

Your career: from management to retail executive

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Once employees reach middle management level there are certain characteristics and skills that are required to move to the executive level. These include leadership; willingness to improve personal weaknesses, promoting the company vision; shopfloor experience; good communication skills; accountability; showing you are a team player and able to influence others; showing initiative and strategic thinking; developing sound knowledge of the business and its drivers; demonstrating you are results driven, creative and a people person; showing good understanding and knowledge of products and the right attitude.

To move to executive level employees need a broad range of experience. This is not just shopfloor experience, but beyond the shop floor, with exposure to different projects and departments. **Mentoring is critical to retail career progression.** Seeking out someone you trust to help guide your development is important. Attending training and conferences, participating in international study tours and being involved in special projects can also help fast track your progress.

When selecting future leaders, employers look for three key things above all else: always putting in more than expected, never refusing an opportunity and being available (in the right place at the right time). These aspects combined with an ability to live the company vision and inspire others to do so, think strategically, provide clear direction and support to other employees and continually trying to develop personally are essential to move to the retail executive level.





There are generally four main pathways to retail executive:

Specialised focus and expertise career path

Often retail organisations will choose executives who possess expertise in a specific area that is seen to be key to the company's future. This career path sometimes has an industry-hopping aspect to it, but the jump seems more logical and less shocking to outside observers. For example, Jeff Bezos had neither retail nor publishing-related experience before he started Amazon, but he had the essential technical expertise to create the amazon.com infrastructure.

Retail entrepreneurship career path

The only guaranteed strategy for becoming a retail executive is to start your own company and award yourself the title. Entrepreneurs don't follow much of a career path at all. Instead they define their own career destination and determine how to get there.

Traditional rise through the retail ranks

Progressive promotion is the traditional strategy for success in retail. Work hard, be loyal, and grow with the company. This career path is slow, steady, and not glamorous, but it is a practical path to take. While rising through the ranks might have previously been considered the only way to advance, it's relatively uncommon for today's retail chief executives.

Company-hopping, Industry-jumping career path

In direct contrast to the traditional rise through the ranks is the career path in which you hop, jump and zigzag your way to the top of a retail organisation. Employees move with ease between different companies and different industries, rising a little higher with each move until they get to the top of a major retail operation. This is more common for contemporary CEOs, which suggests that today's retail companies are less fixed about appointing from within and more about securing talent.

Working up from the shopfloor level to executive is not only possible but also realistic with the right opportunities and the drive to succeed.

If you want advancement to the ultimate retail destination, the career paths of contemporary retail executives show that many different routes are available. The journey will be easiest for those who are the most flexible, adaptable, and resourceful, especially when the next steps are not always clear. If you're not exactly sure how you'll "get there from here", take a step that provides some type of learning or growth.