

# Five tips for retail career progression

**If you want to progress into retail management, there are certain things you should be considering on top of obtaining any necessary qualifications and specific skills.**

## **Speak regularly with your line manager**

It's true that if you demonstrate good working practices, you may be identified as a potential supervisor or manager, but you also need to let your boss know about your career aspirations. Discuss your goals with them and take on board any advice they may offer. Ask them if you can take on more responsibility. See if there are any opportunities to increase your skills and experience by doing additional work within another department or store. Remember the more skills and exposure you get in other aspects of the retail business, the more valuable you are and this will lead to greater career development opportunities.

## **Improve your people skills**

Supervisors and managers who can work closely with their staff to maximise employee job satisfaction and reduce staff turnover are keenly sought after. 'Soft' management skills such as motivation, team building and communication techniques are just as important as the 'hard' management skills such as strategic planning, performance management, innovation and brand marketing. Practice your people skills whenever you can. Become a good listener and take on tasks such as making business presentations. Grab any opportunity you can to lead a group of people – learn how to relate well with both your colleagues and management. Networking at company events and industry functions is also something you should learn how to manage.



## Take the initiative

Many people wrongly assume that you need to blindly obey your boss to progress. That's not the case. Retail companies don't simply want 'followers' as managers, they want people who are proactive and innovative and not afraid to suggest different ways of doing things. So, try to identify ways you can help the business improve and don't be afraid to put these ideas to your supervisor.

**“People skills are so important...my boss has a poster in her office that reads:**

*The customer is always right- misinformed perhaps, inexact, bull-headed, fickle, ignorant and in some cases absolutely stupid, but never, never, ever wrong.”*

## Find a mentor

Mentors share their own experiences and help create opportunities for you to develop new skills and attitudes. A mentor can help you to:

- See your strengths and weaknesses
- Identify future options and directions
- Determine the action necessary to achieve your goals
- Assist in overcoming barriers to progress.

You may find (or be given) a mentor from within your company, but you may also seek out someone external to provide a different perspective. Irrespective, it's important to find a mentor who recognises your potential and will be there to support and guide you and will keep you abreast of possible openings which will advance your career.

## Build your reputation

You won't get earmarked for career progression unless people know what you are capable of. There is no harm in quietly pointing out your accomplishments at the right time to the right people, as they may not be aware of what you've achieved. However, it's also important to not brag excessively and to keep learning. Watch trends that are affecting retailers and ensure that you gain new skills that might be needed as a result. For example new technologies such as digital marketing coupons and self-checkouts are requiring managers to keep up to date with effective ways of integrating new technologies with existing ones to broaden the customer base and remain competitive. Above all, make sure that you're always dependable, co-operative and professional in all you are asked to do.