. A good memory can be a great asset in this job. The ability to deal with many people, usually by telephone, E-mail, or fax, is important as well. From this position, one might be promoted to a head distributor/planner or an assistant buyer. This spot is an entry-level position in most central buying offices.

Buyer's Clerk

This is an excellent starting position for anyone with good clerical skills and an ability to work with figures. The buyer's clerk is responsible for carefully handling the many clerical records that supply the buyer with essential information needed to make buying decisions. He or she answers telephones, takes messages, makes appointments for the buyer, follows up on shipments of merchandise that have been purchased, and might even handle problems related to damaged items or late shipments. This worker has contact with the buyer and the assistant buyer or may be assigned to report to more than one buyer. It is an on-the-job training spot

that offers a splendid overview of the buying function and could lead to advancement to an assistant buyer and a buyer in the future.

You must be well organized, able to deal precisely with details, and work well with many other people to handle this job successfully. Buyer's clerk positions are usually available as entry-level jobs in both central and resident buying offices.

Assistant Buyer Trainee

This entry-level job is also found in both central and resident buying offices. It is a fine starting spot for anyone with a future interest in a career as a buyer. Fast-moving, on-the-job training requires the assistant to help the buyer in many ways. When doing follow-up tasks with the buyer, the assistant begins to learn all about the major resources in the marketplace, eventually being able to place special orders and reorders for the buyer. There is heavy emphasis on keeping precise records, following up on goods, and keeping in close touch with the manufacturers and with the stores the merchandise will eventually be delivered to.

After some time on the job, the assistant may go with the buyer to the manufacturer's showrooms to view collections of merchandise. Later, the assistant may begin to be responsible for a section of the market under the buyer's supervision and for handling the information bulletins that are sent to the stores.

In large resident and central buying offices, each buyer has at least one assistant buyer to rely on. In smaller offices, several buyers may share the services of a single assistant. The assistant buyer in a buying office tends to work more traditional days and hours than retail store workers. Evening and weekend work in buying offices is unusual. Salaries in buying offices reflect this, in that they are often lower than starting salaries in the stores. You would

need to have the same skills as a buyer's clerk to compete for this assignment, as well as the ability to work well under pressure and manage several ongoing tasks at the same time.

Assistant buyers are generally eager to observe and learn as much as possible as they move up the career ladder to the position of buyer.

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NONSTORE RETAILING

A CAREER IN retailing does not necessarily limit you to working in a store. There are many exciting career opportunities available working for mail-order houses, direct marketing, or mailing list operations.

Mail-Order Houses

A mail-order house is simply a retail business that sells to customers through the mail, usually with a catalog. This has been an important type of retailing for nearly one hundred years. You are probably familiar with some major companies that are well known for their substantial mail-order business—JCPenney, Spiegel, and Victoria's Secret, for example. These firms offer a vast range of merchandise to consumers. All selection and delivery is handled through the mail, although it is also possible for customers to phone in their orders.

At one time, mail-order retailing was the most important form of retailing available to rural customers living in outlying areas. The Montgomery Ward and Sears catalogs can be credited with launching this trend of shopping through the mails to rural customers in the late 1800s. At the turn of the century, Sears was distributing three million catalogs to farmers and small-town residents all across America. And once the U.S. Postal Service began parcel post in 1913, Sears received five times the number of mail orders it had the year before. Today, men and women who are interested in shopping with ease in the comfort of their home or office rely on catalogs of every description.

Specialized mail-order businesses also supply customers with goods that are very specific and unique. Everything from gourmet foods to fine craft-working tools, records and videos to garden equipment, can be purchased by mail from more than ten thousand different mail-order firms. Most department and specialty stores send out catalogs regularly, particularly during the Christmas holiday season. They also routinely send direct-mail inserts in monthly bills to their credit customers to describe merchandise promotions.

Catalogs were responsible for the direct marketing explosion of the 1980s, and its success has continued into the twenty-first century. More than half of our country's population has made catalog purchases. Shoppers seem to enjoy the convenience of making leisurely selections from attractive catalogs that offer a great array of interesting products. In some cases the photo and accompanying description of an item offers more details about that product and its benefits than a salesperson could provide. For many consumers, catalog shopping has become a delightful way to fulfill their shopping needs.

Retail Direct Marketers

Traditional retailers, such as Saks and Neiman Marcus, jumped on the direct marketing bandwagon years ago, offering elegant catalogs filled with high-priced specialty goods. In some cases the items are exclusive and offered only through the catalog. Interestingly enough, some major catalog firms, such as Eddie Bauer, are doing the reverse. These businesses are opening retail stores to complement their catalog sales. Research has shown that those who receive catalogs are more likely to shop in the store that sends the catalog to them. And catalog receivers spend twice as much as others in in-store sales! It's estimated that about one-third of all mail-order sales are generated by retailers with mail-order departments.

The Development of Mail Order

America was still largely rural in the 1800s. The idea of selling goods by mail became a possibility when the great transcontinental railroad was completed, and the country had a postal system that included rural, free delivery. Montgomery Ward set up shop in Chicago, which was the railroad center of the country at that time. Chicago quickly became the mail-order headquarters of America when the main offices of Sears and Spiegel established themselves there as well. The large mail-order operations were profitable from the start, although in the earliest days of the mail-order, many retailers believed that customers would never want to order items that they could not see in person.

Mail-order operations have continued to maintain an outstanding record of loyal customers and solid sales. This concept of retailing is firmly a part of the shopping style of many people. It is no

longer the domain of the small town or rural customer. Mail-order customers appreciate the ease and timesaving benefits; the excellent quality of merchandise, value, and service; the huge range of merchandise and services; and the competitive prices, which are a result of the vast purchasing power of the mail-order firms.

Mail-order retailing has offered the public a convenient kind of shopping for general merchandise as well as for more unusual items. The mail-order industry has developed a fine reputation for delivering quality goods. Many such firms frequently offer liberal return policies, and customers now find that delivery can be arranged within forty-eight to seventy-two hours. Of course, the customer pays delivery charges, but many working people do not mind paying extra for this convenient type of shopping.

Mail-Order Copywriter

Mail-order companies provide excellent training to anyone with writing skills. Consider inquiring about entry-level openings at retail stores, catalog houses, magazines, and advertising agencies. If you love to write and think that your words can take the place of a salesperson in promoting a product, consider becoming a direct-mail copywriter. Getting your message to the consumer and convincing him or her to respond to your product or service is a challenging and rewarding task.

Direct Marketing

Direct marketing refers to the method of offering customers products or services through a variety of advertising media—mail, radio, TV, telephone, newspapers, or magazines. It gets an ad *directly* to

the customer in the hopes of getting an immediate response. Those responses can take different forms. A catalog sent in the mail asks the reader to place a mail, fax, or phone order. In some situations, especially where expensive goods or services are being offered, a two-step process occurs. Interested people are sent additional information to review and are then called again, perhaps even more than once, in an effort to finalize the sale.

Regardless of the form the response takes—telephone, mail, or fax—it can be measured. This means that the success rate of every direct marketing campaign is known as soon as all responses are tallied. A large response signifies a successful campaign, while less than the predicted response level means the campaign failed. Direct marketing is sales, pure and simple. It is response advertising via the mail, in a magazine, on the radio, or on TV—all geared to making a sale.

In the past, direct mail was the most important direct marketing medium. Although direct mail is still a very effective tool, other media have sprung up as important direct marketing techniques. Ads placed in newspapers and magazines, particularly the colorful ones inserted in Sunday editions, make it easy and fun for readers to respond. TV commercials sell us everything from fine jewelry to children's toys. The telephone has established itself as a solid direct marketing medium. Everything from an ad on the cover of a matchbook to the insert in your monthly utility bill carries a message urging you for a direct response. Consider the fact that about 24 percent of all consumer purchases are made as a result of direct marketing.

Direct marketing offers many career opportunities. In large part, the expansion of direct marketing services is the result of our changing lifestyle. More and more working women are demanding

greater conveniences and services. There is also much more credit available to the public than ever before. College students and entry-level workers are able to establish credit lines with ease.

And, of course, customers value the luxury of not having to travel to stores and deal with parking and bad weather, the lack of courteous sales help in retail stores, and the crowds that make it necessary to stand in lines to get served, try merchandise on, or pay for goods.

Kinds of Companies

More organizations than you can imagine are involved in the direct marketing area, either directly or through subsidiaries. For example, the Greyhound Corporation owns a company that sells gourmet steaks by mail, while General Mills owns four mail-order catalog companies. Plus, more than half of the largest ad agencies in the United States have direct marketing subsidiaries. Here are areas where you are apt to find direct marketing activities:

- Advertising agencies
- Sales promotion firms
- Mail-order companies
- Large retail firms
- Utilities companies
- Educational, political, and public interest groups
- Airlines
- Insurance companies
- Banks
- Magazine, book, and record companies
- Federal, state, and local agencies

Are you interested in investigating specific firms? Look through magazines or trade journals in your particular field of interest. Make a note of the firms offering products or information and contact those companies. You can probably investigate any kind of business and locate organizations involved in direct marketing in that field.

Kinds of Jobs

Job responsibilities vary from one organization to the next, so it is difficult to provide standardized job titles and descriptions. Review the following job descriptions to get a feeling of what the industry may have to offer you. Remember that with each passing year, new techniques and new technology will surely result in new job titles.

Traffic

This excellent entry-level area can give the aspiring creative applicant or potential account executive a chance to get his or her feet wet in the agency business. The traffic coordinator is responsible for coordinating the parts of a total advertising project with each of the agency's departments. It takes a well-organized person who is good with details and can follow up.

Account Executive

Account executives are responsible for liaison with the client and are also involved in market strategy and coordinating the various other areas related to advertising and marketing. It is helpful for account executives to have a background that includes marketing, business principles, advertising, or communications courses.

Creative

The creative department usually consists of copywriters and graphic artists. Copywriters need to have a love of words and the ability to communicate clearly. Write as much as you can and take as many writing courses as your school offers. The more you have written, the more you will have to offer a prospective employer in your sample portfolio. Copywriters need to have a thorough knowledge of the target audience—what it wants and why it buys.

For a career as a copywriter, you might start off as an assistant or a junior copywriter. You could then advance to a copywriter, senior copywriter, copy supervisor, or director. Candidates with art talent can find positions as artists or layout artists. They work closely with the copywriters in developing the creative concept and joining the copy to the graphic image. A portfolio of samples of your art talent is a must.

Media Buying and Production

Media includes mail, print, broadcast, electronic media, and telephone. A background in communications, liberal arts, or broadcast may be a plus to a potential employer. The arrival of the new electronic media, such as cable TV, home shopping channels, and shopping on computer from home, means that you have to be completely up-to-date with all of the new advances in this area.

Media people work with all departments. They take charge of the selection and the purchasing of space and time and analyze the results of ad campaigns. Media orders must be coordinated with brokers and publications and placed just at the right time. Candidates for a job in media need to be good negotiators when bargaining for print space or broadcast time.

Production workers must be detail-oriented and able to work under the constant pressure of deadlines. They are responsible for working with suppliers, such as printers and art studios. They must see that all the parts of the message are complete, that colors are accurate, and that there are no errors in the copy or mistakes that will be embarrassing to the advertiser.

Research

For a job in research you need to take courses in research methodology, statistics, psychology, and sociology. Unlike some other areas of the direct response marketing industry, an M.B.A. would be very valuable to ensure a career in this field. Careers could start at the assistant level and bring you up to senior management.

Mailing List Operations

Once the direct-mail ad or catalog has been completed, it must reach the appropriate audience. To do that, the marketer must have a mailing list of potential customers. The best mailing piece will not succeed if it does not target the proper prospects. Anyone with a facility for numbers, research, computers, or sales will find opportunities in the following areas of mailing list operations.

List Brokers

The list broker helps the marketer select the lists that will work best for the product or the message that needs to be sent. The broker helps plan the mailing, analyze the responses, and forecast for future mailings. He or she may even help the client determine marketing strategies. The expertise of a list buyer is measured on the

success rate of his or her recommendations. Entry-level jobs include administrative assistant or assistant account manager. You then move up the career ladder to a senior account manager or account supervisor.

List Manager

The list manager rents lists. The manager performs a sales function for the list owner and is concerned with marketing the list and the related clerical detail work. A marketing background is very helpful, as are good communications skills.

List Compilers

These workers develop lists by getting data from a variety of commercial and public sources, such as directories or voter registration lists. List compilers can specialize in business and professional markets or consumer markets. Very large list compilers actually possess databases with marketing-related information of millions of individuals and households all across the nation!

Customers appreciate the value of nonstore shopping. With twenty-four-hour phone and fax ordering services and delivery times shortened to just two or three days—and express delivery for an additional fee if customers are willing to pay the price—shoppers have truly begun to put their faith in firms that do business by mail. Where mail-order companies were once considered shady and their merchandise thought to be substandard, annual sales of goods and services through direct marketing are now well over \$200 billion annually.

Getting Started in Nonstore Retailing

If you would like to get more details about careers in nonstore retailing, don't hesitate to do so. Many cities have direct marketing associations you can contact for further information. Use your telephone directory for addresses. They may even offer job placement services. You can also write to the Direct Marketing Association, 1120 Avenue of the Americas, Thirteenth Floor, New York, New York 10036, for information about careers in direct marketing and scholarship programs for college students.

Use your library to research books and magazines for the field, including *Direct* and *DM News*. *DM News* is a weekly publication with classified ads for positions in the field. It will give you a glimpse of what qualifications employers are seeking and the current salary ranges.

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ADDITIONAL RETAIL CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

WE HAVE ALREADY covered retail careers in large stores and through the mail. This chapter describes some other related opportunities for a career in retail.

Small Store Ownership

Many dream of running their own retail store, and it is an opportunity that is open to decisive and creative people willing to work hard. Retail entrepreneurs must serve in a variety of roles, often handling the buying, receiving, and marking of merchandise; sales; store maintenance; and, of course, the financing of the operation. Successfully opening and running your own small store can be difficult, perhaps more difficult than most people realize. The failure rate for small retail stores is quite high. There are many important decisions that must be made long before your store becomes a reality.

One of the most important, of course, is location. Will the store be opened in a suburban mall, a shopping center, or in the downtown area? You will need to find out about your competition and market and about product demand for the merchandise or service you intend to offer. Are you thinking of a discount or off-price operation or a top-of-the-line store? What will your merchandise and your pricing policy reflect, and will your store's location support it?

Financing is another critical area. You will have to determine how much capital you will need to get started with a full inventory of goods, adequate money for payroll, and rent. And then you'll have to figure out where the initial investment will come from—banks, friends, family, your own savings, or a small business administration loan.

Once you have decided whether you will own your business independently or will be part of a partnership, corporation, or franchise, you will have to decide who will be responsible for publicity, advertising, special promotions, inventory, receiving of goods, and security. Will you be able to handle all of these duties? Are you good at handling all of them? Will you have the time to do so? Do you have the experience to be responsible for them?

And don't forget about personnel and management. Will personal selling and customer service play an important role in your business? Will there be close employee supervision, or will you delegate many of the duties?

The following skills and experiences are essential before you consider becoming an entrepreneur:

- Three to five years of work experience in a mid- to large-size retail organization
- Understanding of or actual work experience in a small store operation, observing all aspects of merchandising goods

- Ongoing assistance from both a lawyer and an accountant for counsel and guidance on many issues
- Familiarity with material available from the Small Business Administration (U.S. Department of Commerce) that provides detailed information about steps to be taken when considering opening a small store
- Self-knowledge and a thorough understanding of your skills and attributes, including commitment, knowledge, and dedication to an exciting and fast-paced venture

It should be clear that starting your own business is not an easy task. When small retail stores fail, it is primarily because of lack of retailing experience, lack of knowledge about the product or service, or inadequate record-keeping and financial experience.

The owner of the retail business is the most important part of the business. It is essential that he or she have the same qualities that successful retail employees need:

- Good decision-making abilities
- Leadership potential
- Ability to accept responsibility
- Good communication skills
- Commitment and dedication
- Stamina and tolerance for long and irregular work hours
- Initiative and self-starting ability

Being accountable for a retail store involves competency in the many activities necessary to maintain it. It is likely that the small store owner will get involved in some or all of these activities. He or she should really be a jack-of-all-trades to be able to delegate and supervise these duties:

- Market research and sales forecasting
- Planning and budgeting
- Buying of merchandise
- Inventory control
- Pricing of merchandise
- Hiring, training, and supervising of workers
- Employee scheduling
- Advertising, publicity, display, and promotions
- Customer service and customer relations

Thinking of Your Own Business?

Does owning and operating your own retail store still appeal to you? More and more people are becoming small store owners, or entrepreneurs, after getting solid experience in the retail area. Operating your own small store often means that you are merchandise manager, buyer, financial expert, public relations (PR) director, and personnel head all rolled into one. You might also be the security guard, housekeeper, and janitor. Once the business begins to show profits, it is possible to hire other workers and delegate some of these duties. But you must be prepared for a lean period in the first few years. It takes time for a store to develop customer loyalty and gain a reputation in the community. Your financial obligations will remain constant, and you will be expected to have the capital to pay for all expenses, even during the slower times. As has already been stated, new retail businesses generally have a low rate of survival. If you can make it through the first two years, the chances of long-term survival are considerably better, and the rewards are many.

Can you picture yourself owning your own store and being your own boss? It is a great feeling to succeed, but success doesn't "just

happen” to the lucky ones. It is important for the small store owner to learn all about successfully starting and managing a business.

How to Begin

If opening your own store is your dream, are you confused about how to get started? Don't be. Join the ranks of others who take advantage of the growing numbers of workshops and courses that are now available all across the country. Adult education courses of this sort are offered in high schools and community colleges. Almost every business school and many specialized schools with programs in merchandising, retailing, or business have courses relating to independent business ventures. Short seminars and workshops on small business operations can help you learn everything from how to raise venture capital for the new business to how to write a business plan.

Take the first step. Learn how you can be successful. But don't even think about starting your own business without having solid retail work experience first.

More Career Positions

There are many more areas of retailing to explore as you think about your career. Here are some other positions you might want to consider.

Fashion Coordinator

The job of fashion coordinator is one of the most coveted positions in the world of retailing. As the name indicates, the fashion coordinator makes sure that all fashion departments are up-to-date on

the latest fashion information. Fashion coordinators can be style-setters, so they must have their own sense of fashion and good taste. The retail fashion coordinator alerts and advises buyers and their managers to the latest trends and developments in the fashion world. He or she works very closely with the store's advertising and promotion departments. And, of course, the fashion coordinator is responsible for the fashion shows run by the stores. He or she is involved in selecting clothing and accessories, styling the outfits, working with models, writing the commentary, and arranging for publicity.

Frequently the fashion coordinator works with local high schools or colleges to form a college board that appeals to young, fashion-conscious shoppers. The fashion coordinator needs to be familiar with wholesale and retail markets to get a sense of what is new and trendy in fashion and quickly relay that information to the store. He or she also suggests how customers can coordinate or accessorize merchandise from one department with items from another department. In this way, a store can present a unified look—or fashion story—to the customer. For example, the fashion coordinator attempts to make sure that there are shoes, handbags, and hosiery to coordinate with apparel sold in different areas of the store's fashion departments.

This is a busy job, and it requires knowledge of fashion merchandising and broad retail experience. A highly developed sense of fashion and good taste are essential. The job requires being sensitive and open to what is brand new and ahead of the times, as well as having a strong interest in color, design, and fabrics. The fashion coordinator represents the store, so he or she has to look and sound the part. The public component of this position demands excellent dress, grooming, and communications skills.

A fashion coordinator is likely to be an expert in home furnishings, as well as in fashion apparel. If there is no interior design department in the store, the fashion coordinator may also have the job of putting together model rooms and coordinating the latest styles of furnishings, fabrics, and room accessories. Most customers love to view model rooms. It inspires them to consider new ways of redecorating their homes or apartments, and it always spurs new sales in the home furnishings areas.

If you are interested in the job of fashion coordinator, be forewarned—it is highly competitive. Unless you are a top-notch candidate with an extensive fashion merchandising background, it may be extremely unrealistic for you to consider starting off in this position. But if your heart is set on becoming a fashion coordinator, you can look beyond retail stores for jobs in advertising agencies, buying offices, pattern companies, fiber and textile firms, and large clothing manufacturing companies.

Assistant to the Fashion Coordinator

The logical entry job for anyone who aspires to become a fashion coordinator is assistant to a fashion coordinator. It is possible to be hired in any type of retail store or the other areas where fashion coordinators work. Beginner's duties are generally clerical in nature, and strong word processing and clerical skills are an asset. There is a huge volume of detail and follow-up work that the fashion coordinator delegates to an assistant, but this is a good way to learn all about the position.

Assistants do everything: make appointments, make telephone contacts, book models, deal with the fashion press, deliver and pick up garments that will be photographed, run errands, and make sure

things run smoothly and on schedule for the fashion coordinator. There are opportunities for the assistant to work closely with the coordinator: putting on fashion shows or other promotional events, writing fashion bulletins, and spending time in the market observing trends and styles.

You must look and act the part to be considered for these very scarce and competitive spots. Excellent grooming and fashion sense are a necessity. Poise, a polished manner, and a good speaking voice are also essential. To successfully represent the fashion coordinator and the store, the assistant must be a model of good taste and style.

The Future of Retailing

The retailing industry can point with great pride to its role in the growth of our country and our economy. And the future of retailing seems bright. That means a great deal to retailers, as millions of shoppers seek more and more merchandise. The potential is there for you to play a vital role in servicing the consumer while forging ahead in a great variety of dynamic careers.

Business experts predict that there will be a major shift in the retail world. Expect to see a surge of vertical malls in bigger cities, retail-restaurant combinations, and a growth in nontraditional shopping environments in places such as office buildings and train and airport terminals. The forecast calls for a great expansion of national specialty and discount chains, probably at the expense of department stores and smaller, local merchants.

Retail consultants also believe that there is a greater movement toward *mass merchandising*. According to the publisher of *Fashion Network Report*, "The void in moderate-priced fashion that department stores have abandoned will grow even larger. The biggest

growth is not coming from the silk-wearers, but from the polyester-wearers.” We should see a retail mix that combines the convenience of both mail-order shopping online and TV home shopping with the strengths of the more traditional stores. Showroom catalog stores might loom large, with customers selecting their purchases from a display of floor samples. In such a setting, a mere swipe of a credit card will finalize the sale and initiate an automatic delivery system within forty-eight hours. The retail industry will continue to implement new technologies, specifically in non-store retailing—online and home shopping and interactive kiosks. These dynamic changes make retailing a cutting edge career choice for the twenty-first century.

Television and Video Retailing

Selling goods on TV to people in their homes has taken a giant leap upscale. In addition to the mass merchandise items that have long dominated the airwaves, glamorous and more costly items are now available. For example, today we often see a fashion director on TV giving us information about the latest European and American designer collections.

Home shopping executives generally target an audience in its thirties and forties. But they are also targeting the twentysomething Generation X-ers. This audience differs considerably from the older population who provided the bulk of the buying power in the industry’s first decade. There has been a corresponding hike in the quality and price of home shopping items as the industry moves from budget goods to high-fashion fare.

Current sales are ringing up several billion dollars per year. Although it represents only a small segment of the estimated \$245 billion spent on apparel and jewelry in the 1990s, home shopping

is more than likely to be retailing's fastest-growing sector. Giant retailers such as Macy's and Nordstrom are willing to try their luck and test upscale home shopping ventures. And the industry leaders, QVC and the Home Shopping Network, are starting new channels aimed at more affluent audiences.

As the number of two-career families increases, and as they grow increasingly impatient with what they perceive as the poor service and poor security in shopping malls, more and more customers may be willing to give home shopping a try. You may wonder, just who offers excellent customer service in cyberspace?

In 2001 a study of one hundred online merchants were reviewed in these areas: merchandising, checkout process, communication, and overall shopping experience. Among the top ten were Nordstrom, JCPenney, Lands' End, and Kmart.

Some critics contend that certain types of products cannot be sold on TV. Customers want to touch and feel the fabric of higher-priced garments. Moreover, there is apparently a high return rate from home shopping customers, who complain about the fit or quality of the items they have purchased. These are problems that creative retailers are looking to resolve, as home shopping is simply too big and too important for the retail industry to ignore.

The Senior Market

The market for seniors, customers who are fifty and older, is also ripe for action. This group now represents a large market, one with lots of disposable income. A research project on the shopping habits of older consumers, commissioned by the International Mass Retailing Association, discovered that many retailers are not doing enough to catch the attention or the dollars of the fifty-plus group. Every eight seconds, another American turns fifty, and in 1996 the

oldest of the baby boomers became fifty years of age. The United States now has eighty-five million people over the age of fifty—twice the population of all of Canada—and this group of seniors spends almost half of all consumer dollars. They also control 81 percent of all the financial assets in the country. They buy more than half of all the luxury cars and can afford 83 percent of luxury travel bookings. They look, feel, and think as though they were younger than their actual age. With their leisure time and dollars to spend, retailers need to be more thoughtful about capturing this segment of the population, the members of which are not necessarily concerned about passing savings on to their children and tend to be more materialistic than were the Depression-generation seniors, now in their eighties.

One firm specializing in research on older Americans has the following suggestions for those retailers who want to capitalize on the increased spending power of senior consumers:

- Offer senior labels for immediate customer service
- Improve store signs with larger and easier to read type
- Increase in-store demonstrations and sampling
- Display brochures with product information
- Redo packages with easy-to-grip handles
- Add seating throughout the stores
- Station security guards in visible locations throughout the store and parking areas
- Have a public address system that gives clear messages
- Play music that is appropriate and not annoying
- Make sales staff available to handle special requests
- Offer more in-store services, such as food courts, video rentals, photo processing, mailing facilities, and other business services

Private-Label Apparel

Alfani, Charter Club, and Savile Row are names for Macy's store-brand clothes, what is referred to in the industry as *private-label apparel* or *private brand*. They are increasingly popular with retailers because they are so profitable.

Private-label clothing is generally a great deal for consumers, too. Items look, feel, and fit like the name brands, often because the manufacturer of name-brand apparel makes them. Yet the prices are lower, as retailers determine what materials to use and what to charge. Sometimes it's quite apparent that a store's merchandise is private-label. Firms such as the Gap, Ann Taylor, Talbot's, and Sears have built their business on their own labels. Nordstrom uses another approach, contracting with manufacturers like Hickey-Freeman to make its own line of menswear items exclusively for Nordstrom's stores.

Private brands allow stores to customize their product and offer exceptional values. For example, at Federated Department Stores, private brands account for about 15 percent of total sales, and that is more than \$2 billion.

Private-brand product development means taking a trend or an idea and seeing it through to becoming merchandise on the selling floor. It entails conceptualizing, designing, sourcing, and marketing the new item. A brief glimpse of the process follows:

1. Forecasters predict trends and colors.
2. Development meetings are held with designers to create items.
3. Pricing and production sequences are set.
4. Samples are made and shown to buyers.
5. Buyers make commitments by writing orders.

6. Items are fitted and tested.
7. Production of the items begins.
8. Merchandise is shipped.
9. Stores promote and sell.
10. Sales are analyzed to measure success of items.

Large Sizes

As the size of the average American has increased throughout the past century, retailers have placed more emphasis on the plus-size industry, targeting women sized fourteen to twenty-four. At least one-third of the women in this country wear size fourteen or larger, according to New York City–based Plus Designers Council. This was a long-neglected segment of the market, and because these consumers finally are being offered fashions that they want to wear, they are buying more than \$10 billion worth of large-size apparel items. Plus-size women have waited a long time for flattering, attractive, quality merchandise, and they now represent a very receptive market. After decades of being ignored by manufacturers, this profitable segment is now being catered to by firms such as Liz Claiborne and Jones New York. And major retailers, such as Macy's, Saks Fifth Avenue, and Bloomingdale's, are jumping on this bandwagon and enlarging or opening plus-size departments in their stores.

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GETTING READY FOR A CAREER IN RETAILING

NO MATTER WHERE you live, the best way for you to begin a retailing career and provide yourself with the best all-around training is by getting a job in sales or in some related beginning-level position. An entry-level or sales position will allow you to test the water and determine if this fascinating world might hold a place for you. Plan to continue your education beyond high school. Whether you get an academic or a business degree, additional schooling will open opportunities to you. Coursework should include marketing, communications, finance, management, merchandising, computer technology and information systems.

Most retail career-level positions from store manager to corporate executive are attained with a college degree. Most colleges and universities offer programs ranging from associate degrees to master's degrees in retailing, retail management, retail merchandising, marketing, and fashion/apparel merchandising. See Appendix A

for schools offering these programs, or visit the National Retail Federation website at nrf.com.

Where to Begin

One place to start might be a summer or part-time sales job, or even a temporary assignment during the peak retail period at the Christmas season. This generally starts right after Thanksgiving and lasts until Christmas Day. Working during the Christmas season will provide you with a great deal of exposure and a taste of this fast-moving industry at its busiest time. Never underestimate the value of sales experience. It puts you in direct contact with the customers and gives you a chance to observe stock routines and learn how inventory records are kept. You will learn to operate a cash register, write up sales, and handle refunds and exchanges. You will also keep counters and shelves neat and arrange merchandise displays. You will discover which items the customers are buying and why. And as you begin to gain product knowledge, you will learn what information you should—or should not—pass on to the customers.

Also, don't say no to a stock job. You can gain valuable experience in a retail store by learning to keep an inventory of what merchandise has sold so that it can be reordered. You will be helping the sales staff by keeping the empty shelves and counters on the sales floor filled with goods as they arrive in the stockroom or warehouse from the manufacturer.

Learning to keep accurate records of the flow of items from the stockroom to the selling floor may be part of your stock job as well. In many retail stores, electronic data processing equipment is used to help collect this information. If you have responsibility for

the stock in branch stores, you will have telephone contact with those stores to coordinate shipping and receiving of goods. You can also expect to have contact with salespeople, clerical and stock workers from branch stores, assistant buyers, and buyers.

A stock job is frequently the first step on the retail ladder and might be considered by high school graduates who are attending college at night or someone waiting to enter an executive training program. This might be the perfect job for summer or part-time work while you are still in school. The vast amount of merchandise that large and smaller stores receive must all be recorded, ticketed, and distributed in an orderly system. As the stock person in this process, you can play a major part in the prompt and efficient handling of these tasks.

Investigate Your Options

Become familiar with the retail stores in your local area. Talk with salespeople and merchants to find out what they do on their jobs and what training and experience they have. Consider the various types of stores that you might think of working for: chain, department, specialty, or small independent stores. Approach the store of your choice to see if part-time or summer entry-level jobs are available. You could begin as a salesperson, cashier, or stock clerk. While on the job, you will have the opportunity to observe the overall picture of the organization and see the range of other jobs that people have and how they are done.

If you can take merchandising or business courses while still in high school, do so. Learn about college programs in retailing, marketing, or merchandising with the help of your guidance counselor or librarian.

Work experience in any type of retail store is valuable and transferable. Once you have learned retailing techniques, you can move from a larger operation to a smaller one, from a discount store to a department store, from a firm in Boston to one in Colorado. There are retail stores everywhere. You might even begin to think of opening your own store someday.

Get the Right Education

If you are interested in a retail career, you should consider studying the following subjects:

- **Retail math**—to learn the fundamentals of arithmetic and problem-solving techniques
- **Marketing**—to understand how trading relationships are established and maintained in a sophisticated and changing economy
- **Advertising**—to familiarize you with the communication within the marketplace that gives consumers information about merchandise
- **Management**—to introduce you to the concepts of managing people and situations
- **Retail management**—to allow you to learn basic principles of retailing and retail store organization
- **Retail buying**—to provide you with an overview of the techniques, problems, and policies of a retail organization
- **Computers**—to be up-to-date on the impact and effect the computer has had in retail activities and to understand the advantages and uses of the computer in business

- **Textiles**—to become familiar with the various types of fabrics, fibers, and finishes available to the consumer
- **Fashion merchandising**—to get to know the language of fashion and understand its impact on the consumer

The computer is a vital information source for retailers who must rely on current and accurate data. A store's merchandise is its most valuable asset. Knowing what stock is on hand, what is needed, and when to buy more and from which manufacturer requires great coordination of information. The computer is able to gather data from many departments and many locations with great speed and can print easy-to-read reports. It is therefore important that you take advantage of any computer training you can get. It will serve you well in your career in retailing.

A wide range of other business-related and liberal arts courses are equally important. Retail recruiters are always seeking well-rounded, liberally educated people who have a keen interest in business and the education or experience that will support a career in retailing or merchandising. Retailing offers promising careers in fulfilling the needs of the public. It is an industry that demands many skills and a broad educational background.

Co-Op or Work-Study

Many colleges that offer retailing or merchandising programs also offer cooperative work-study programs as part of the preparation. This enables students to work in a retail setting as part of the college curriculum. Sometimes academic credit is given for this work, but the student is always paid the typical retail wage. It is a perfect opportunity to explore retailing and decide whether you want to

consider it as a career. It is the time to apply classroom theory to actual on-the-job experiences. Students are generally evaluated on their co-op experience by their work supervisor and then discuss the evaluation with their school career counselor. It is an unusual opportunity to take advantage of an experienced retailer's expertise while you are still a student.

Below is a sample co-op evaluation form used by the retail employers of one school. Note the broad range of items that are assessed by a supervisor. Students have the opportunity to learn a great deal about the operation of a retail store, including: reviewing sales techniques and store procedures, writing up sales, operating a cash register, handling customer service, setting up displays, getting stockroom experience, following and taking directions, receiving and marking merchandise, developing product knowledge, helping with clerical details, helping with housekeeping duties, scheduling salespeople, and developing personnel relationships.

Employer's Evaluation of a Co-op Student

NAME: _____ POSITION: _____

DATE STARTED: _____ DATE TERMINATED: _____

NAME OF FIRM: _____

Signature of Personnel Officer/Supervisor: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Your cooperation in returning this evaluation quickly will be greatly appreciated. Co-op is a requirement for graduation. For the student to receive credit for the experience, the evaluation must be on file by that date.

On the following scale, please rate the student on the standards of performance expected by your company. Also, where appropriate, please document your rating with comments.

	Performs above standard	Performs to standard	Performs below standard some of the time	Consistently performs below standard
<p>Work Quality: Assignments are completed thoroughly, accurately, and in a timely manner.</p>				
<p>Work Quantity: Performs expected amount of work.</p>				
<p>Job Comprehension: Demonstrates understanding of systems, procedures, and products/services.</p>				
<p>Organizational Skills: Plans and prioritizes tasks.</p>				
<p>Business Acumen: Gathers and analyzes data; makes well-founded decisions.</p>				
<p>Initiative: Takes responsibility to look for other work when assigned tasks are completed. Contributes ideas and suggestions when appropriate.</p>				

	Performs above standard	Performs to standard	Performs below standard some of the time	Consistently performs below standard
<p>Leadership: Is assertive, speaks up when necessary, commands attention.</p>				
<p>Supervises others as required.</p>				
<p>Demonstrates dependability, is reliable, and follows through.</p>				
<p>Shows flexibility to the demands of his/her assignments.</p>				
<p>Demonstrates professionalism in dealing with subordinates, coworkers, and superiors. Tolerates stress while performing job; does not lose temper or get flustered.</p>				
<p>Communication: Conveys information clearly and quickly both to individuals and to groups.</p>				
<p>Effectively conveys information in writing.</p>				

Comments: _____

Attendance: _____

Punctuality: _____

Overall Performance: _____

Strengths: _____

Weaknesses: _____

If there were a future opening in this department, I would/would not wish to hire this person.

Additional Comments: _____

It is hard to imagine other work-related experiences that are as valuable, given the supervision and the evaluation that are required by the college offering the co-op program. Don't overlook this splendid opportunity.

Two-Year Colleges

Two-year colleges, also called junior colleges or community colleges, can be public or private institutions. They offer programs that prepare students for professional technical careers, as well as for transfer to senior or four-year colleges. You can locate hundreds of two-year colleges that offer excellent retailing and related programs. Refer to Appendixes A and B in this book, which contain a comprehensive list of such schools. Write directly to each school that is of interest to you to get specific information about the institution and its programs.

There are significant advantages to considering a two-year college: tuition is often lower than at senior colleges; you can live at home and commute to college; highly specialized programs are

available; the student body is frequently smaller, which may allow the less mature student greater opportunity to develop; and there is often a closer relationship with faculty.

Two-year colleges are important features of today's educational system. Remember that the two-year college is not an extension of high school, nor is it a smaller version of a senior college. It has its own special identity and makes a significant contribution to American education.

Carefully examine programs that are of interest to you and make sure that the courses will be transferable to a senior college you might move to in the future.

College Guides

Use your school or local library for assistance in getting educational information. You can find current directories to get up-to-date college data. The *College Blue Book of Occupational Education*, published by Macmillan, lists colleges by state and indicates the occupational programs offered.

Peterson's Annual Guide to Undergraduate Study is available for both two- and four-year colleges. It is published by Peterson's Guides. Each edition gives detailed profiles of campuses that include data on admission, financial aid, the student body, athletics, college life, and tuition.

The *HEP Higher Education Directory*, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., will supply you with important information in your research.

The Diverse Field of Retailing

You have had a chance to read about the wide variety of activities in retailing. Retailing needs men and women who can perform

many diverse duties. And the need for new professionals in this field continues to grow. The future of retailing looks bright for college graduates who are eager to prove themselves in this challenging industry. Here are some features of the retailing profession for you to consider.

- We are all shoppers and consumers, so retail stores exist just about everywhere. Retailing is not confined to a specific geographic area. You can find jobs in retailing in any part of the country or start your own business wherever there are people. You might even have the chance to work abroad.
- Retailers are always looking for well-trained and dedicated men and women to nurture and help grow with the business. Unlike many other career paths, retailing adapts to new changes and trends. It is a wonderful field for those creative and imaginative people who can react to its continuous changes.
- Retailing is a field that has long offered equal opportunity employment to women and other minority groups. In many firms there are more female buyers than male buyers. However, there is still a need for minorities in upper management.
- As a people-oriented field, it is perfect for those who enjoy dealing with others.

The plain fact is that retailing is not only an exciting business to be in, it is still one of the nation's top growth industries. And it offers more openings and opportunities than many other fields.

For recent college graduates, entry-level jobs pay anywhere from \$24,000 to \$32,000 in department stores, with specialty stores, chains, and buying offices offering somewhat less.

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THE JOB SEARCH

RETAILING ACCOUNTS FOR more than \$3 trillion in annual sales, just in the United States. And there are more than one million retail firms operating today; so, once you have decided to pursue a career in retailing, it is important for you to learn as much as you can about the field. It is also essential for you to learn more about yourself. As a job seeker, you need to be clear about your own interests and abilities, in addition to specifics about various career areas. Armed with this information, you will be able to make wise career choices.

It is not easy to know where to begin to take stock of ourselves. Indeed, it takes some of us a lifetime to understand what motivates and inspires us. And as we grow and develop, our values and interests may change as well. Now is the time to start paying close attention to those job-related interests that you can identify. Think about yourself as a worker and about the range of job-related assignments you may find yourself doing in the next thirty or forty

years. Believe it or not, forty years is roughly the amount of time a worker spends on the job during a lifetime. Does that sound like a long time to you? With research and planning, you can make those years challenging and exciting. Workers do their best when they are involved in tasks that they enjoy and from which they gain a sense of satisfaction. Gather as much information as you can about yourself and the retailing industry, and determine if your own abilities and interests fit in with the demands of a retailing career.

Identify Your Accomplishments, Skills, and Interests

You can begin to find out more about yourself by sorting out what you enjoy doing, what you believe you do well, and what you think you would like to do in the future. In short, identify your marketable characteristics. Matching your strengths to those required in retailing will allow you to mesh your best qualities with what retail employers are seeking. An inventory of your accomplishments, your skills, and your interests can help you eliminate areas that may not work well for you, as well as help you explore alternatives and related career areas before you make your final decisions.

Keep in mind some of the facts uncovered by national surveys. Many workers in the United States are not happy with their jobs and believe that real opportunities for advancement are not available to them. In addition, far too many workers feel unappreciated and believe they are poorly paid for the work they do. All the more reason to make sure that you carefully select a career that will offer what appeals to you and fits well with what you have to offer.

Make a Personal Inventory

Itemizing your personal accomplishments will allow you to identify your likes, dislikes, abilities, and the kind of activities that you value. It is very helpful to put this list down in writing rather than just thinking about it. Try to remember the occasions that have been special for you and provided you with good learning experiences. Also include situations where you have been successful in school, at work, or in social or leisure circles. Your inventory should be a tally of your good and weak points, your interests, and your values.

Use the following sample inventory as a model for your own inventory. It shows accomplishments and activities and the required skills and abilities demonstrated to achieve them.

Knowing what you have liked and disliked in the past can help you identify future career possibilities. For every item you list in your accomplishments and skills inventory, think critically about how you felt about the event. Did you like or dislike it? For what reasons? Be sure to jot this information down, too. Listing these three areas side by side can give you the beginnings of a composite picture of you as a working person.

Accomplishments and Activities

School

Planned fund-raising flea market sale for benefit of the
high school library

Passed tough math course in summer school

Work

Taught myself to do minor repairs on office copying
machine on part-time job

Held part-time jobs through high school to help pay for school supplies and for my own pocket money

Social

Was member of first all-girl basketball team to win a trophy in local competition

Demonstrated Skills and Abilities

Good organizational skills, accurate record keeping, and ability to work with large group of students, delegate tasks, and communicate clearly

Can work under pressure, work with figures, and problem-solve

Ability to learn without supervision or instruction; self-starter; good manual dexterity

Ability to work independently and organize and manage time well

Can work on a team to successfully compete for a common goal

Clarify Your Values

Your values are the ideas and concepts that you feel strongly about and believe in. They vary from person to person. People in the same family often have different sets of values. Values are personal beliefs that represent what gives you great satisfaction. Some job-related values include nine-to-five work hours, recognition and status, variety of assignments, and opportunity to travel, to name just a few.

Rank the job-related values in the order of your preference. It may be difficult for you to decide which items are truly the most

important and which items should be ranked ahead of others. The values that end up as the first five or six on your list are those you must pay special attention to. You should consider a career that allows you to incorporate those job-related values in your work.

If indeed you wish to consider a career in retailing, review your skills, interests, and values and compare them with the information you already have about jobs in the field. Keep in mind that your list of accomplishments and activities will grow as you acquire experience. You should reassess your inventory as you collect more information about retailing careers. You may find that you change your ideas about what is important to you as a result of new career data and more life experiences. Be open to all career opportunities that seem to be in keeping with your educational goals, skills, interests, values, and preferred lifestyle.

Aside from helping you make wise career choices, having a good understanding of yourself will allow you to present your best side to a potential employer. Unless you can identify your own strengths, it is hard to tell someone about them. Once you know yourself, you can focus on what you have to offer. We all have limitations and weak areas. These weak points may change and improve over time, so you should not view them as permanent shortcomings. In fact, your ability to identify a weakness now may encourage you to work hard in overcoming it. For example, if you have a history of turning in school assignments late because you are bogged down with your part-time job, you may decide you want to learn how to organize and manage your time more effectively. With some time-management skills under your belt, you may be able to hold onto your part-time job and complete all your school projects on time. This weakness—and how you addressed it—may turn out to be a selling point you can talk about to an employer in the future.

After you have researched your specific area of career interest and have completed your personal inventory, consider the following questions:

- What occupations have the most appeal to me?
- What aspects of each job interest me most?
- What don't I like about the job?
- What skills and aptitudes are needed? Do I have those skills and aptitudes?
- What is the typical career path for a beginning worker?
- Which of my values and interests are satisfied in this area of work? What is a typical entry-level job like?

Researching the Job Market

Don't overlook any possible resources when starting to collect information about job leads. Explore all of the following resources.

School Placement Office

If you are still a student, or if you are a recent graduate, make use of the placement services offered by your school. Many placement offices have computerized listings and extensive vocational libraries where you can also research companies. Consult with your career counselor about what facilities you can use and for how long after your graduation they are available to you.

Local or School Library

Most libraries now have many current career books and pamphlets as well as résumé guides. Larger libraries will have a collection of videotapes that offer tips on preparing résumés and conducting job

interviews. You will also find many helpful trade directories and business journals. *Sheldon's Retail* and *Phelon's Resident Buyers Directory* will provide you with a geographic list of department stores, women's specialty stores, chain stores, and resident buying offices. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, published by the United States Department of Labor, is revised every two years. It surveys the national employment outlook and gives specific job descriptions and details about educational requirements, career paths, and salary ranges for thousands of jobs. Or you can write to the National Retail Federation, 325 Seventh Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20004. This largest trade association in the world includes the large chain stores as well as smaller, independently operated stores. The NRF offers many professional services to its members in the United States and in fifty countries abroad. *Chain Store Age/Trends*, *Discount Store News*, and *Apparel Merchandising* are trade newspapers that can be found in any business library.

Newspapers

Look at the classified ads in the employment section of your local newspaper. Sunday issues generally have the most listings. If you plan on relocating, start to check ads in out-of-town or out-of-state newspapers to get an overview of what the job market is like and what type of help employers in those areas are seeking. Look to see what background is required and what salary ranges are offered.

Telephone Directory

An excellent source of potential employers can be found in the yellow pages of your telephone directory. Look under specific headings, such as "specialty stores," "retail stores," or "resident buying

offices.” You can also locate trade associations in the directory, and then call or write for further information about members.

State Employment Service

Every state in the nation maintains a free employment service for residents of that state. You may even qualify for career counseling at your local state employment service office. Many employers routinely list positions with this agency, which is often an excellent resource for beginning workers.

Chamber of Commerce

Each city’s chamber of commerce has a membership list of local businesspeople that is available upon request. This can be very useful when planning a job hunt in a new locale. You can write in advance to request a list of member retailers. Then mail a cover letter and résumé to the firms that interest you, indicating when you will be available for an interview.

Employment Agencies

Employers with private employment agencies list many fine jobs. Make sure the agency you decide to work with does not charge you a fee for helping you find a job. Read carefully all the forms you are asked to sign. You can find listings of employment agencies in the telephone directory, trade journals, and newspapers. Specialized agencies, such as those concentrating on merchandising and retailing, may be particularly useful to you, as they often provide applicants with detailed information about the job listing, the company, and its policies.

Local Employers in the Community

Your entry-level job may be waiting right in your own community. Investigate the local merchants in your neighborhood and in the areas nearby. Contact them and inquire about job openings. If no positions are available at the time you inquire, let these employers know of your interest in working for them, so that they can call you as jobs open in their firms.

Friends, Family, Recently Employed Graduates, and Others

Tell everyone that you know that you are job hunting, as they may be able to help you with job leads. Keep in touch with classmates who have recently been employed. Most people enjoy talking about their jobs and career goals and are willing to share job-related information. In fact, you can approach almost any worker in a field that interests you and explain that you would appreciate some time to chat about his or her work. This is called informational interviewing, and it is an informal way of getting helpful employment details from people who are working in your chosen field. You can ask workers questions such as:

- How did you find your first job?
- What educational background did you need to start in your job?
- What skills are most needed in your work?
- What do you like best about your job?
- Can you tell me about a typical day?
- What advice would you give to a beginner who is considering this field?

- What related fields can you suggest I look into?
- Can you tell me what you did on your first job?
- Are there other people in this field you could introduce me to?

When talking with workers, make it clear that you are simply interested in gathering information and that you do not expect to be given a job lead. And remember that in some situations, busy workers may not be able to speak with you at great length. Ask if there would be a more convenient time for you to meet with them.

The Cover Letter

Your cover letter introduces you to the reader, who is generally an employer or an interviewer. It should convince the reader to review your attached résumé and consider you for a job interview. Always enclose a cover letter when you mail a résumé to a prospective employer. Try to find out who is responsible for the hiring in a particular firm, check for the correct title and spelling of that person's name, and address your cover letter directly to him or her. If you are not able to get this information, address your cover letter to the personnel or human resources director of the company.

Your cover letter should not be longer than three or four paragraphs and should never exceed one typewritten page. Keep the letter simple—it should be brief and to the point—and avoid repeating information that you have already stated in your résumé. The person reading your cover letter should be able to quickly learn of your interest in applying for a particular position. A well-written and interesting cover letter should persuade him or her to read your

attached résumé for more details about you. The cover letter also must be neatly typed and grammatically correct. Never use photocopied or duplicated letters. Individually print your letter on good quality white paper, and make sure that you sign your name just above the line where it is typewritten.

Personalize your cover letter so that the reader feels you are writing specifically about that firm and that you have genuine interest in that organization. Slant your cover letter toward what you can offer the company.

Your cover letter should encourage a prospective employer to want to learn more about your background and your future goals. A thoughtfully designed cover letter will help you get what you want—a job interview.

Look at the following cover letter. Note that it clearly states the reason it is being sent in the first paragraph. That is your chance to identify the position you are applying for and mention how you learned about it. A brief statement about your background and why you believe you can fill the spot comes next. Close on a positive note, expressing your interest in setting up an interview. You can do all this in just a handful of sentences.

The Résumé

A résumé is a very important tool in your job hunt. It is a brief description of yourself and provides information about you, your school and work background, and several personal interests or hobbies. All of these details should work together to create a strong portrait of you. A résumé acquaints the reader with your goals, interests, qualifications, and experiences. It may be written in a traditional manner or in an individualized style. A well-written résumé

Sample Cover Letter

Matthew Philips
8 West Walk
Dunewood, New York 11734
June 3, 2003

Mr. Ira Alan
Human Resources Director
Alan's Clothing Store
Fair Harbor, New York 11734

Dear Mr. Alan:

I am interested in applying for the sales position in your store that you listed in the Dunewood School employment office.

My part-time and summer sales experience plus my course work as a merchandising major have given me an excellent background for the opening. I am looking forward to a career in retailing.

I will call your office next week to arrange for an interview at your convenience.

Yours truly,

Matthew Philips

is no guarantee of getting a job, but it may be very helpful in getting you that all-important interview.

Most prospective employers expect to receive a résumé from you in advance of the interview or at the time of the interview. There is no one perfect way of presenting information about yourself, but many people think of a résumé as a way of selling yourself on paper. By carefully describing what you have accomplished and by highlighting your best points, you are, in fact, creating an advertisement for yourself. This can be a very personal picture you paint for the reader. A poor résumé will merely report what you have done, leaving it up to the employer to decide if your background is right for the job. A thoughtfully written résumé will detail your background in a clear and well-organized manner, easily allowing the employer to see why you are qualified for the position.

Think of your résumé as a marketing document that will allow you to compete for the interview in a businesslike and professional manner. Be prepared to invest time and effort in the preparation of your résumé. It is an excellent investment. It can bring interest and attention to you as a candidate and persuade a prospective employer to grant you an interview. Here are résumé-writing guidelines that beginning job seekers should keep in mind:

- Revise your rough draft as many times as necessary until you are convinced that you have detailed all areas of importance.
- Point out what you have accomplished in school or on the job, if you have past work or volunteer experience. Describe abilities that you have that would be of interest to the firm. Be frank about your accomplishments without boasting or bragging.

- Include a goal or job objective to help the reader pinpoint your immediate or future interest.
- Avoid abbreviations, initials, and contractions on your résumé. Do not type the word *Résumé* at the top of the page. Never include your photograph.
- As a beginning job seeker, your résumé should not exceed one typewritten page.
- Sloppy résumés, or those with typing, spelling, or factual errors, are unprofessional and unacceptable.
- Allow enough space between categories of information so that your résumé is easy to read and creates a pleasing impression.
- There is no need to include names of references, but be ready to list them on an employment application form or discuss them at an interview.
- Complete sentences are not necessary. It is more important to be brief and concise in your statements.
- List the jobs you have had, beginning with the last one you held and ending the list with your first job. This reverse chronological order allows the reader to see what your most recent experience has been.
- Emphasize any changes in responsibility on the job. Employers will be impressed with your ability to assume more responsibility and move up on the job.

- For beginners without significant work history, any minor experience, including volunteer work or community service, is important. It shows an employer your ability to handle responsibility in a variety of settings.
- List your school course of study or major courses, particularly if they relate to the position you are applying for.
- Everyone has something to offer. Focus on your talents in your résumé and once again at the time of your interview. Remember, your résumé is your best advertisement.

Résumé Outline

Design your résumé so that the following areas are covered:

Heading

Your name, street address, city, state, zip code, telephone number, and/or E-mail address should appear at the top center of the page or in the upper corner of the page. It will identify the résumé and let the employer know how to contact you. This is the only personal information that should be included.

Objective

List your immediate employment goal by a specific job title or field. Make sure it is in keeping with the job for which you are applying. Not every résumé must include an objective, particularly if you wish to consider several unrelated areas of work. If you decide not to list an objective, be sure you can clearly describe the position you want at the interview.

Education

If you have a college degree, list it and omit high school data. Indicate the name of the school, dates of attendance, the kind of degree received, and any school honors or scholarships. If your educational background is directly related to your job objective, carefully itemize the relevant course work or other preparation that seems suitable, such as workshops or seminars. You can also include extracurricular activities in this section, such as student government, clubs, yearbook, or student newspaper experiences.

If you have no college background, list your high school training or any course work or other training, if it is related to the job you are seeking. Always list your most recent education first.

Work Experience

You may have accumulated some work experience from part-time or summer jobs. Describe your responsibilities and how you used your various skills, using as many action words as possible. List all industry-related exposure you have had, including attendance at professional meetings or trade association events.

As you gain professional experience in the industry, you will be able to delete the incidental jobs from your résumé. Until then, show the reader that you have had some work responsibility by listing any and all jobs, particularly if they were recent. You don't need to go into elaborate detail, but you should describe your accomplishments and the skills you used.

List your most recent job first and note the duties you performed and any promotions you may have received. Employers are often interested in learning that students have held part-time jobs and maintained good school grades as well.

Unpaid Experience

Do not be modest about describing unpaid activities. Volunteer work often impresses employers. This can include volunteer or internship experiences in your church, local hospitals, community agencies, or civic groups. Describe this area just as you would paid activities.

Special Skills and Activities

This part of the résumé is optional and may not serve every job hunter well. Use it only if you can present interesting or unusual aptitudes or talents to the employer. Do you speak more than one language? Have you a unique hobby? Are you a sports enthusiast, an amateur photographer, a skilled musician? A brief line or two about your special activities may be interesting to the reader and gives a personalized note to your résumé.

These are the major categories that are typically found on résumés. Place them in an order that suits you. For example, extensive work experience might be placed ahead of educational experience, as it may be more important for the employer to notice your work activities. Of course, other categories such as military service or extended travel should be added if they apply.

There is no need for beginners to list references. By highlighting your education and work experience, you show the reader that you are a qualified candidate. If the employer is interested in offering you a job, you should then be ready to give the names and addresses of several references.

Try to get the permission of two or three supervisors or past teachers who would be willing to have a potential employer con-

tact them to discuss your work habits and your skills. Keep a list of the names, business addresses, and telephone numbers of your references. You will then be prepared for a reference check. Never use anyone's name without getting his or her approval in advance.

The simplest type of résumé for the beginning job hunter is a chronological résumé. You begin by listing your most recent experiences at school and work, and describe the rest in reverse order. This style of résumé is useful for recent graduates, as it focuses on the skills learned through their schooling, or for graduates with limited work experience. It is not recommended as a format for those with big gaps of unemployment or those who have been job-hopping in a variety of fields.

Describe your role on jobs and your accomplishments with action words. These verbs will help give your résumé a stronger and more assertive tone. Some examples of action verbs are “designed,” “arranged,” “established,” “coordinated,” and “sold.”

Résumé Checklist

Rate your own résumé by comparing it against the following checklist:

- **Overall appearance.** Is it neat and professional looking? Easy to read? Neatly spaced? No typing, spelling, or grammatical errors?
- **Layout.** Is it well laid out on a single page with ample margins? Do your bestselling points stand out?
- **Relevance.** Is there unrelated or unimportant information that can be deleted?
- **Content.** Can the reader get a quick picture of your qualifications and abilities?

- **Action orientation.** Do sentences begin with action words?
- **Specificity.** Does your résumé avoid generalities and focus on specific information?
- **Accomplishments.** Are your skills and accomplishments emphasized?
- **Completeness.** Is all the important information about you included? Does your résumé do the job of convincing the reader to invite you to a job interview?

The following page shows a sample chronological résumé that you might find helpful.

Sample Résumé

Matthew Philips
8 West Walk
Dunewood, New York 11734
(555) 583-8058

Objective:

Assistant Store Manager

Education:

Fashion Institute of Technology, State University of New York

Major: Fashion Buying and Merchandising

Degree: Associate in Applied Science, May 2003

Major Courses: Fashion Marketing, Consumer Motivation, Buying and Merchandising, Marketing Principles

Related Courses: Apparel Construction, Textile Science, Fashion Art and Design

Honors and Activities:

Retailing Society Scholarship 2001–2003

Dean's List, Fall 2002

Member of the Merchandising Society

Work Experience:

9/02–12/02—Macy's Herald Square:

Work-study assignment in men's shoe department. Assisted customers, arranged displays, maintained stock, increased departmental sales by 22 percent.

Summers 2001 and 2002—Camp Northwood, Remsen, New York:

As a camp counselor, planned and supervised activities of ten- to twelve-year-old boys. Was in charge of wilderness trips.

Skills:

Fluent in Spanish.

Computer literate in Word, Excel, Powerpoint.

THE JOB INTERVIEW: MAKE IT A SUCCESS

YOU HAVE TAKEN the necessary time to do your own personal inventory of interests and skills and have prepared a perfect résumé and cover letter. Now you are ready for the next step—preparing for the interview. The job interview is a critical step in the employment process. The purpose of the interview is to allow the employer to make a decision about your employment with the company. Skilled interviewers can learn a great deal of information about you from your cover letter and résumé, your appearance, and the manner in which you answer questions during the interview. The job interview is also your chance to find out if the position is right for you.

Preparing for the Interview

The job interview is a situation where advance preparation can really work for you. The candidates who are hired are not always the most qualified. However, they are probably the most qualified

at selling themselves. Use the time you have with each interviewer to convey the best about yourself. It is your chance to convince the interviewer that *you* are the best-qualified person to fill the job.

Unfortunately, many job hunters do not do the proper homework necessary to present themselves in the best possible light. Remember, a beginning job, gained as a result of a successful interview, may pave the way for an exciting and challenging career. Once you have set a date for an employment interview, keep the following details in mind.

Time and Place

Be sure you know the exact date, time, and place of the interview. Try to get the complete name of the company and of the person who will be interviewing you. Find out how to pronounce the name of the interviewer if it looks difficult. All these details should be kept in a small notepad. Do not rely on your memory.

Researching Companies

Researching prospective employers is an enormously important part of your job search. If you don't know much about the organization and its products or services, you are at a distinct disadvantage. Find out all that you can about firms that are interesting to you. The larger organizations will have annual reports or other descriptive materials available to the public. You may want to work with your librarian to locate business news clippings in the library's vertical files for firms you are interested in researching.

Let everyone you meet know that you are eager to start your job hunt. Make a habit of going directly to the places where people are working in your area of interest. Ask questions. Find out about the background and education of the workers, what they like about

their jobs, and what the negative aspects are. You can also find out about companies this way. Is it a pleasant place to work? Do promotions come from within? Does the company offer benefits, such as tuition reimbursement? If you can get the name of the person in charge of hiring, write it down for future use.

Take advantage of any materials your school placement office has about the various companies that recruit on your campus.

Talk to your placement counselor, teachers, and the people you know who work for the company. If the firm you are researching manufactures a product, telephone the sales office and ask what stores sell the product in your area. Then visit those stores to view the item and familiarize yourself with the price range and the manufacturer's line of goods.

Take notes on the information you discover about each firm and review them before each interview. This will make you feel—and appear—more knowledgeable. This information may provide you with material you might want to discuss during your interview. Try to find out the following information before you have your interview:

- What does the company do? Does it sell, service, manufacture, or distribute a product?
- Who are the company's customers? Are they consumers or other businesses?
- Is it a large or small operation? How many employees does it have?

For larger firms and corporations, try to find out:

- Names and titles of the key executives
- If it is a local, national, or international firm

- If it is a publicly or privately owned company
- What the company's growth pattern has been in the recent past

Do your research. It will pay off.

Travel

Allow for enough time to get to your interview so that you arrive about ten to fifteen minutes before your appointment. Remember, traffic jams and other delays are unpredictable, but showing up late for an interview is never acceptable. Getting there a bit early gives you the opportunity to relax and get ready to meet the interviewer in a more leisurely fashion. Nothing is more upsetting than dashing into an interview out of breath and out of sorts.

Application Forms

Many firms, especially the larger ones that have a personnel or human resources department, will ask you to complete an employment application form. Be sure you come prepared with a pen to the interview. Fill out the form neatly and completely. A messy or hard-to-read form can be a sign that you are a careless or sloppy worker. Bring along your notepad if you can't remember all the important dates you will need to provide, such as dates of graduation or dates of employment on past jobs. Be sure to answer all questions so that the form is complete when you turn it in.

Appearance

How you look is a major factor in your overall presentation. The clothes you choose to wear and the impression you make give an interviewer an immediate idea of how businesslike you are. Dress

in a professional manner for the interview. A rule of thumb is to avoid extreme, trendy looks.

Don't arrive with your arms filled with packages or schoolbooks. Never bring friends or family members with you to the interview. The first impression you make is a lasting one. Interviewers are very skilled at making quick judgments. Use the interview opportunity to make an excellent impression on everyone you meet at your interview.

The Interview

You might be nervous during the interview. This is only natural. After you have had several interviews, you will have a better idea of what interviewers expect. Chances are you will be more at ease as you have more opportunities to practice your responses. Each interviewer's style will vary, and every interview you have will be different and unique. Some people will greet you with warmth and real interest in you and your background. Other interviewers will be more formal and impersonal. Some interviewers are talkative and chatty, while others expect you to take the lead in directing the flow of conversation. Be prepared for all possibilities by practicing and planning in advance of the interview. Think about the best answers you can give to commonly asked questions. Strengthen your answers by citing specific examples. Practice talking about your background, your interests, your school experience, and your plans for the future.

Go over this information with your placement counselor, a friend, or in the privacy of your room in front of a mirror. Be aware of both your verbal and nonverbal presentation. Your body language conveys a great deal about you. Good posture at all times is essential, even when you are seated. Avoid slouching or slumping

in your chair. Don't fidget with your hair or your clothing. Do not chew gum or smoke. If you are able to find out the name of the person interviewing you, use it in an opening greeting. Try to maintain eye contact during the interview, even though it is often easier to avoid the glance of the person you are talking to.

Never discuss personal problems or criticize past employers. Describe your background and qualifications honestly. Employers who hire beginners know that they cannot expect an extensive work history. Above all, try to convey a friendly and positive attitude. This will help put both the interviewer and you at ease. Be pleasant and businesslike. Smile as often as you can—and nothing is as effective as an ice-breaker in a difficult situation.

You should attempt to get information about the firm while giving information about yourself. Listen carefully and express interest and enthusiasm when you respond to the interviewer. If you have a feeling that the interview is not going well, don't allow your disappointment to show. Instead, try to review what went wrong after it is over and perhaps learn how to avoid those mistakes on future interviews.

Try to answer all questions fully without wandering off the topic. If you feel stumped by a particularly tough question, let the interviewer know that you need more time to think about your answer. Try to prepare a better answer to the question for the next time it comes up in an interview.

You can generally break down the interview process into a few distinct parts. It might be helpful for you to understand what you may encounter.

The Warm-Up

Interviews usually begin with a friendly exchange of greetings to help relax the applicant. Expect casual conversation about the

weather, any travel difficulty in getting to the interview location, and chatty items of this sort.

The Interviewer Asks Questions

If the interviewer is doing a good job, the applicant will be allowed to talk about himself or herself after the warm-up through a series of questions from the interviewer. This allows the interviewer to determine if the applicant has the qualifications for the job and if he or she will fit in the organization.

Practice responding to these commonly asked questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why should I hire you?
- Describe your strong points.
- What are your weaknesses?
- Why do you want to work for this firm?
- What are your proudest accomplishments?
- How would you describe yourself?
- Why are you interested in the field of retailing?
- How did that interest begin?
- How well do you work under pressure?
- How did you learn about this company?
- What do you want to learn on your first job?
- What did you enjoy most in school? Why?
- What can you contribute to this organization?
- How much money do you think you are worth?
- What are your goals and career plans?

The Interviewer Gives Information

Now the job of the interviewer is to sell the position and the company by giving job details and information about the firm, work-

ing conditions, and plans for growth. This is usually the point where there is some mention of salary and benefits.

The Applicant Asks Questions

Here is your chance to show that you have done some research. Asking questions will also indicate your interest in the firm. Before you enter the interview, prepare several questions to ask the interviewer, such as:

- What specific tasks will I be doing? (Ask only if the interviewer has not yet discussed this.)
- To what department/supervisor will I report?
- How often will my performance be reviewed?
- Is the firm planning growth or expansion in the near future? If so, in what areas?
- What sort of training or supervision can I expect?

The Wrap-Up

This portion of the interview may give you some idea of whether or not you will be considered for the job. The interviewer may indicate when you could expect to hear some word about the hiring decision or when to return for a second interview. It is also the right time to thank the interviewer for spending time with you. Always try to end the interview on a courteous, positive note.

The Question of Salary

It is important that you become familiar with the general salary range of the entry-level jobs you are considering. Your placement counselors or teachers can be a good source for this information.

And just reading classified ads in newspapers will give you a sense of what employers are offering.

If there is no mention of salary by the end of your interview, and the job appeals to you, you can freely ask the interviewer what salary the position will pay. The interviewer is just as likely to answer by asking how much you think you are worth, so you must be prepared to know and state the going salary rate. You would not serve yourself well by asking for an unreasonably high wage or settling on a salary far below standard.

You should bring up a discussion of salary only if you think there is a real likelihood that you and the job are suited for each other. Never raise questions about vacations, sick days, other benefits, or salary until all other aspects of the job have been explained to you.

The starting salary should not always be the major factor in deciding which position to select. It is very important for you to know the company's policy on salary review. It is possible to accept an entry job at a higher wage than your schoolmates and then discover that you are locked into that salary for a whole year because the firm's policy limits you to an annual salary review. Other beginners may have a chance to be reviewed for a raise in three or six months and be earning more than you in a rather short time.

Job Offers

It may happen that an interviewer will offer you a job at your first interview. In such a situation, you must be prepared to either accept or reject the job offer. If you feel sure that it is the job for you and you do not want to have further interviews at other firms, accept it courteously with a definite "thank you." Then be sure that you find out from the interviewer the exact day and time that you

should show up for work. Find out whom you will report to and where you should report on your first day. Also make sure that you are clear about the starting salary. You might be asked to fill out forms for the personnel and payroll units, although this may wait until your first day at work. If you have interviews scheduled with other companies, remember to call and let them know that you are no longer available.

If you would like more time to consider the job offer, if you wish to discuss it with your family, or even if you want to have more interviews, tell the interviewer that you appreciate the job offer. Let the interviewer know when you will call back with a decision. Be sure that you make a note of when you agreed to call back and do so, regardless of your decision.

If you are unsure whether the job is suitable for you and you decide not to accept the job offer, express your appreciation for the offer and the interviewer's interest in you. You might even want to mention the reason you are rejecting the offer so that the interviewer will understand. For example, "As you described the position, I realized that I would not have the opportunity to learn about your computerized systems, and I'm quite interested in that area. However, thank you for considering me for the job."

If the interviewer does not say whether or not you are a candidate for the position, you should make a point of asking at the end of the interview. "I'm quite interested in the job. Will you be considering me for it?"

Interviewers need to know that you are interested in the job they are trying to fill. Make every effort to convince the interviewer that you can do the job and that you want a chance to prove it. Relax, smile, and show enthusiasm at the prospect of joining the company's workforce.

What Interviewers Look For

Although interviewers are always looking for new employees with good skills in specific areas, they also seek beginners with good attitudes about work. The qualities many interviewers value in a candidate include:

- Being well prepared for the interview
- Showing enthusiasm and expressing a willingness to work and learn on the job
- Honest, genuine answers to questions during the interview, rather than overconfident or arrogant attitudes
- Knowledge of the firm and of the industry
- High energy level
- The ability to deal with other workers
- The ability to accept criticism and grow and learn from errors

Interview Checklist

No interview is ever perfect. But you will find that they do get smoother with practice. It will help you to review questions you could not answer easily and work on better ways to respond to them.

Spend a few minutes after each interview to take stock of how it went. Honestly answer these questions:

- Did you arrive on time or a few minutes early?
- Were you dressed appropriately?
- Did you smile and greet the interviewer by name?
- Were you able to mention your skills and strong points?

- Did you show interest in working for the company?
- Did you answer most questions thoughtfully and completely instead of with single “yes” or “no” responses?
- Did you stay on track and not ramble on about unrelated issues?
- Did you ask the interviewer all you need to know about the job?
- Did you come prepared with reasons why you want to work for the company, reasons why the employer should hire you, and questions that indicated a genuine interest in learning more about the firm?
- Do you know what the next step is?

Keep a record of which interviewers expect you to call them back. Note which interviewers will be contacting you and when.

Try not to feel discouraged by rejections or think that no one wants to hire you. You will learn a great deal from your early interviews and will be able to use those experiences to do better in future ones. The job for you may turn up when you least expect it. But don't wait for exciting opportunities to come to you. Be active and follow up on all leads that interest you. Go after what you want.

Discrimination

Laws exist to protect job hunters from discrimination in a job interview. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act makes it illegal to discriminate in hiring. The intent of the law is to allow all qualified candidates a chance to apply and compete for available jobs. It is illegal to discriminate against a candidate because of age, religion, race, sex, national origin, marital status, or certain physical disabilities (as long as they do not prevent the applicant from doing

the job described in the interview). Most organizations make a genuine effort to uphold the law. But do keep in mind that the hiring decision is made by the employer, provided it is not based on discriminatory reasons.

If you are not hired after an interview, do not jump to the conclusion that you were a victim of illegal discrimination. Job seekers who really believe that they were rejected because of discriminatory practices must thoughtfully review the situation and be sure that they can back up their claim. Even a well-documented case against an employer will mean an investment of a great deal of time and effort, and there is no guarantee of success in opening up the job to the candidate in question.

If you wish to register a complaint, discuss fully the details of the situation with a lawyer representing the local office of the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. You can write to it directly for material about laws and applicants' rights:

U.S. EEOC
1801 L Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20507

Your First Job

Your first position in retailing deserves a great deal of your attention and energy. The first job often sets the stage for a series of advancements up the career ladder. It is the best time for you to begin to develop professional skills and sort out career choices that the field can offer you. You can test out and improve your interpersonal and communications skills. You can also examine the areas that you believe are particularly weak in your background and

make efforts to bolster them by signing up for courses or applying yourself to on-the-job learning experiences.

Your first job in retailing can be an exciting and challenging experience. Capitalize on it by keeping the following in mind:

Be Ready for Hard Work

You will be expected to pitch in and apply yourself from the moment you step into your job. Beginners are observed and evaluated more frequently than senior workers, so be ready for lots of people to be paying attention to the kind of job you are doing.

Be Flexible

Be cooperative and assist your coworkers whenever you are able to without interrupting your own work routines. You will surely need their assistance at some point, and then you can more freely ask for help. Become known as a worker who is always ready to pitch in.

Be a Doer

You can impress your coworkers and your supervisor as well with your energy and your enthusiasm for getting the job done. You will soon earn the reputation of a worker who can be relied upon. This will serve you well when employees' records are reviewed for promotion.

Observe Everything

Use your eyes and ears and learn as much as possible about every operation you have contact with. Don't limit yourself to just your particular responsibilities. You can pick up valuable tips and information about other jobs and how other departments function. Note

how others handle their responsibilities. You will learn the ropes of the organization more quickly and employers will appreciate your interest in the larger picture of their business.

Find a Mentor

Try to seek out a senior worker or a supervisor who recognizes your talents and interest in the firm. Your mentor might be able to give you tasks that will help you learn and progress, as well as helpful information about the company that is often hard for beginners to learn about. Mentor relationships can be especially valuable in larger, more impersonal firms.

Respect Your Colleagues

Experienced workers can be a great source of guidance and advice for you. Go to your coworkers to ask simple questions about routines and procedures. You can respect their experience. Be sure that you check with your supervisor for concerns you have about guidelines for your specific duties.

Learn from Mistakes

Mistakes happen to all of us. Learn to acknowledge when you have made an error and try to profit from it by recognizing what not to do the next time. No one can demand perfection on the job all the time, especially from a beginner. Admitting your mistakes will help you gain respect among your coworkers.

It's Up to You

Now you have gathered some information about the field of retailing and the range of careers it may offer you. As well, you may be

learning about yourself and the things that you do well and value. Give as much energy and thought as you can to your career. You don't want to place yourself in a work situation that will result in years of boredom and frustration. You can look forward to forty or more years on the job. Do not allow those thousands of working hours—a vital part of your life—to be anything but satisfying and rewarding.

Often the most gratifying careers do not follow a straight path. There are detours that occur for us all, some of which are completely unforeseen. Be flexible and make room for those detours as you move along. Always be open to those new areas of work that your lifestyle will allow—full-time jobs, weekend or evening positions, temporary assignments, new locations, or new skills.

Continue to think about how you can apply your skills and experience to innovative projects. Never turn down the chance to learn something new, whether in a formal school setting or on-the-job exposure. Those skills may serve you well at a later time. Additional education and training are always a plus.

And never forget how important you are. Leave time for your own personal growth and development. Family involvement, ongoing education, travel, relaxation, and a thoughtfully planned career can all add up to enrich and enhance your route to success. You can make it happen.

CASE STUDIES IN RETAILING CAREERS

BECAUSE RETAILING OFFERS a wide variety of opportunities, the field attracts many different people, all with unique personalities and abilities. The following case histories trace the career paths of men and women who are currently working in different areas of retailing. By working hard to develop their skills, they have all achieved success in retailing.

Strive to Be the Best

Joanne had always been fascinated with “color and clothing and putting things together.” She held part-time sales jobs in retail stores throughout high school and after graduation enrolled in a four-year college to study fashion buying and merchandising. Originally, she was set on becoming a buyer. But by the time she graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree, her goal had changed.

She was eager to consider the broad area of manufacturing rather than focus on her earlier buying goal.

After a brief stint as an administrative assistant for a textile manufacturer, Joanne was not sure what direction to go in. It seemed as though a year abroad might have been just right at that time, but those plans fell through. Joanne realized that it was essential for her to spend her time and energy concentrating on planning her career.

She began by reading as much as possible about industries that interested her. There seemed to be excellent opportunities available in the cosmetics field. She spoke to the sales analyst from whom she was purchasing her cosmetics, and learned more about the exciting possibilities of that industry. In fact, the sales analyst was so informative that she convinced Joanne to seriously consider a job with her cosmetics firm and even arranged for her interview appointment. Joanne was hired immediately as a part-time salesperson, and after four months, a full-time sales spot became available. Just six short weeks later a position as counter manager opened, and Joanne made a smooth transition into that position, even though she was a very new worker for the company. She stayed in that role for two years, supervising one other sales analyst and building up a loyal following of customers.

Joanne was then transferred to a counter manager position at Bergdorf Goodman in Manhattan. This assignment lasted for one and a half years. Joanne supervised two other employees and continued to build up a solid business. With an excellent work record behind her, it was only natural that she was promoted to field development manager. At present, Joanne is happy in this job. She is responsible for recruiting in the northeast region of the country. She concentrates on the busy areas of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. Her job is to scout

for other enthusiastic people who will be trained as sales analysts for both full- and part-time positions in the major retail stores.

She now sees herself as “selling cosmetics through other people.” She knows that friendly and dedicated salespeople are the key to the company’s loyal base of customers, and it is Joanne’s job to recruit those people. Joanne never dreamed she would end up in this aspect of retailing, but she is very pleased with her career. She loves the freedom of movement her job offers her, being able to set her own work schedule, and being in a different store every day. In fact, it is hard for her to think about a feature of her assignment that she does not enjoy.

Joanne believes that her future will involve moving up the career ladder to training manager or account executive. But right now she is having a great time working hard and striving to be the best that she can be, and she is well rewarded for her efforts.

Color, Fabrics, and Clothing

Debbie says she was always fascinated by colors, fabrics, and clothing. It was not until she was a merchandising student at the Fashion Institute of Technology that she had her first taste of retail sales, both as a work-study assignment and as a part-time job. At that point she was convinced that she wanted to become a buyer.

After completing a four-year degree, Debbie entered the labor market and landed a job as a production assistant for a lingerie manufacturer in New York City’s garment district. She tested those waters for just three months before it was clear to her that the work was far too technical for her. The FIT placement office helped her find her next spot in a major buying office as an assistant to the product manager for home furnishings items. Debbie felt com-

fortable in that job, and learned to report on trends in home fashions, handle the paperwork involved in importing items, and send telex messages overseas. Debbie was the buying office's liaison to member stores and to vendors. She remembers feeling that she wore many hats and always found it very interesting. She learned a great deal about life in a buying office, and after one and a half years felt ready to move on to a position of greater responsibility.

At present Debbie is an assistant buyer for a chain of more than one hundred clothing stores for men, women, and children. Her specific area of responsibility is menswear, and she believes she has been given a chance to learn a lot about the market and gain a great deal of hands-on experience. She writes orders for purchases her buyer makes, deals directly with vendors, and enjoys the opportunity of becoming very familiar with the menswear market. She spends at least two days a week visiting resources and has had great exposure to the many manufacturers and wholesalers in her field. She spends time using her retail math skills, figuring markups and markdowns, and planning the distribution of goods to the chain's stores. She also analyzes and evaluates the different sales figures of each store to help determine future purchases. Debbie works with a computer for order entries and to get printouts on various styles and information about how well items are selling.

She is convinced that the buying office segment of retailing is for her and is confident that she will soon progress to a buyer's spot.

The Myth Was True

Danya remembers always wanting to be a buyer, even though her part-time work experience as a high school student was in the non-

related areas of waitressing and baby-sitting. Because she did not believe she had a strong enough academic bent, she decided to research more practical college programs that would prepare her for immediate employment upon her graduation. She discovered a buying and merchandising major that was highly regarded by those in the field and decided to enroll in that two-year program. She thoroughly enjoyed her college experience and discovered the broad scope of careers open to her. Her class in small store operations was a particular eye-opener for her, as she now seemed to lean toward management positions rather than jobs that would lead to a buying career.

With this in mind, she applied for an entry-level position as an assistant store manager in training for the Gap. It was then that Danya realized that what she thought was a myth actually was true. While she was researching the field, she frequently heard that employers are delighted to hire graduates of her program. And this was truly the case with Danya. She was offered a job on her very first interview. Her comprehensive background and solid skills in the merchandising area would indeed open many career doors for her.

After four months in training, she moved on to the assistant manager position in the store. Because that particular retail unit had no store manager at that time, it was an excellent opportunity for Danya, along with several other assistant managers, to handle a variety of responsibilities. She learned all store operations and was pleased to pitch in and perform tasks that a store manager might have handled, including dealing with the payroll and supervising and managing the staff.

She loved what she was learning about all aspects of managing a store and after a year was transferred to another location, where

she was quickly promoted to store manager. She remembers with great pride that she was just twenty years old and the Gap's youngest store manager, handling a two-level retail operation that had a \$750,000 sales volume.

She thoroughly enjoyed that spot but felt ready to move on and consider the world of wholesale. As a sales manager for a manufacturer of imported sportswear, she was now in a position to sell to buyers. Although she still enjoyed the sales aspect of the position, she did not really care for the traditional Monday through Friday work schedule and began to miss the retail life. She allowed herself a full year to learn more about this aspect of the industry before she was drawn back to retailing. At this point, she decided to work for a major department store.

Danya chose Lord and Taylor's executive training program. Because of her varied work history, she was able to bypass some of the entry-level assignments and moved into a slot as a branch assistant buyer for dresses in the New York City store. The position gave Danya responsibility for overseeing the dress department of forty-two branch stores. She loved the job and was fortunate to have a very seasoned buyer as her boss. She found a great mentor in her supervisor, who allowed Danya to accompany her to the market frequently and shared her knowledge with her. After four months, Danya was promoted to a department manager of dresses in a branch store, where she stayed on for a year and a half, supervising an assistant and ten salespeople.

To her great surprise, Danya was approached by a representative of her current employer, the Talbots chain of women's clothing stores. Talbots sought a top-notch store manager for a store that was about to open. Danya was hired as the store manager and had full control of the merchandising of goods, staffing, and customer

relations for the new operation. Because she was able to do such a fine job of running that store and handling a \$1.5 million volume annually, Danya was selected by Talbots to open its New York City flagship store, which does more than \$4 million in business yearly.

Her talents at successfully assuming that huge responsibility brought her to her next and current position with Talbots—district manager. Danya is responsible for seven stores in the chain in New York and New Jersey and for a total sales volume of \$15 million annually! This takes her on the road daily within the New York/New Jersey area, visiting the stores and working very closely with store managers. Danya's greatest sense of satisfaction derives from the opportunity to help in the professional development of the store managers. In fact, she received a Talbots award for "The Best Developer of People."

Although Danya has great responsibilities and a very busy schedule, she enjoys every minute of her day. She is generally at one of the stores by 9:00 A.M. and stays on until 7:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. And Danya's goal seems very much within her reach—to become a regional manager for Talbots and eventually share her retail expertise with young men and women by teaching in college. Judging from the way Danya's career has taken off, it is bound to happen.

Launching a Dream

Paul was raised in rural Louisiana with little or no exposure to the world of fashion, except for the magazines he read. He gravitated toward studying fashion buying in a local college, and after one year of that program decided to make other plans. While still a college student, Paul held a part-time job at JCPenney. His super-

visor there suggested that he consider other programs of study that might satisfy his creative spirit. After a bit of research about various college programs, Paul discovered a menswear design and marketing major at a New York school and transferred to New York City to complete his education.

This change seemed to work just right for Paul, as he became more interested than ever in men's fashions at a time when the menswear industry was experiencing a major shift. Menswear was beginning to move from a rather traditional, predictable apparel area to one moving ahead in excitement and fashion.

Paul's concentration in fashion marketing introduced him to fashion forecasting and fashion direction. It was then that he was able to clearly identify his dream. He realized that although the design world was not the right spot for him, the fashion director's role had enormous appeal. His feelings have not changed since his graduation more than ten years ago.

Interestingly enough, Paul's first work experience was not in retailing but in the wholesale area. He was hired as a designer of men's hosiery for a major manufacturer and gained excellent experience, learning a great deal about color and yarns during the nine months he was in the manufacturing aspect of the fashion industry. He was contacted by Macy's, who had his résumé on file from his initial job-hunting campaign, and was quickly hired as its menswear fashion coordinator. That began a long and solid working relationship with the firm. Paul worked at the Herald Square store for one and a half years, reporting to the menswear fashion director and immersing himself in every aspect of Macy's large and fashionable menswear department.

When an opening occurred in Macy's Paris fashion office, Paul was delighted to be its candidate. He began as a freelance consul-

tant for the store, covering the European markets and trade shows, and quickly began full-time work for Macy's. In that capacity he dealt with the menswear buyers for all of Macy's stores and traveled through Europe with them—introducing the buyers to the new resources he had uncovered and getting heavily involved in product development.

Paul's work was so important to the growth of Macy's menswear areas that he was asked to return to the New York City corporate office, but he was not ready to leave Paris just yet. He worked as a freelance consultant for other clients, as well as continuing to work closely with Macy's.

As Paul's reputation and experience in the menswear area grew, he received a wonderful offer from Saks Fifth Avenue. He was finally lured back to New York City from Paris to start work as the associate fashion director for menswear for Saks. Since then Paul has been fortunate enough to work closely with that firm's fashion director and continue to build his reputation and exposure in the menswear area.

Paul knows his position is very desirable and very sought after, and his future plans include getting to learn about the markets in the Far East, as well as assuming greater responsibilities and authority. For Paul, much of his dream has already become a reality. His next goal is to become the fashion director of a major retail operation.

From Schoolteacher to Personnel Manager

Ako's interest in retailing began in college. She had no part-time work experience at all while attending high school, and it wasn't until her senior year that she did what so many teens in Hawaii

do—work in a pineapple cannery for the summer. At the University of Hawaii, Ako began her studies in courses that would lead to a degree as an elementary schoolteacher. However, a part-time job as a sales floater in a retail store dramatically changed Ako's career path. Her interest in retailing was sparked when she was assigned to one department and then to the next, allowing her to become a “mini-expert” in many product areas.

While Ako was still a student, she enrolled in a fashion seminar run by the local Sears store. Grooming, poise, and fashion were discussed at those sessions. Ako must have been a memorable pupil, as she was contacted by Sears and asked to become an instructor for the fashion seminars while still a student at the university. Ako was trained by Sears and worked with other more experienced instructors. She then dealt with various groups of people, ranging from senior citizens to toddlers.

Ako's exposure to student teaching as part of her course work at the university, coupled with her experience with retailing, enabled her to make the decision to return to the university after completing her education degree for a design and merchandising program. She now recognized that her interest was in that area, and Ako never did get to apply for a teaching position. She claims that part of her retail interest must be credited to her mother, who always owned her own business and was an entrepreneur.

While enrolled in the University of Hawaii's design and merchandising program, she heard about a relevant college program in New York and quickly decided that it made sense for her to learn about the world of fashion and design where much of it was going on—in New York City. And so she went as a visiting one-year student without friends or relatives in New York City—and she loved it. One of Ako's courses in running a small business required her

to interview a retail store owner. After researching her project and identifying a shoe store that interested her, she interviewed the owner and ended up getting a sales job in the shop as well. With as much enthusiasm for her work today as she had five years ago as a trainee, Ako still praises the retail industry: “The diversity of the field is part of the excitement. One day is just never the same as the next, and the constant change and challenge are so exciting.”

Ako points out that retailing is an area for those who enjoy making decisions and who have the self-confidence to deal effectively with others. She has learned to be a very good negotiator in her daily dealings. When hiring new trainees, Ako tries to select those with good analytical skills and some facility with numbers. And she is always looking for people who are able to think of new ways the organization can make money. As personnel director for a major chain of retail stores, Ako is convinced she has found the right career and enjoys reflecting that it all came about because of a part-time sales job.

From Direct Marketing to Retailing

Leslie was born in upstate New York and had many experiences in retailing as a high school student. He held several part-time sales jobs, and by the time he graduated, he was determined to select a buying and merchandising program in college. After doing the appropriate research, he decided that the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) was his only choice. Although his family had concerns about his going to school in New York City, he immediately settled into the dorm life and the program and loved both.

Convinced he really wanted a four-year baccalaureate degree, Leslie completed the two-year program and then went for a mar-

keting major for the remaining two years. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1987.

One of the many exciting courses Leslie enrolled in was direct marketing. He was eager to take that class because he was very aware of the prominence of direct marketing and the mail-order field. "The course was just fascinating and really stirred up my interest in that industry even further."

As no job seemed to be available in the direct marketing area at the time Leslie graduated from college, he took an entry-level position with a well-known apparel manufacturer, helping to coordinate samples and acting as an administrative assistant. After several months on the job, his boss was fired. Leslie then paid a visit to the placement office at FIT. While researching job leads there, Leslie was drawn to the position he currently holds—a buyer's assistant for Avon. This major corporation puts out several catalogs each season, and Leslie is pleased to be working very closely with the buyer for sportswear. Together they attempt to estimate sales projections for each item of merchandise that appears on the catalog page. He is also learning to work with a computer.

Leslie is convinced that the course in direct marketing helped him land this terrific job. He was able to talk knowledgeably about the field at the interview, and he is truly excited about his beginnings in this most fascinating, growing industry.

RETAILING IN CANADA

OVER THE LAST century, Canada has grown from a heavily agrarian economy to one of the world's leading trading nations. The retail field in Canada has enjoyed impressive economic gains in the recent past. The Canadian retailing industry now employs more than one million workers, and retailing is a major source of Canadian employment. Most retail trade takes place in planned shopping centers, similar to the shopping malls of the United States. Not all shopping centers are in suburban locations. In fact, most Canadian cities have one or more major shopping centers, often a mix of both office and retail space, in their downtown areas.

An Important Retail Market

Canada has as long a retailing history as the United States. Indeed, with a history of more than three hundred years of trading, Hudson's Bay Company is one of Canada's leading retailers and North America's oldest corporation. HBC opened the Canadian Arctic in

the late 1800s, establishing remote trading posts in the Hudson's Bay territory. The company continued to dominate the world fur trade through the 1970s. HBC is now in the midst of major store renovations and merchandise upgrades and is seeking to expand into new regions, such as China.

In 1989 Canada and the United States officially formed the world's largest free trade area, which extends from the Arctic Circle to the Rio Grande. This allows both countries to exchange goods and services totaling more than \$200 billion each year. The basis of this free trade area was the elimination of all tariff and nontariff trade barriers on goods and services.

Trends

In 1996 about four million Canadians fell into the fifty-to-sixty-four-year-old age group, a group that has disposable income to spend. These folks are hardly "old" in their outlook, and they look forward to retail markets for everything from books on tape to nutritional gourmet foods. Canada's senior citizens are a relatively prosperous market segment, receiving two-thirds of their nation's bond and bank interest. Many in the over-sixty-five group have diverse sources of income and few financial obligations. They are living longer and spending more, characteristics that make them an increasingly attractive target for smart retailers. In fact, America's most popular malls have become major tourist destinations for Canadians. By car and on bus tours, eager shoppers cross the border from miles away to take part in this retail shopping experience that both Americans and Canadians have grown to love.

New trends will see retailers eager to please value-conscious Canadian consumers. The newest retail developments have been

freestanding, warehouse-style “mega-stores,” which offer discount prices and a wide selection of enticing goods. Canadian retailers will have to work harder to compete with some of the American superstars that are discovering Canada’s lucrative retail market. They have already learned that Toronto is Canada’s largest retail market—larger than retail sales in Montreal and double the retail sales of Vancouver. With more than ten million square feet of retail space, Toronto’s downtown area is the third largest in North America, after New York City and Chicago.

Some of America’s most prestigious retailers have already crossed the border to capture sales and market share of the Canadian customer. In 1994 Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., the world’s largest retailer, purchased 122 Woolco Stores in Canada. Wal-Mart executives have been busily redesigning each of these stores. The plan is to have all store traffic pass through soft-goods areas, such as apparel and accessories, and then move through hard-goods departments, such as housewares and appliances. The reasoning behind this layout is that profit margins of soft-goods items are higher, and Wal-Mart is determined to capture the spending power of the Canadian customer. With wide aisles, bright lighting, and attractive signage, the impact has already been felt. Wal-Mart has actually changed the way Canadians are being served by other retailers, breaking the established notions of high prices and mediocre service. Canadian retailers have quickly moved to meet the challenge by offering classroom training sessions to employees, as well as one-on-one coaching to ensure that a shopper’s retail experience is a positive one.

Local Canadian shoppers will benefit enormously from the competition generated by the entry of U.S. mega-retailers into Canada. Canadian retailers, of course, may dread the increased competition posed by the large warehouse-type chain stores. However,

with active pricing and high-quality customer service, small retailers are managing to stay afloat. This is now the time to win back the loyalty of the many Canadians living near the border, who have routinely shopped in the United States, where they believed they got more service and more for their money. Canadians have long enjoyed the experience of shopping in off-price and outlet stores, and now the new American entries are expected to add a challenge to the Canadian retail scene. Sportmart, Computer City, the Gap International, Kmart, Toys 'R' Us, and Home Depot have joined the group of American retailers who have advanced into Canada.

America's favorite shopping activity has been discovered by Canada with the construction of huge malls in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Alberta markets.

Canadian Mills Mall, opened in 2001, is the first new major shopping complex built in Canada in the past decade, and it has brought a wonderful mix of American retailers to Canada. Shopping aside, these malls offer fun and entertainment for the family and have become social centers while offering a huge variety of quality merchandise at attractive prices.

The retailing industry in the twenty-first century faces new challenges and changes. The loss of many well-known department stores, as well as the mergers and takeovers common in the 1980s, will make this century an unusual and exciting time for the Canadian retail world!

The *Annual Directory of Retail Chains in Canada*, published by Monday Reports on Retailers in Toronto, is an excellent retail resource. It contains an alphabetical list of retail companies and product categories as well as other essential information, including the year the firm was established, price categories, buying policy, locations, new outlets planned, total sales, and the names of buyers.

The *Canadian Almanac and Directory*, published by Copp Clark, provides information about specific areas of retailing in addition to apparel, such as sporting goods, tableware, giftware, and accessories. It also includes addresses of associations, publications, government agencies, and universities.

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APPENDIX A

Retailing Programs in the United States

FOLLOWING ARE U.S. colleges and universities offering degrees in retailing, retail management, retail merchandising, retail marketing, retail sales, and fashion/apparel merchandising.

Alabama

Auburn University

Bessemer State Technical College

John C. Calhoun State Community College

Gadsden State Community College

Jefferson State Community College

University of Alabama

University of Montevallo

Wallace State Community College at Hanceville

Arizona

Northern Arizona University

Pima Community College

University of Arizona

Arkansas

Harding University
Southern Arkansas University

California

American River College
Chabot College
Chaffey Community College
College of the Desert
Columbia College
Diablo Valley College
Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising
Golden West College
Las Positas College
Long Beach City College
Marin Community College
Orange Coast College
Pasadena City College
Saddleback College
San Francisco State University
Santa Clara University
Shasta College
Sierra College

Colorado

Arapahoe Community College
Colorado State University
Community College of Aurora

Connecticut

Cultural Connecticut State University
Gateway Community College
Middlesex Community Technical College
University of New Haven

Delaware

Wesley College
University of Delaware

Florida

Florida State University
Indian River Community College
International Fine Arts College
Palm Beach Community College
Webber College

Georgia

Athens Area Technical Institute
Savannah Technical Institute

Hawaii

Kapiolani Community College
University of Hawaii

Idaho

College of Southern Idaho
Lewis-Clark State College

Illinois

Belleville Area College
Black Hawk College, Quad Cities Campus
Chicago State
City Colleges of Chicago, Wright College
College of DuPage
Elgin Community College
Illinois Eastern Community Colleges,
 Wabash Valley College
John A. Logan College
Joliet Junior College
Kaskaskia College
Kishwaukee College
Lincoln Land Community College
McHenry County College
Oakton Community College
Parkland College
Richland Community College
Rock Valley College
Southwestern Illinois College
University of St. Francis
Wabash Valley College
Waubonsee Community College
William Rainey Harper College

Indiana

Ball State University
Indiana State University
International Business College
Purdue University
Vincennes University

Iowa

Des Moines Area Community College
Hawkeye Institute of Technology
Iowa Central Community College
Iowa State University
Iowa Western Community College
Kirkwood Community College
Muscatine Community College
North Iowa Area Community College
Western Iowa Tech Community College

Kansas

Allen County Community College
Barton County Community College
Hutchinson Community College
Johnson County Community College

Kentucky

Eastern Kentucky
Henderson Community College
Maysville Community College
University of Kentucky
Western Kentucky University

Louisiana

Louisiana State University
Louisiana Tech University

Maine

Husson College
Thomas College

Maryland

Allegheny Community College
Charles County Community College
Harford Community College
Howard Community College
Montgomery College, Germantown and
Rockville Campuses

Massachusetts

Acquinas College at Milton
Babson College
Bay State College
Bristol Community College
Cape Cod Community College
Dean Junior College
Endicott College
Framingham State College
Holyoke Community College
Lasell Community College
Middlesex Community College
Mount Ida College
Newbury College
Roxbury Community College
Simmons College

Michigan

Bay de Noc Community College
Cleary College
Davenport College of Business
Delta College

Eastern Michigan University
Ferris State University
Lansing Community College
Michigan State University
Northwood Institute
Western Michigan University

Minnesota

Alexandria Technical College
Dakota County Technical College
Lake Superior College
Minnesota State College—Southeast Technical
North Hennepin Community College
Ridgewater College
St. Cloud Technical College
St. Paul Technical College
University of Minnesota Twin Cities

Mississippi

Hinas Community College
University of Mississippi

Missouri

Fontbonne College
Jefferson College
Longview Community College
Maple Woods Community College
Northwest Missouri State
Penn Valley Community College
Southeast Missouri State University

State Fair Community College
Stephens College

Nebraska

University of Nebraska, Lincoln Campus

Nevada

Community College of Southern Nevada

New Hampshire

Hanser College
New Hampshire College

New Jersey

Atlantic Cape Community College
Bergen Community College
Berkley College of Business
Camden County College
County College of Morris
Gloucester County College
Jersey City State College
Ocean County College
Passaic County Community College
Raritan Valley Community College
Thomas Edison State College (a correspondence school)

New Mexico

Albuquerque Technical Vocational School
Clovis Community College

New York

Bryant and Stratton Business Institute

Cazenovia College

City University of New York, Baruch College

City University of New York, Bronx Community College

City University of New York, Westchester
Community College

State University of New York

Cayuga County Community College

Community College of the Finger Lakes

Dutchess Community College

Erie Community College

Fashion Institute of Technology

Genesee Community College

Jamestown Community College

Jefferson Community College

Mohawk Valley Community College

Monroe Community College

Nassau Community College

Niagara County Community College

North Country Community College

Onondaga Community College

Orange County Community College

Suffolk County Community College

Sullivan Community College

Tompkins/Cortland Community College

Ulster County Community College

Syracuse University

North Carolina

Alamance Community College
Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College
Blue Ridge Community College
Craven Community College
East Carolina University
Lenoir Community College
Pitt Community College
Surry Community College
University of North Carolina
Wayne Community College
Western Piedmont Community College

North Dakota

Bismarck State College
Lake Region State College
North Dakota State University
University of North Dakota

Ohio

Belmont Technical Center
Bluffton College
Bowling Green State University, Firelands College
Columbus State Community College
Dyke College
Edison State Community College
Hocking Technical College
Jefferson Technical College
Kent State University
Miami-Jacobs Junior College

Miami University, Oxford Campus
Muskingum Area Technical College
Northwest Technical College
Ohio University
Sinclair Community College
Stark Technical College
University of Akron
University of Rio Grande
University of Toledo
Wilmington College
Youngstown State University

Oklahoma

Connors State College
East Central University
Oklahoma State University
Southeastern Oklahoma State
University of Central Oklahoma

Oregon

Bassit College
Clackamas Community College
Lane Community College

Pennsylvania

Bucks County Community College
Butler Community College
Cedar Crest College
Central Pennsylvania College

Community College of Allegheny—Allegheny, Boyce,
North and South Campuses

Community College of Beaver County

Community College of Philadelphia

Delaware County Community College

Drexel University

Harcum Junior College

Harrisburg Area Community College

Marywood College

Montgomery County Community College

Pennsylvania College of Technology

Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science

Philadelphia University

Pierce Junior College

Pittsburgh Technical Institute

Sawyer School

Seton Hill College

Westmoreland County Community College

York College of Pennsylvania

Puerto Rico

University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus

Rhode Island

Community College of Rhode Island, Knight/
Flanagan Campus

Johnson & Wales University

South Carolina

Aiken Technical College

Florence-Darlington Technical College

Midlands Technical College
University of South Carolina

South Dakota

South Dakota State University

Tennessee

Belmont College
Trevecca Nazarene University
University of Tennessee

Texas

Alvin Community College
Baylor University
Collin County Community College
Lamar University
Sam Houston State University
Tarleton State University
Tarrant County College
Texas A & M University
Texas Woman's University
University of North Texas

Utah

Brigham Young University
Dixie State College of Utah
Latter-Day Saints Business College
Utah State University
Weber State College

Vermont

Champlain College

Virginia

James Madison University

Marymount University

National Business College

Norfolk State University

Tidewater Community College

Virginia Commonwealth University

Virginia Tech University

Virginia Union University

Washington

Central Washington University

Centralia College

Columbia Basin College

Highline Community College

Lake Washington Technical College

Pierce College

Shoreline Community College

Spokane Falls Community College

Walla Walla Community College

West Virginia

Marshall University

Wisconsin

Gateway Technical College

Milwaukee Area Technical College

Moraine Park Technical College
Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
University of Wisconsin, Stout
Western Wisconsin Technical College
Wisconsin Indianhead Technical College

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APPENDIX B

Retailing Programs in Canada

FOLLOWING ARE CANADIAN schools that offer programs in marketing, marketing management, fashion merchandising, and retail management.

Marketing Programs

Ontario

École des Hautes Études Commerciales

Fanshawe College

Georgian College of Applied Arts and Technology

Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology

Ryerson Polytechnic University

St. Clair College of Applied Arts and Technology

Sheridan College

University of Guelph

University of Ottawa

New Brunswick

University College of Cape Breton

Quebec

Bishop's University

Université du Québec à Montreal

University of Saskatchewan

Marketing Management

British Columbia

Capilano College

Alberta

Northern Alberta Institute of Technology

Ontario

Niagara College of Applied Arts & Technology

Fashion Merchandising

Alberta

Olds College

Ontario

Centennial College of Applied Arts & Technology

Retail Management

Ontario

Niagara College of Applied Arts & Technology

Saint Clair College of Applied Arts & Technology

Sheridan College

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APPENDIX C

Trade Publications for Retailers

Chain Store Age. Focuses on news of interest to managers and executives of chain stores.

Discount Merchandiser. Reports on discount merchandising including manufacturing, retailing, and advertising.

Discount Store News. Concentrates on news related to discount stores: new products, industry trends, visual merchandising.

Marketing News. Covers information for marketing professionals about trends, market research, and retailing concepts.

Retail Control. A bimonthly magazine focusing on retail trade and accounting issues in the retail field.

Retailing Today. A monthly newsletter for retail managers focusing on issues in the retail industry.

Stores. A monthly trade magazine that offers news of general interest to retailers.

VM & SD. A monthly magazine presenting information on merchandise presentation and store planning.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROSLYN DOLBER HAS been an enthusiastic proponent of the fashion industry for more than thirty years and the director of career counseling and placement at New York City's Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT). Thoroughly familiar with the wide range of career opportunities in fashion and its many allied areas, she has counseled and placed hundreds of students and graduates. Her professional affiliations include the Metropolitan New York College Placement Officers Association (director), the Eastern College Placement Officers and the State University of New York Career Development organizations, and the Northeast Association of Student Employment Administrators.

In addition to her role at FIT, Ms. Dolber speaks on fashion-related careers in the New York metropolitan area. She has contributed articles on this subject to several industry publications and has written and helped produce a filmstrip on surviving the job interview. She is the author of *Opportunities in Fashion Careers* as well as a college guide for high school students with learning disabilities, *College and Career Success for Students with Learning Disabilities*.