

# THE RETAILER

Issue 64 - February 2019

## *Employees* *The backbone of retail*

DESIGNING THE EMPLOYEE  
EXPERIENCE

—  
CREATING A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE  
BEYOND CUSTOMER SERVICE

—  
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:  
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FROM THE

# Executive Director

As we settle into the new year, the Australian Retailers Association (ARA) are eager to see what 2019 has in-store for the Australian retail industry.

With the new year marking the opportunity for new beginnings, the ARA are pleased to announce its recent partnership with the Hair and Beauty Association (HBIA).

The alliance between the two associations has commenced to strengthen the relationship between the retail, and hair and beauty services sectors. As the peak body for the retail industry, the ARA will continue to advocate on behalf the retail industry and its members.

This year, we can expect to see retailers across the country driving sales through their stores by focusing on delivering exceptional customer service through dedicated staff and management.

On the preface of this notion, this year's first edition of *The Retailer* will divulge into one of the most important assets to the success of any business- the employees.

Often regarded as the backbone of the retail industry, in this issue we put a spotlight on how employees can communicate a businesses core values to customers and represent the brand's overall image and vision.

As the retail sector is a \$310 billion-dollar industry that employs over 1.2 million people nationwide, the employees make a significant contribution to the growth and longevity of the Australian economy.

With this in mind, the ARA Retail Institute is Australia's leading retail training provider for both accredited and non-accredited learning programs. These programs are tailored towards retail enthusiasts who strive to transform their retail journey into a long-term and professionally fulfilling career. For more information on the Retail Institute, please refer to pages 26 and 39.

With the pre-Christmas trading period proving to be another bustling, yet exhilarating time for retailers, the ARA and Roy Morgan have predicted that post-Christmas sales will recognise a 3.1% year-on-year growth in sales from December 26, 2018 to January 15, 2019

This February, the ARA will once again partner with Roy Morgan to deliver comprehensive and accurate final figures around Christmas trade and look forward to featuring key highlights from this information in our upcoming *Retail Debrief*.

Council elections will commence during the month of February and members will be updated once proceedings take place. If members wish to nominate, please contact the ARA on 1300 368 041.

This year also marks the ARA's first exclusive and only digitalised publication of *The Retailer* magazine.

We hope you enjoy this edition of *The Retailer* magazine and we wish you all a thriving and prosperous trading year ahead.

Best wishes,



**Russell Zimmerman**  
Executive Director  
Australian Retailers Association



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BY CHIARA LA ROCCA [ARA]

QANTAS FREQUENT FLYER LAUNCHES NEW SHOPPING DESTINATION

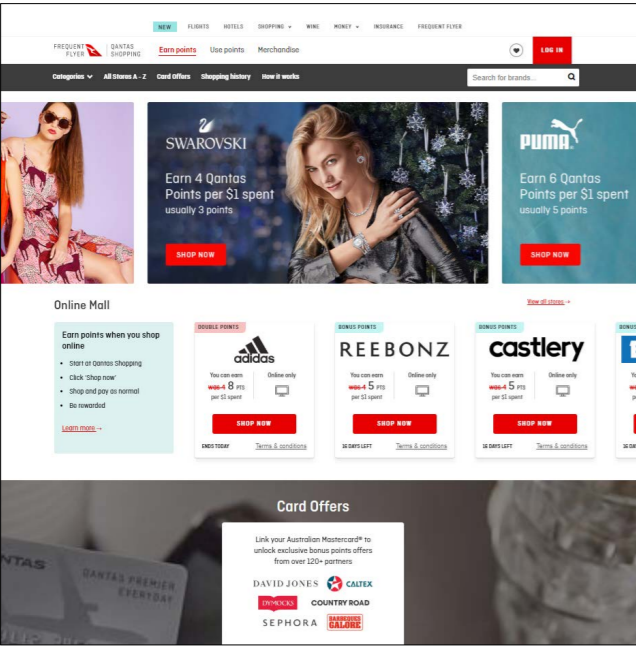
Qantas Frequent Flyer have recently expanded opportunities in retail by launching their new e-commerce platform, Qantas Shopping. This gives Frequent Flyers a chance to earn points while shopping at their leisure; at any time and any place.

- This is a first for Qantas Frequent Flyer where members can visit one place to:
- 1. Earn points by shopping online or in-store at over 150 retailers;
  - 2. Use points on 8,000 products through the Qantas Rewards store; and
  - 3. Browse and shop with over 600 brands

To celebrate their September launch, retailers offered bonus Frequent Flyer points for purchases made through Qantas Shopping, with 10 points to be earned for every \$1 spent on products.

The Qantas shopping site includes a range of features designed to enhance the shopping experience. Through categorising their store into departments, this allows members to easily browse through retailers they want to shop with the added benefit of a transaction history, which shows shoppers where they have earned points.

Qantas also have a Card Offers feature to allow Frequent Flyers to earn additional points when linking their Mastercard to their Frequent Flyer account. Card Offers also share targeted promotions with members based on their previous purchases and points are earned when purchases are made on linked Mastercards either online or in store. The Qantas points are then transferred into their accounts.



ACCESS ABILITY DAY- A HUGE SUCCESS

More than half of Australian businesses in the retail industry are missing out on an untapped pool of talent by overlooking candidates with disability during the hiring process.

According to research from the Australian Government, while the majority are open to hiring people with disability (78%), only 45% of businesses are currently employing someone with disability,

Last year ended with a win for Australians with a disability, with AccessAbility Day, an Australian Government initiative introducing 1,400 people with a disability to over 940 businesses.

The campaign ran from 26-30 November in 2018, and throughout the week, Australians with disability were introduced to employers who had the opportunity to see the skills, talent and ability that can be brought into the workplace. The high volumes of participants turned the event into a great success, giving prospective employees a chance to experience a role that aligns with their career interests.

AccessAbility Day stems from the nationwide campaign, Employ their ability by Job Access with the purpose to raise awareness of disability employment. The campaign had some amazing faces, and showcased retailers that have extended career opportunities to people with disability, for example The Harris Farm Markets in Sydney aim to have at least one person with disability in each of their stores.

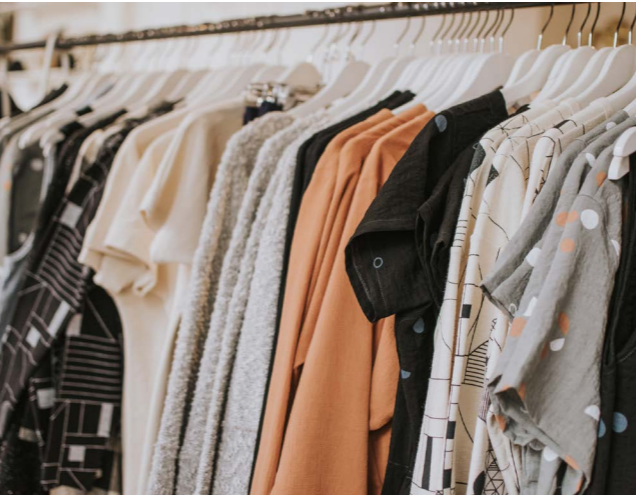
LUXURY BRAND MAKES GIANT LEAP TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Global luxury fashion brand Burberry, have recently announced that they will disband on using and selling real fur and discontinue the destruction of unsaleable products. The initiative came into effect immediately after the announcement.

The brand recently became a core partner of the *Make Fashion Circular Initiative* arranged by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation early in 2018. Partnering with sustainable luxury company, Elvis & Kresse, Burberry transformed 120 tonnes of leather offcuts into new products.

“Modern luxury means being socially and environmentally responsible. This belief is core to us at Burberry and key to our long-term success,” commented Marco Gobetti, Burberry’s Chief Executive Officer.

Sustainability and corporate responsibility have become an increasing concern for consumers and having a luxury brand such as Burberry take action, sets an example for retailers to rethink their current practices and move towards generating a more sustainable future.



Data from Nielsen has indicated that:

- 65% of Chinese tourists use mobile payment platforms during overseas travels – six times more than non-Chinese tourists (11%);
- Over 90% of Chinese tourists would consider using Alipay when travelling abroad if Alipay were more widely accepted among foreign merchants; and
- Over 90% of Chinese tourists indicated they would increase their spending if Alipay were an accepted payment method.

Tyro is further diversifying its offering and responding to merchant needs by introducing initiatives that will attract more revenue to its merchants’ businesses. The Alipay integration fits with Tyro’s strategy to offer alternative payments, as part of its existing award-winning EFTPOS and banking-specific products. As an Australian bank completely dedicated to business banking, Tyro is at the forefront of banking and payments and strongly supports its customers by designing innovative products and a better experience, so they can succeed. 🛒

SYDNEY AIRPORT MADE MORE APPEALING TO CHINESE TOURISTS

Australia’s business-only bank Tyro, announced its next Alipay integration with Sydney Airport tax and duty-free retailer Heinemann Australia, where the payment system is currently live.

With 900 million users choosing to pay for goods and services globally via Alipay and its strategic partners, it has evolved from a digital wallet, to a lifestyle enabler and is the number one preferred payment method in China. Through its partnership with Alipay, Tyro is now helping Australian businesses access the ever-expanding Chinese visitor market and empowering Australian retailers to better serve Chinese tourists by offering the payment options they prefer.

For the year ending October 2018, there were over 1.4 million Chinese visitor arrivals in Australia. Chinese visitors injected AU\$10.4 billion into the economy in the year ending December 2017, and this figure is predicted to rise to AU\$13 billion by 2020.

According to *Tourism Research Australia’s Dispersal of Chinese Free and Independent Leisure Visitors in Australia* 2015 report, Sydney is the most prominent arrival gateway with 45% of Chinese free and independent travellers (FITs) landing in the capital city.

Tyro will offer Alipay to its other eligible 20,000+ businesses within the first half of 2019. This means, Australian businesses looking to capitalise on the Chinese tourist market will soon be able to offer a simple and seamless payment option to Chinese visitors, helping to make their local experience more familiar and replicate how they transact at home.

Thousands of Chinese students and migrants who use Alipay and merchants, particularly across the retail and hospitality sectors, will also have the opportunity to engage with a range of payment options that provide more choice.



Chiara is the Communications Administrator for the Australian Retailers Association and has a passion for sharing insightful and thought-provoking content to our members. See more at [blog.retail.org.au](http://blog.retail.org.au)

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## 2019 - 2020 COURSES

### COURSE INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the course work and discussions relating to expectations, assessment submission, assessment grading and outcomes. Course administration and navigation through the online learning platform.

### DEVELOP A MERCHANDISE STRATEGY (SIRRM002)

Research and critically evaluate factors impacting merchandise strategy and evaluate its effectiveness to develop a profitable merchandise strategy.

### CONDUCT A POST TRADE ANALYSIS (SIRRM003)

Analyse post trade information to draw insights and conclusions. Learn retail mathematics to make recommendations for improved merchandise performance.

### DEVELOP A MERCHANDISE FINANCIAL PLAN (SIRRM004)

Develop skills and knowledge to understand how financial decisions are made in the merchandise function and the implications of the merchandise function.

### DEVELOP A CATEGORY FINANCIAL PLAN (SIRRM005)

Undertake merchandise financial planning at the category and subcategory level for a retail organisation. Review merchandise plans and product categories.

### PLAN A MERCHANDISE PRODUCT RANGE (SIRRM006)

Develop a commercially viable range of retail merchandise that reflects an established merchandise category financial plan and merchandise strategy.

## COST

FULL DIPLOMA (11 WORKSHOPS)	PICK & CHOOSE (PER WORKSHOP)
\$4500	\$450

ARA Members can enjoy a 10% member discount off each ticket.



### NEGOTIATE & ESTABLISH A SUPPLY ARRANGEMENT (SIRRM007)

Learn to negotiate, evaluate and formalise agreements with suppliers. Develop skills to determine supplier suitability and establish agreed terms of supply.

### DEVELOP A MERCHANDISE PROMOTIONAL PLAN (SIRRM008)

Develop a merchandise promotional plan that supports merchandise performance. Schedule promotional activities that align to a merchandise strategy.

### PLAN MERCHANDISE BUYING TRIPS (SIRRM009)

Plan buying trips for the purpose of sourcing new product, materials or suppliers. Develop trip itinerary, key activities and identify product opportunities.

### PLAN PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT (SIRRM010)

Plan the development of new retail products. Learn to generate product ideas suitable for a defined marketplace and prepare a design brief for production.

### MANAGE MERCHANDISE QUALITY & COMPLIANCE (SIRRM011)

Develop skills to review quality and compliance standards, ensure products meet requirements and take action to address quality and compliance issues.

### DEVELOP AN ECOMMERCE STRATEGY (SIRXSTR001)

Analyse and evaluate trends in ecommerce to develop an effective ecommerce strategy. Develop digital content across digital platforms for the online sale of products or services.

## DATES

VIC	12 March 2019 - 28 April 2020
NSW	13 March 2019 - 29 April 2020
QLD	4 July 2019 - 20 August 2020

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For more information  
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e. [training@retail.org.au](mailto:training@retail.org.au)  
p. 03 8660 3341

## EMPLOYEES | CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

# Exceptional customer experience begins from the inside out

If you want your business to be successful, focus on building relationships with both customers and employees.

BY NAYSLA EDWARDS [AMERICAN EXPRESS]

If someone were to pose the question, “what comes first in a business, customers or employees?” -what would you say? In a world where ‘the customer is always right,’ is a common business refrain, it might seem obvious, but it isn’t.

As businesses look to compete in our digital world, no topic has received as much attention as customer experience. But what do customers actually want in an experience? A recent Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) report found, while customer experience comprises of the things we expect when we hear the phrase (speed, convenience and consistency) there is another crucial ingredient that doesn’t attract nearly as much attention: human connection.

Making technology feel more human and giving employees the freedom they need to go the extra mile, are the things that really matter. In fact, the report found that despite technology becoming more intuitive, 81% of Australians still want to interact with a real person. This means that our focus should be on the people who make this possible every day; our employees.

So how can you ensure your employee experience is creating the right customer experience?

### STEP INTO THEIR SHOES

Having the right culture means understanding the experience of the employees and the points of friction they grapple with every day. There are a range of HR tools that can help with this but the best advice is free, speak to them.

This also means incentivising employees in the right way to provide a good experience and boosting the training available to help them improve their services. Investing in your people is not only good for your company culture, but it’s good for business too.

### FREEING STAFF FROM THE MESSAGING BOOK

If an employer wants employees to go the extra mile you have to enable them to do so. Instead of tying them to your messaging book or script, empowering staff to use their expertise to engage with your customers is critical.

A great example is US retailer Nordstrom which has a single line as a piece of corporate guidance in its employee handbook: *Use best judgment in all situations*. Staff are given the freedom to make the decisions they need to serve their customers best. American Express is another great example, their *Relationship Care model* is used to empower employees to resolve problems on the first point of contact, rather than needing to escalate to higher levels of management.

### INNOVATE WITH PURPOSE

More now than ever, businesses are seeing innovation as a way to beat out their competition. But innovation for its own sake won’t push any company forward, it needs to have the customer at the centre to really move the needle.

This is where your culture comes in. If a business has a culture that places the customer at the centre, the employees will innovate with purpose, whether it’s building new products, making customers’ lives easier or creating novel experiences. This isn’t just something that applies to frontline workers, it’s all staff from back office to the CEO who need to have a clear idea of the company’s values and an understanding of how to apply that to what they do every day.

To revisit the question of who should come first in your business, clearly your employee and your customers are as important as each other. If you want your business to be a success, it’s critical that you focus on building reciprocal relationships with both of them. 🍷



Naysla is the Vice President Brand, Charge Cards and Experiences at American Express Australia. For more information, please visit [www.americanexpress.com](http://www.americanexpress.com)

# THE TRUTHS THAT WE SHOULDN'T IGNORE

Promoting retail as a career and fostering the notion that the industry can provide a vibrant, fulfilling and lifelong occupation, starting off with two key campaigns in 2019.

BY JOSH WALKER [ARA]

With tales of doom and gloom for the sector persisting, it can be easy to feel nervous about retail's future prospects. Obsessions over online competition, financials and growing costs are dominating the headlines. In some senses, they may be justified; in others, maybe not. Yet, an often-overlooked indicator should be cause for optimism, and points to the sustained vitality and importance of retail: employment.

Looking at the latest figures from the Department of Jobs and Small Business, retail is holding up extremely well. Over the last five years, total employment in the retail industry has grown by 43,600 people. This represents a 3.6% growth rate across the 2013-2018 period, with 1.27 million Australians now employed in a retail job.

Those numbers highlight the incredibly important contribution that retail makes to the economy. Retail is Australia's largest private sector employer and ranks second only to the healthcare industry in overall employment. Retailers should rightly be proud of the opportunities and benefits they provide to so many Australians through a job in a store, distribution centre or head office around the country.

Retail provides innumerate Australians the opportunity to enter the workforce for the first time. A part-time job after school or on weekends is where many of us begin our working lives. So too, does a job in retail help us support ourselves throughout our studies, or offer opportunities to re-enter the workforce at a later stage. All the while, retail employment supports the development of important skills, including a disciplined work ethic, relationship skills, business operations and so much more.

However, this often leads to perceptions of a job in retail as a merely transient stepping stone, or a stopgap between jobs in other industries. We need to counter these perceptions and move away from the idea that retail is not a 'real job'. One of the Australian Retailers Association's (ARA) key focuses for 2019 is to do just that. We want to promote retail as a career and foster the notion that the industry can provide a vibrant, fulfilling and lifelong occupation. We are starting off by doing this through two key campaigns in 2019. Two of the most important aspects of retail employment are central to achieving this goal: women in retail, and skills.

Retail employment is a key driver for women's workforce participation. The Department of Jobs and Small Business notes that 55.4% of employees in retail are women. This is something retailers should be proud of, as employment is crucial for individual economic participation and empowerment. Despite this, we must not rest on our laurels. These figures should be celebrated, but also tempered with the reality that the challenges facing women in other industries – achievement, recognition, career progression, leadership, among others – are faced by female retailers too. We can do much more to promote the status of women in our own industry. It begins by sparking the conversation; that's why the ARA's Women in Retail campaign will be a top focus for 2019.

An inextricable link between this challenge and the promotion of retail as a career will be skills development. The ARA is passionate about developing the important pathways towards success and leadership in the industry. We see these skills as central to the success of women in retail - and all retail employees for that matter – in forging long term careers in the industry. One of the ARA's first major pieces of work in this vein for 2019 will be the Government's Independent Review into Vocational Education and Training.



Retail employment supports the development of **important skills, including a disciplined work ethic, relationship skills, business operations and so much more.**

The ARA and the ARA Retail Institute will be advocating for retailers and employees of all kinds when responding to this review.

The size of these tasks for 2019 may be grandiose, yet the ARA is undaunted. This is because we are motivated by the importance of the industry, and the success of our members, every time we tackle the important issues. Retail employment, women in retail and skills development are three of those. 2019 is already shaping up to be a career year! 📈



Josh is the Policy and Regulatory Advisor for the Australian Retailers Association and has a passion for advocating on issues related to the retail industry. To get involved in the ARA's Policy and Advocacy campaigns, or to register your interest in the ARA's policy committees, please contact [policy@retail.org.au](mailto:policy@retail.org.au)

# AUTOMATE AND ELEVATE

How automation and digitalisation are easing the burden for retail employees.

BY JOY CHUA [MELDCX]

**R**etail employees have been the backbone of traditional retail. Over the past decade the rise of e-commerce, debates over extended trading hours and the need for bricks-and-mortar outlets to deliver increasingly outstanding customer service has placed heavy demands on front line staff.

One solution to ease the pressure of online staff is leveraging technology. Automating routine processes and tasks, digitising admin to reduce paperwork, and employing AI and machine learning to continually improve workflows and procedures, can all free up critical human hours so that staff can focus on more higher-value tasks like customer service.

The critical element in any retail solution is to ensure that it supports staff instead of a creating a challenging burden. Employees form the executional layer of any digital strategy. They're the frontline ambassadors for new technology; digitalisation can't be truly executed without employee adoption.

Solutions need to be about ease of deployment and maintenance and ensure that both customers and staff benefit from the new technology.

One example of how technology can make work easier for retail staff is a Queue Management System (QMS). Combined with assisted selling, this can be a powerful way to automate repetitive tasks such as collecting

customer details and directing people to the right counters.

For example, MeldCX are currently rolling out a QMS for a major international car hire firm. The firm's key pain point has been delivering an excellent customer experience, as research has found that customers dislike the lengthy and complex process of renting a car.

Together with partner AOPEN Solutions, MeldCX have developed in-store fit-outs including a combination of wall, floor and desk mounted kiosks, as well as providing mobile tablets to shift much of the work from reception tasks to customers in a self-check-in system. Customers enter their reference number and drivers' license numbers and so on, instead of queuing to do this at a counter.

This not only cuts waiting time for customers, but also allows them to go at their own pace, with their own language preferences. For front line staff, it frees up time and speeds up the whole process. They can focus on more important and valuable work, such as upselling insurance and fuel top-ups. They can also train and educate customers better, improving the overall customer experience.

Another example is a staff sign-in process which is currently being piloted by a leading Australian supermarket chain. This automates a daily process so that staff can focus on other tasks. The sign-in solution can be used for everyone coming to a store: regular staff, visitors, contractors, casual and part-time staff.

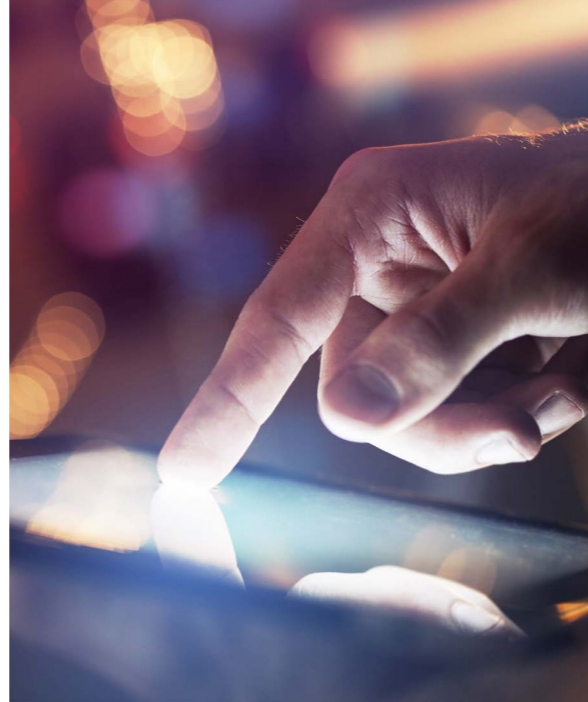
It makes it much easier to onboard staff, track who is in the building, and also train contractors on safety procedures such as fire exits.

The digitalisation journey is two pronged, it is about providing excellent customer service, and also about elevating staff to focus on what matters, while removing any mundane tasks that can be automated. 📱



**Employees form the executional layer of any digital strategy.** They're the front line ambassadors for new technology: digitalisation can't be truly executed without employee adoption.

Joy is the Strategic Partnerships and Market Development at meldCX. Joy has demonstrated a history of working in the information technology and services industry with a focus on creating marketing frameworks which enable large organisations to grow in thought leadership and create unique experiences. Visit [www.meldcx.com](http://www.meldcx.com)



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# Customer intimacy: Give your employees insights to seal the deal

How can retailers empower employees to serve customers who expect you to know what they want before they walk into your store.

BY LES BRUZZANITI [PRONTO SOFTWARE]

**A**fter a few weeks in any new relationship, there's an expectation that you know what your partner likes, at least that you can pick a movie they'd enjoy and know if a turmeric latte or black chai is how they start their day. Fail at this and the relationship flounders. Somewhat similarly, in retail, there's increasingly a high expectation that we know what our customers want, before they walk into the store. Fail at this and you may lose the sale.

The internet gives customers access to mountains of information about every product – including functionality, performance and whether it comes in rose gold or not! So when a customer does walk into a store, they've spent time getting to know the staff and products and they expect employees to reciprocate this. When they don't get the service they expect it may result in the customer voicing their complaints on social media, which can potentially have disastrous outcomes.

Sales assistants can know as much as possible about a product – but that knowledge alone simply does not cut it! They need to get personal. Intelligent data combined with a solid customer experience (CX) interface is the key. Data driven insights allow retailers to empower their teams with the power to predict the customer's needs and guide the buying decision with confidence and panache.

Technology can assist in capturing the sales journey from start to finish, so if an important opportunity is missed, the retailer will still have a handy alert to prompt them to take follow-up action. A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution which is the single source of truth about prospects and customers can be a powerful data treasure trove. From here you can garner valuable insights such as buying behaviours, communication preferences and engagement patterns.



Arguably the biggest thrill in any relationship is when you realise the other person has taken the time to get to know you really well. **The retail relationship is no different.**

Further, when a CRM solution is integrated seamlessly with point of sale (POS), marketing and buying teams can slice and dice data and become more intimately aware of customer demands. For example, when a consumer has visited a website or interacted with a chatbot through a phone conversation, this data can be combined to build a very detailed profile of consumer preferences.

When sales assistants can access and review data about customers quickly they are fully aware of their preferences and able to offer outstanding service. The key is to have an interface that allows your employees to easily quantify what the consumer is looking for, based on hard data.

Sales assistants are also more empowered to solve problems and direct sales straight from the floor. For example, a customer may come into a store to get a feel for a camera having completed their

research online at the company website or other sites. When they come into the store, a sales assistant should be able to pull up the customer's buying and search history and then talk to the customer about the relevant product's specific functionality and features.

If there happens to be no stock for that particular model available in store, the sales assistant should be equipped to order a delivery of the product to the customer's home or, for delivery to the store for a later pick up. This should be completed on the spot and based on the customer's preference. They can also share exclusive promotions or special offers applicable to the customer that they may not have been aware of. The end result is a satisfied and loyal customer who is more likely to recommend the retailer to their friends and family.

While some pundits claim that bricks-and-mortar stores are floating into extinction, the data does not quite agree. A recent survey from TotalRetail revealed that younger shoppers are more likely to visit physical shopfronts frequently and value insights from retail staff. It was found that 56% of surveyed millennials, 44% of Gen Xers and 27% of baby boomers shop in a physical store at least once a week.

Using data, and in particular CRM integrated with business intelligence technology, enables marketing and buying teams to discover meaningful correlations, patterns and trends in large volumes of data, all of which relates to their prospects and customers. This is the promise of omni-channel retail, allowing you to combine the power of online data with the expertise of your sales assistants on the floor. As this occurs, online and in-store experiences comes together to create something completely new and puts sales people at the epicentre of the buying equation.

Arguably the biggest thrill in any relationship is when you realise the other person has taken the time to get to know you really well. The retail relationship is no different. Learn how to leverage your data to seal the deal in 2019. 🍷



Les Bruzzaniti is the Retail and CRM Product Manager at Pronto Software. Pronto Software (Pronto) is an Australian developer of award-winning business management software. With in-built intelligence, flexibility and an easy-to-use interface, its flagship product, Pronto Xi, delivers rich business insights – helping organisations optimise and grow their operations. Learn more at [www.pronto.net](http://www.pronto.net)

# DESIGNING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

For all the benefits that technology brings, customers still value human interaction.

BY GARY MCCARTNEY [MCCARTNEY DESIGN]

In physical stores, a memorable service experience depends on an engaged and empowered team. Your own people spend a lot more time in store than your customers do, and they do it every working day. By designing an environment that's easy, efficient and fun for your staff to work in, we create a better customer experience.

From our experience in store design, positive environments and positive team members synergise. Not only does a well-designed environment enhance the morale of existing team, it attracts potential new team members of a positive mindset.

Even the uniform is important. In a recent project for BP Australia, we re-designed the staff uniform as part of an overall transformation of their convenience retail environments. By introducing a new, casual, hospitality-based uniform, we transformed sales assistants into hosts and gave them the confidence to interact positively with customers.

The key effect was a much more credible café experience and coffee sales increased dramatically. In a world where initial research into new purchases takes place online, store staff find themselves in the position of fielding deeper and more detailed questions from customers. Instead of selling to customers they are there to help them make purchase decisions. This takes time and we need to somehow create that time.

This means removing functional, routine tasks like direction giving and ringing up sales. For the former, it means creating an environment that is intuitive for both staff and customers to use.

For example, customers tend to use signage as a last resort for navigation. Their main navigational aids are colour, contrast and merchandise (you don't need a sign in a supermarket to say 'Fruit'), and their attention is concentrated at eye level. We have to lay out stores and categorise in a way that makes sense to customers.

Clear and simple pathways and long but controlled sight lines are important. Getting your customer quickly to the category area they are looking for in-store takes away their initial anxiety. This puts them in relaxed browsing mode, which makes it easier for staff to open conversations. Designing purposeful spaces for these moments to happen is essential.

Technology does help, especially mobile technology. On a very simple level, store categories should align with website categories. If someone has been shopping online how much easier is it to find something when they are in the store if it's laid out in the same way? Mobile POS technology should be replacing the conventional queues at POS counters and enabling your team to work one on one with customers. Click & Collect and self-service kiosks increase efficiency for routing shopping while freeing up staff for more meaningful interactions.

Curating the right store environments creates new roles for your staff: they become consultants, event organisers, hosts and facilitators. Their customer facing roles become more aligned with hospitality than retail- and that's what customers expect.

A recent example of this is the Supercheap Auto Experience Centre which features all of



Gary McCartney is the owner of McCartney Design. We specialise in the design of retail and hospitality environments. Find out more at [www.mccartneydesign.com.au](http://www.mccartneydesign.com.au)

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Curating the right store environments creates new roles for your staff: **they become consultants, event organisers, hosts and facilitators.**

the above; smart team uniforms, customer help desks, and a calendar of educational and entertaining events for customers. The entire centre of the store is devoted to an area where staff can interact with customers through one-to-many presentations and one-to-one consultations. The store is really designed around creating a better environment for the team to help customers in their purchase decisions and not only has customer dwell time increased dramatically, it's where the entire SCA team wants to work!

The takeout? The better the experience will be for your staff, the better it will be for your customers! 🚗

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# Great culture, the key differentiator in driving employee and customer engagement

Delivering exceptional customer experience in the retail world starts with building great employee engagement.

BY **CHRIS GRAY** [THE DAYLIGHT AGENCY]

Owners of all retail businesses would agree that a fundamental ingredient to their success is an ongoing stream of happy customers or 'super fans,' if you like. People who will gladly talk about a brand, buy from it regularly and refer it to friends and family.

Research shows one of the ways to ensure brands build communities of engaged and happy customers, is to first focus on building engaged and happy employees. Indeed, the correlation between the two is so powerful that many experts believe it is difficult, if not impossible, to gain the former without the latter.

Global consulting firm Gallup, which regularly releases compelling data on the topic, says the equation is simple: happier employees equals happier customers. Gallup's latest findings reveal that employees who are engaged with a brand are more likely to deliver higher levels of customer experience with an average 20% increase in sales. That's a powerful impact on any retailer's bottom line!

So what are the secrets to retail nirvana? How do organisations create such a compelling internal culture that staff will willingly deliver superior customer experiences? There are a number of factors at play. Here are six suggestions:

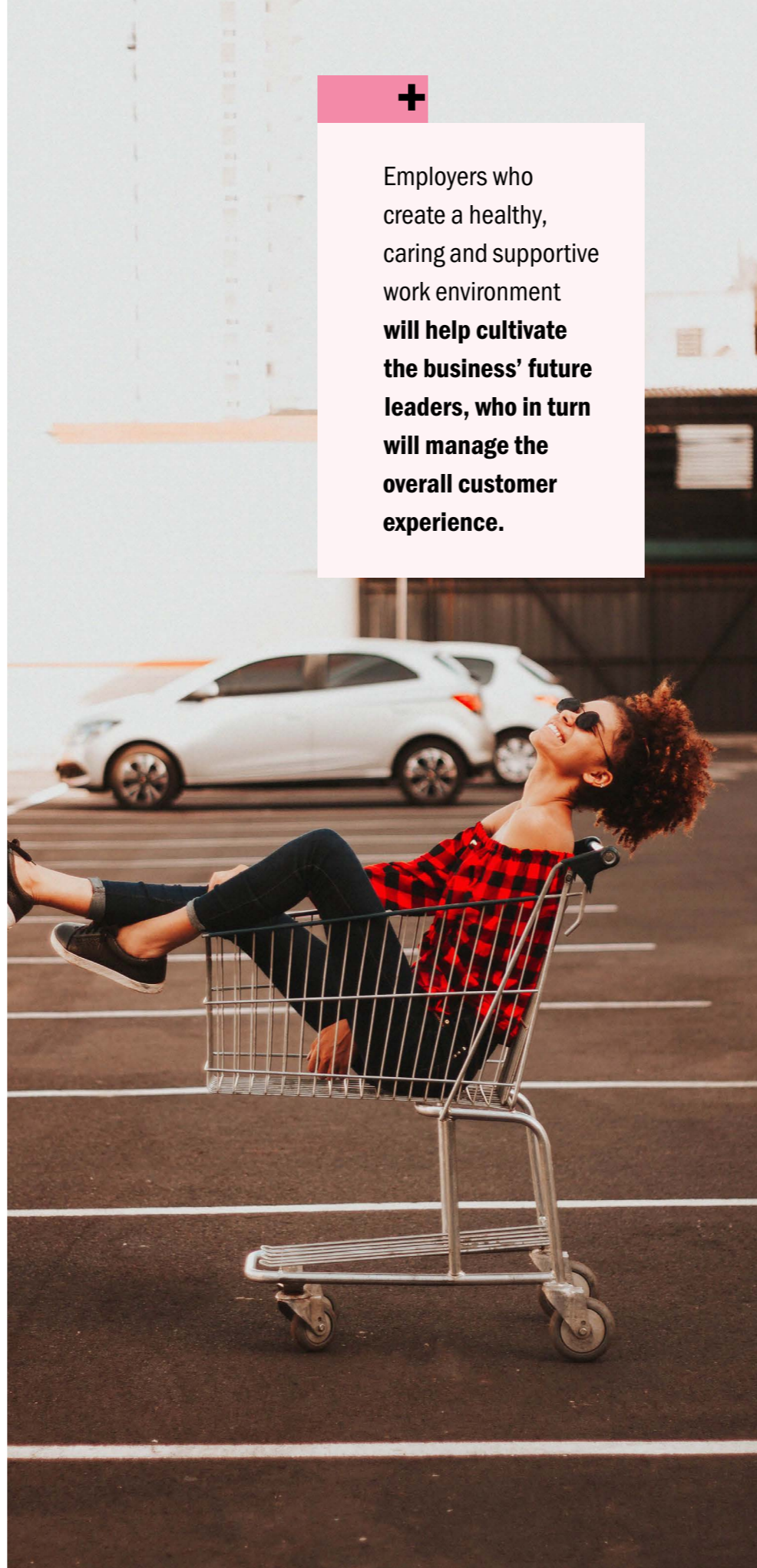
## **1. EDUCATE YOUR TEAMS AROUND YOUR BRAND PURPOSE**

People want to work for businesses that have a purpose and a belief. Ensure you know what your cause is. Why does your business exist? In the words of international speaker and best-selling author Simon Sinek, "Knowing your 'why' inspires people to do something bigger than themselves."

Articulating the 'why' of your business with a rallying call and point of difference in the marketplace. If you don't know your why, spend some time developing or honing it as it will give you a powerful platform on which to grow your business to higher levels.



Employers who create a healthy, caring and supportive work environment will help cultivate the business' future leaders, who in turn will manage the overall customer experience.



## **2. OFFER STAFF MEANINGFUL DEVELOPMENT**

Employees want to feel there is opportunity for advancement within the organisation they work for. Let them know their options and how they can get there. If they feel they have a solid career path ahead of them, they'll be more inclined to provide great service to customers knowing it will also benefit their long-term goals.

## **3. MAKE TRAINING PART OF YOUR CULTURE**

Employees want to gain new skills that will make them more successful in their current positions and potentially lead to advancement. Provide ongoing training and coaching that teaches employees new skills, because these skills will ultimately shine through in customer interactions.

## **4. SHOW EMPLOYEES THEY ARE SUPPORTED**

Interactions between management and employees is fundamental to building upon the lessons learned in training and coaching sessions. Feedback and praise are critical to employees feeling like they are making a difference. Employers who create a healthy, caring and supportive work environment will help cultivate the business' future leaders, who in turn will manage the overall customer experience.

## **5. CREATE AN ENJOYABLE WORKPLACE**

Even companies with heavy structures can create a positive and enjoyable environment that employees relish being a part of. For employees to be fully engaged at work and with your customers, they must feel fulfilled with their employment, believe their talents and interests aid in their success and be excited about what's next- which could be the next big product, their next project or maybe just being excited about coming back to work the next day. Even small gestures to make a workplace more enjoyable can influence the levels of service and patience that employees deliver to customers.

## **6. PROVIDE REWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

Beyond creating an enjoyable workplace, it's important to recognise employees for a job well done. A rewards program where leadership recognises top employees can foster camaraderie. Employers can take it that step further by empowering all employees to nominate their colleagues for a superstar performance. Rewarding strong employees for great customer service interactions will not only set an example for other employees, but it may also inspire them to go above and beyond in providing excellent service to the customers they engage with.

All of this can help make a business more successful. As was famously said some years ago by Herb Kelleher, co-founder of US-based Southwest Airlines- one of the brands consistently awarded for exceptional customer service: "So who comes first? Shareholders, employees or customers? That must always be the same answer. Employees come first. When treated right, employees will treat the outside world right. The outside world will then use the company's products again and that makes shareholders happy. That's the key to business success." 🍷

Chris Gray is Managing Director and a Partner at The Daylight Agency, an integrated communication services firm which helps promote and protect brands. Chris consults regularly in the retail environment and has worked for several small, medium-sized and large organisations operating in the sector. For more information visit [www.daylightagency.com.au](http://www.daylightagency.com.au)

# Mastering the art OF HUMAN RESOURCES

As a human resource (HR) manager, Mhairi Holway knows all too well about issues in the workplace and the conundrum retailers face when it comes to actioning workplace compliance.

BY ZOE THOMPSON [ARA]

**T**he workplace compliance system is a complex and ever-changing process that can be difficult to manage. With non-compliance issues in the workplace on the incline, the role of human resources plays an essential part in understanding key issues within the workplace, developing company strategies and handling employee-centred activities.

As a human resource (HR) manager, Mhairi Holway knows all too well about issues in the workplace and the conundrum retailers face when it comes to actioning workplace compliance.

"I believe the majority of retailers genuinely want to do the right thing, but find it challenging to keep abreast of the changes and/or lack the resources to help them. It's a huge challenge, especially for small retailers."

Working as the Vice President HR manager for Pandora over the last decade, Mhairi has been at the forefront of watching an organisation grow

and develop into a prosperous and successful business.

"I joined Pandora when it was a family business with just a few stores and very little in the way of HR. It has been a privilege to contribute to the success of the business over the last 10 years and shape the culture and employee experience."

With a wealth of knowledge and experience to draw upon, Mhairi has recently made the bold decision to pursue her long-term career goal of starting her own HR consultancy business.

"Throughout my career, I've learnt that every challenge presents an opportunity for personal growth and I need an environment of constant learning to keep me nourished. I've also learnt that sometimes you need to work in the grey and just run with an idea."

While complications around business practices may arise, Mhairi has developed the skills to face any challenges that come her way through supporting her team and emphasising the prosperous opportunities that arise from change.

"Business restructures can be a harrowing task, however they are a necessary part of the evolution of a business. The key to getting through any challenge is to throw your energy into supporting individuals through their transition with the aim of getting them to a position that is equal or better than the starting point."

As the Australian retail industry is a \$310 billion-dollar sector, employing 10% of the working population, Mhairi plays an integral role in the acquisition of retail staff who are often recognised as the backbone in the industry.

"Retail is such a dynamic environment and a multi-faceted industry that offers a range of avenues for young people to sink their teeth into," she said.

"My advice for anyone trying to break into the industry would be to seek out projects from different aspects of the business whether it be commercial, merchandising, marketing, sales, HR, finance or logistics and discover what really drives and inspires you. If you wait until you're 100% ready, you will be 100% too late."



**"Retail is such a dynamic environment and a multi-faceted industry that offers a range of avenues for young people to sink their teeth into."**

Mhairi is the Director and Owner of the HR Dept Northern Beaches based in Sydney. The HR Dept provides businesses with tailored and personal outsourced HR services at the fraction of the cost of having an in-house team. To learn more about HR Dept visit [www.hrdept.com.au](http://www.hrdept.com.au) or email [Mhairi.Holway@hrdept.com.au](mailto:Mhairi.Holway@hrdept.com.au)

With 55% of retail employees being female, the ARA Women in Retail series will celebrate the extraordinary achievements of female leaders in retail by sharing stories behind their success. These positive stories will help build confidence in female workers across the sector, inspiring them to achieve their professional and personal goals. 📖

Our series highlights how a more diverse management structure can boost profitability, alleviating some of the cost pressures and challenges retailers are facing today. As 80% of retail customers are female, the ARA are looking to mimic the retail customer base with retail management. To read more inspirational stories like Mhairi's, visit the Australian Retailers Association's Women in Retail series at [info.retail.org.au/womeninretail](http://info.retail.org.au/womeninretail)

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: HELPING RETAILERS ENHANCE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Technology has drastically altered the way retailers interact with their customers and those that continue legacy service methods are already falling behind.

BY RYAN LESTER [LOGMEIN]

**T**he rise of the digital age has revolutionised the retail sector, enabling customers to be closer to the brands they love. The advent of new channels of engagement like live chat, AI-powered chatbots and social media messaging have created a springboard for companies; and in turn their employees, to develop stronger, more meaningful relationships with customers.

In today's crowded market, what separates a brand from the pack is its customer experience. Facilitating on-demand, personalised service across multiple channels is now the standard, not the exception and one bad experience is enough to drive a customer away for good. Customers aren't simply comparing a brand to its competitors any longer. Instead, they are comparing it to the best service received from any company they have purchased from.

While senior decision makers grapple with meeting these heightened expectations, tools like AI are growing in popularity – helping to free up employees for higher value customer interactions, enabling around the clock service delivery and reducing budget blowouts.

Here are some of the many ways AI is improving service and empowering valuable interactions:

## DATA DEEP DIVE

One of the biggest challenge's companies face is adapting to the digital nature of today's customer journey. In January 2018, 21.7 million Australians, or 88% of our population, reported using the internet. Of these individuals, 73% used the internet to search for a product online and 59% used it to purchase a product or service (We Are Social).

Australians have a huge appetite for interacting with brands online. And with data flowing in from all directions, companies often find themselves stretched and sitting on a wealth of information they just aren't capable of processing, and therefore cannot use to their advantage.

AI helps companies effectively process and analyse the vast amounts of data that they gather to provide actionable recommendations for the business and for its customer service team, to enhance interactions. For example, if a company can identify that a customer is continually abandoning an experience at a particular part of the journey or if a high percentage of customers seem to be asking the same questions over and over, they can quickly fix issues and optimise around gaps of information more effectively than ever before.

## EMPOWERING CUSTOMERS AND AGENTS

As the adoption of AI in customer experience continues to increase, customer interactions will shift from being heavily dependent on the human agent, to a hybrid model consisting of the human element, with technology helping share the workload. The rise in AI-powered chatbots means customers are empowered to self-serve where appropriate and are no longer forced to wait in long queues for an employee to help them with a simple question.

That, however, should not translate to massive job loss for human agents, as some predict. Bots should work hand-in-hand with human agents; actioning simple, repetitive tasks and leaving their human counterparts open to more creative, strategic and meaningful work.



Australians have a huge appetite for **interacting with brands online.**

Ryan J. Lester, Director of Customer Engagement Technologies at LogMeIn, and his team own the strategic development and implementation for the go to market plan for AI, Chatbot and Virtual Assistant products at LogMeIn. For more information visit [www.bold360.com](http://www.bold360.com)



Today's bots are smart enough to know when they aren't equipped to solve a problem and need their human 'co-worker's' help. Technology has made it possible to seamlessly bring the agent into the conversation to continue the interaction, right where the bot left off. It's also a symbiotic relationship, with AI helping agents in the backend to provide a better, more personalised experience – quickly feeding customer history and preferences as well as recommendations to the agent throughout the conversation.

AI affords companies the ability to better leverage their most valuable resources – their employees – not replace them.

## CREATING A MORE CONSISTENT EXPERIENCE

AI is helping to close the information gap between customers and businesses, through smoother cohesion of communications platforms. It provides both bots and agents with a 360-degree view of the customer journey, ensuring companies are in a better position to support customers when, where and how they need it the most.

For example, an agent may pick up the phone to a customer, and before the conversation even begins, the agent will know that the frustrated customer sent a direct message on social media outlining their problem and knowing that they are yet to receive a response. Instead of having that customer rehash the issue the agent can start solving the problem immediately.

Brands know that they need to be thinking about customer experience, but companies who aren't acting on it will start to feel the full effects, as unhappy customers move to the competition. Businesses now have the opportunity to elevate and personalise their customer support, while backing their employees to deliver high quality service and AI makes that possible. 🍷

# How employees are the next best marketing influencers

Using your best employees as brand influencers can help you achieve your 2019 goals.

BY JENN DONOVAN [SOCIAL MEDIA AND MARKETING AUSTRALIA]

**T**here's always a new marketing trend to follow, new hashtags to get right and a new 'expert' on the block who's got the answers to your burning marketing questions.

And one trend perpetuating its way into 2019, is influencer marketing.

The return on investment of influencer marketing can be marginally higher than traditional forms of marketing such as TV, print or online ads.

With higher returns, it is understandable that small businesses are looking at who could be the 'influencer' for them to use within their content marketing strategy.

Most small business owners have a limited budget to engage a 'celebrity' influencer and as a result, many small business owners are reaching out online forums looking for the right person, at the right price, who can assist them with diversifying their marketing strategy.

But what most small business owners are missing and in fact, overlooking, is the influencer(s) they already have, the ones they can already afford—their employees.

Employees as influencers leverages the trust and strength of the employee's networks, helping to increase brand reach and exposure, impacting engagement and ultimately leading to new ventures, customers and more sales.

Employees are already a businesses' biggest asset. They are at the forefront of handling customer needs on a daily basis and are perhaps to the customer, the face of the business. Therefore, their opinions on products and services are highly regarded by customers in the decision and purchasing process.

Having an employee as an influencer aids in providing that personal touch for the customer to develop the know, like and trust factors. Customers can humanise a brand with the voices of genuine people and recommend products through one of the most powerful marketing tools—word of mouth.

It's no secret that social media platforms are still highly personal channels. Adopting a marketing strategy that is crafted around your employees and their influence, can leverage that affiliation and assist in developing the know, like and trust factors that ALL marketing in 2019 will need to bring to the table to stay relevant.

According to Sprout Social, spreading brand awareness is at the top of the list for 80% of small business owners. With this in mind, employers should look towards increasing their brand awareness through influencing their employees to become brand advocates.

By using employees as influencers, it expresses a level of trust between the employer and employee. It shows that beyond being talented and highly skilled in what they do, they are also a

representation of the business and play an important role in upholding the brand's reputation.

And what better way to boost morale then to create core values and a workplace culture that fosters appreciation and respect, providing the team with the opportunity to be an integral part of the business. Asking employees to share their thoughts and experiences with customers or on a product or service or even asking for contribution towards marketing content, is also another great way to involve them in the growth of the business.

Employee influencers are the answer to many of the concerns small business owners have with staying relevant, reaching their target audiences and, most importantly, reaching their business goals. Customers naturally see your employees as less promotional than a business, and therefore more authentic.

In 2019, employees will be small business best bet for reaching, engaging, converting and retaining your audience. 📱

Jenn successfully runs the company Social Media & Marketing Australia, which educates, connects and inspires small business owners within all industries, including retail. For more information visit [www.socialmediaandmarketing.com.au](http://www.socialmediaandmarketing.com.au)



**Employee advocacy**  
IS the new influencer marketing.





**The employees are the eyes and ears of any business.**

They are the ones talking to customers, fielding complaints and observing the direct response to products and services.

# INVESTING IN EMPLOYEES

Investing into them is investing into the development and success of your brand.

BY THE AUSTRALIAN RETAILERS ASSOCIATION [ARA]

Many young people start their career in the retail industry. While a certain portion recognise the long-term potential of a retail career, most young people treat their first retail job as a transitional phase, providing enough income for study or travel before launching into their actual career. Retailers might not see the benefit of training employees with a short working span, but training is actually an essential long-term investment. The most motivated and enterprising employees will be attracted to jobs with training opportunities, and training also boosts the confidence and motivation of the less enterprising employees. As Richard Branson famously said: “Train people well enough so they can leave. Treat them well enough so they don’t want to.”

One of the most important investments as a retail employer is training staff to provide exceptional customer service. The employees are brand ambassadors, so it is essential that they know how to present the brand professionally, and that they understand how to interact effectively with customers. Strong communication starts with the employer and expectations should be outlined to employees, so they understand what message they are to deliver. Training can assist an employee to understand the customer perspective, and recognise the impact of their own speaking manner and approach.

Problem-solving ability is closely linked to strong customers service skills. If a customer approaches a business with a problem, it is up to the employee to provide the solution.

Employees should be equipped with the necessary problem-solving skills and the background knowledge of the business to confidently suggest appropriate solutions for the customer’s problem.

If a new employee is struggling to stay on top of their designated tasks, some additional training might be required to help them streamline their efforts and stay organised. Often poor time management is a sign of not understanding the task at hand or the end result. Many new employees have come straight from school into the workforce. At school, they were provided with a routine and deadlines for assignments, so there was very little multi-tasking involved. Working in retail can involve juggling a number of conflicting tasks – customer service, stock control, administrative work – and the work day will alternate between busy periods and quiet periods. With additional training, the employee will develop a stronger sense of purpose and greater efficiency.

Even the newest employee will benefit from understanding the basic operating structure of the business. The concepts of store revenue and profit, market trends and merchandising techniques can seem foreign to someone just

out of school and earning money for the first time, but understanding these concepts will help develop a greater sense of ownership and purpose.

The employees are the eyes and ears of any business. They are the ones talking to customers, fielding complaints and observing the direct response to products and services. This means that your employees have valuable information to share with the business, and their ideas or observations can assist in streamlining the daily operations.

Employers will benefit greatly from training an employee to undertake a leadership role, as the employee will provide valuable feedback and positive new suggestions. Best of all, they will be empowered to take initiative and to do the best possible job, because they know they have a voice in the running of the business.

As there are so many training platforms available, training does not have to be a drain on resources, and employees will respond to a platform that best suits their learning style. Besides practical on-the-job training, you can provide access to online training, instructor-led courses, seminars and mentoring or coaching.

Employee training is an excellent way to maintain the loyalty and enthusiasm of your team, while ensuring your customers receive the most efficient and effective service. 🗨️

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# Employees advanced by tech

Employees are the backbone of the retail industry - and technology is becoming the beating heart; like in the human body, all the parts have to work together to stay alive. Amazingly, the people component is the hardest part to manage.

BY OLIVER GUY [SOFTWARE AG]

What is one of the most important assets to your organisation? If you ask any retailer the answer would be their employees. This is because employees form the backbone of any retail organisation - from the IT department to the store floor. They are working with technology in back-end processes and working with people (and technology) in customer-facing service operations.

So, while employees are the backbone of the retail industry, technology is becoming the beating heart. And, like in the human body, all the parts have to work together to stay alive.

When retailers consider technology projects, the people element is a critical consideration. There are three things that are crucial with regards to retailers getting value out of their investments:

1. **Technology (does it work?)**
2. **Process (is it appropriate?)**
3. **People (can they work the new process and technology?)**

The people component in this equation is always the hardest thing to manage. Retailers work with people of various age groups, including millennials and Generation Z (more on this later), so adaptability - to be able to meet the needs of each set of employees - is key to success.

Generally, people rarely like change making it a challenge to roll out new technology and processes. Yet, technology is the most important asset to help employees enhance and revolutionise the retail operation and the customer experience. So, training and change management are absolutely critical in order to have a successful technology outcome.

Some employees might also be afraid that technology will take over their jobs - but it is more likely that it will result in their jobs changing, not disappearing. Technology in the form of machines and Artificial Intelligence (AI) may assist in making staff more effective and productive.



**In 2019, Generation Z (those born between 1995 and 2009) will become the largest demographic group on the planet.** As such, it will become an immensely important part of any retailer's planning - internally (employees) and externally (customers).

For example, there might be solutions in stores that help the store associate to advise the customer on the product that best suits their needs. AI-enhanced supply chain decision-making can work to advise supply chain planners if there are issues with stock - and can redirect inventory to minimise stock-outs and maximise sales. These are just some of the ways in which employees and technology can work hand in hand to develop successful outcomes for retailers.

In 2019, Generation Z (those born between 1995 and 2009) will become the largest demographic group on the planet. As such, it will become an immensely important part of any retailer's planning - internally (employees) and externally (customers).

Gen Z will comprise 32% of the global population of 7.7 billion in 2019, nudging ahead of millennials, who will account for a 31.5%. Generation Z has some very specific expectations when it comes to customer experience and desires. Interestingly enough the behaviours, habits and expectations are manifesting themselves in older generations such as Millennials and Generation X. Generation Z has specific customer expectations which impact retailers. They seek the Four C's: Control, Consistency, Curation and Convenience.

Consider social media usage such as Instagram and Pinterest - use of these platforms commenced with Generation Z and has migrated to older generations. Gartner noted that 'Generation Z's are disproportionately influencing and impacting the world stage as they set the foundation for the future of living.'

Being aware of these changes is a great first step. Adapting them is going to be a challenging journey. Technologies providing visibility and co-ordination across the organization will be the key to addressing these needs for customers. Leveraging IoT, AI and other emerging technologies will help. For employees, training and change management will become paramount. Luckily Gen Z and millennials are pretty tech-savvy, making retailers' efforts to marry people with processes and technology easier going forward. 🍷

Oliver Guy is Global Industry Director for retail at Software AG, specialising in Digital Transformation and unified commerce technology strategy. Oliver advises retailers across the globe on their technology strategy and decisions. Learn more at [www.softwareag.com](http://www.softwareag.com)



Every level of a brand must understand the importance when selling and or educating customers. **A decision to embody sustainable action must be equally reflected internally because the employees are like a tribe.**

# Why the industry needs to be aware of the rise of the conscious consumer

Driving sustainable messaging within the fashion industry to match market trends is essential.

BY CAMILLE REED [AUSTRALASIAN CIRCULAR TEXTILE ASSOCIATION | THE AUSTRALIAN CIRCULAR FASHION CONFERENCE]

A new disruptive frontier sweeps retail. One equally as ubiquitous to modern slavery. The buzzword sustainability has become synonymous with fashion on all levels in 2019 and the importance for environmental responsibility is here. The term 'Plastics Moment' is a new adage used to describe the enormity of plastic waste. The concept of 'Plastics Moment' is very much a harsh realisation of 'oh no, we've mucked up a good thing' and the fashion industry is said to be going through the same disruption.

On a global scale, the industry has begun to redefine how to assess retail products life cycles and how brands adapt to such big changes from grassroots to top dog. So how will 'sustainability' effect the customer experience in the fashion industry?

First things first, the customer buys into the ideals and values a brand demonstrates in order to be recognised amongst other players, and sustainability follows soon after as another pillar to the brand's core values.

Every level of a brand must understand the importance of sustainability, when selling and/or educating customers. A decision to embody sustainable action must be equally reflected internally, because the employees are like a tribe.

There is no doubt that the tribe are fielding a growing number of questions from customers than ever before. These questions reflect design decisions, manufacturing, negative impacts, ethical responsibility and much more. The level of expertise for employees to answer these queries do not have to be exorbitant, but they must be well considered.

The customer landscape is shifting rapidly and we're moving at a faster pace than ever before.

With the new target consumer now dubbed as the 'conscious consumer', international brands are leading the way in educating customers on sustainable choices. Retailers know the experience begins in-store and the same method is applied for conscious consumer. They've delivered an opportunity to learn and interact with sustainable

products and are incentivised to revisit the store, in order to return used garments to receive discounts. The international facilitators grooming customers to use and participate in the services is their tribe. Customers are relishing the different message they're receiving visiting these stores, why? Because all their needs are being met.

The difference between the international brands is their message to market. The majority of Australian brands have not yet begun communicating the importance sustainability represents and how that change is filtering through. Therefore a special customer experience, especially to the conscious consumer, is failing to be delivered and they'll choose to shop where they feel most engaged. A brands tribe can overwhelmingly portray a leadership position very swiftly.

The best example of brand values and customer experience are Eileen Fisher and Filippa K. Both are extremely large international fashion brands, who offer both take-back collection schemes and unique customer in-store experiences; including the opportunity to purchase up-cycled or second-hand products. These two retailers have also begun exploring recycled materials as base cloths; Eileen Fisher and Filippa K will be represented at The Australian Circular Fashion Conference, Thursday 21 March, St Kilda Town Hall.

The good news, local industries are working very quickly on new business systems and processes, to reassess the very nature of sustainability. Although it will remain primarily internal dialogue for the next 12-18 months, be rest assured the differences will be felt as we transition from linear to a circular economy.

As you can imagine companies as big as Target, Cotton-On or Kmart must take into consideration the enormity of their supply chain, various categories, departments and stakeholders. Imagine what the essence of a tribe as big as theirs will bring to the customer experience and retail scene. 🐦



Camille Reed is the founder of The Australian Circular Fashion Conference. ACFC is an annual event supporting the AU+NZ fashion industry in becoming self-sufficient with sustainable practice. To attend the ACFC Thursday 21 March visit the website to secure an early bird tickets [www.australiancircularfashion.com.au](http://www.australiancircularfashion.com.au)

# CHATIME'S SWITCH SAVES THREE ADMIN HOURS PER STORE EVERY WEEK

In-store solutions improve efficiency, so that retailers can spend more time engaging with customers, and less working overtime to complete necessary tasks.

BY **ASHIK AHMED** [DEPUTY]

**T**he ice teas at Chatime stores across Australia put a modern twist on the refreshing drink enjoyed for generations. Customers enjoy tea infused with fruit such as honeydew or grapefruit, often adding in delicious jelly-like pearls made famous in Taiwan.

Chatime drinks have proven so popular with Australians the business has grown to 108 T-breweries in less than a decade, making it the fastest growing iced tea brand in the country.

## MORE TEA, LESS ADMIN PLEASE

Most of Chatime's stores (93 of 108) are run by franchisees, who like many store owners enjoy the human interactions of their businesses but less-so the admin. A few years ago Lawrence Chen, CFO of Chatime Australia, began exploring ways to improve workforce management:

"Many of them used to do schedules in Excel and email them out. Creating a roster manually could take half an hour a week," he explains. At the end of each week, each store owner then calculated wages according to each employee's Award rates. We want every store to be compliant with the fast food industry award," he explains.

"It's not possible to do the menial work of calculating award rates because it's very complex. I gave them a test case of example questions and no-one got it right."

## DEPUTY EASES ADMIN. IMPROVES TEAMWORK

In July 2017 Chatime collaborated with Deputy to improve day-to-day scheduling efficiency while complying with modern Awards.

"The beauty of Deputy is it's a very simple, easy-to-use cloud-based system that records the hours correctly," explains Lawrence.



**Awards are too complex to calculate manually.**



"The benefit is having it systemised all in one place. Above all we can demonstrate to Fair Work the record keeping best practice is in place."

Chatime store owners now save a lot of time using Deputy to streamline admin tasks:

- Deputy app accurately records hours worked by every employee – matched to the correct Awards in Deputy's built-in Awards Library and Award Interpretation
- Rosters can be optimised using sales and cost-per-shift data
- Optimised rosters can be copied and pasted then automatically sent to each employee saving time every week.

"We estimate our store owners save half an hour each week just on rostering," says Lawrence. Then Deputy's Awards Library saves another 2.5 hours on calculating pay, so that's 3 hours saved. That's a lot of money on admin to be saved. And importantly, it ensures compliance. Awards are too complex to calculate manually." 📄

Find out how Deputy can help you roster in minutes and get Awards right [www.deputy.com](http://www.deputy.com)

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# How employees can cultivate a positive shopping experience

The importance of offering exceptional customer service.

BY ZOE THOMPSON [ARA]

The ever-changing digital market has resulted in a competitive marketplace for retailers. While some customers shop for entertainment purposes, others find the task daunting and unpleasant. With the majority of customers nestled in the middle ground between pleasure and necessity, the Australian Retailers Association (ARA) have developed strategies for retailers to implement into their business practices

focusing on creating a positive shopping experience. The ARA are Australia's largest retail association representing the country's \$310 billion-dollar sector. As the retail industry employs over 1.2 million people, the importance of educating employees in this area will assist retailers in generating customer satisfaction, repeat business and enhance corporate reputation and revenue. So how can employees create a positive shopping experience?



Although offering quality products, appropriate pricing policies and a pleasant store environment are important, **it is service that distinguishes between a positive shopping experience to a mediocre one as service is vast becoming the way of the future.**

There are a variation of ways employees can approach the task. First, tailoring your services to individual needs can assist in ensuring the customer leaves your store with a memorable impression.

For example, if a customer walks into a flower shop and is after flowers for her wedding, you could ask "When's the big day?" or "What colour schemes have you chosen?". Let's say the customer says "Well, my big day is in two weeks and my colour schemes are white and lavender accents". The employee can then offer different types of flower combinations based on their responses. By asking these questions, the employee is exhibiting care and understanding, while also gaining direct insight into what the customer is after and therefore eliminating unwanted possibilities.

Through asking a few simple questions, the employee has created a seamless and personalised experience for the customer. Although offering quality products, appropriate pricing policies and a pleasant store environment are important, it is service that is the distinguishing factor between a positive shopping experience and a mediocre one, as service is vast becoming the way of the future.

The level of service a business and its employees offer can significantly impact a customer's impression of a store. The ARA have closely examined the elements of a positive shopping experience including: selling as a service, finalising a sale and creating sales opportunities. Service is becoming the differentiating factor amongst competitive retailers, as premium service attracts customers. Retail employees can improve on service by focusing on delivery after sales and

resolving customer complaints to ensure quality control, customer loyalty and satisfaction.

Introducing appropriate products is also an important facet of any business. Recommending products and services to customers is an exciting element of the customer interaction and having a service mindset will assist retailers and employees in achieving their service objectives. A service mindset includes: a positive attitude, showing interest in the customer and their needs, being available to assist customers, listening attentively and using open, positive body language and facial expressions.

A prime example of a business that offers outstanding customer service and quality products are Bunnings. Bunnings aim to align operational policies, procedures and practices with strategies for sales and services in accordance to their values. Bunnings have focused on refining their customer service skills, with engaging communities and recognising employees as the heart and soul of the business. By generating core values ranging from providing customers with quality products at a low price, Bunnings have established themselves as a competitive force in the home improvement market.

With the digital age in full- effect, many retailers are integrating technology and to enhance the customer experience and while this is an effective contribution to customers overall experience of a brand, it's the service and expert knowledge delivered by employees that turns an average experience into an exceptional one. 🗨️



Zoe is the Marketing and Communications Officer for the Australian Retailers Association and has a vested interest in public relations and the media. To keep up to date with the latest in retail news visit [www.retail.org.au/media-centre](http://www.retail.org.au/media-centre) or for media inquiries please call the media team on 0439 612 556.

# In 2019 customer experience is a top priority and its success begins and ends with one interaction

Why an investment in your staff is an investment in your bottom line.

BY DYLAN BERRINGTON [TRURATING]



**I**n a world where consumers can research products online before ever stepping foot into a store, staff are expected to not only deliver exceptional service but also a wealth of knowledge a consumer couldn't get anywhere else.

In today's world, it's a simple fact that consumers have more choice than ever. With a never-ending array of products available at their fingertips, why do so many consumers still choose to make purchases in bricks-and-mortar stores? A staggering 81% of customers rate experience as the key reason. 'Good' is no longer enough, and retailers must strive for excellent to meet the expectations of the modern consumer.

Recent years have seen the rise of 'retailtainment', an imaginative re-thinking of the in-store experience, blending retail and entertainment for an innovative and engaging experience. Think of Nike's 5-story flagship store in New York which invites customers to trial products on their onsite basketball courts, treadmills and football pitch. In an environment where 51% of consumers will never do business with a company again after a single negative experience, retailers have to ensure they are providing the ultimate customer experience in every store, every day.

While online merchants have long enjoyed the luxury of being able to analyse each point of their customer journey to microscopic levels of detail, until recently the in-store experience had been left to languish, neglected from a measurement perspective. Tech company, TruRating have discovered that when you provide retailers with the ability to collect validated customer data, at a fast pace and during the point-of-sale, staff quite literally become empowered.

In 2018 a store manager for a major grocery retailer, blew everyone away with the speed of results achieved from just one month of using their in-store customer data. The ability to identify hotspots of poor service performance meant the



Getting customer experience right is hard work. **It's a continuous effort, and in some cases can require a bold re-think of existing strategies.** But it's an investment with a clear pay off.

manager could make informed roster changes, and within a month the store's customer service improved, resulting in thousands of dollars in weekly revenue back on the table.

A major sports retailer trained its staff to offer multiple product choices to customers when they were in-store and considering a product purchase. The rationale behind this approach was with the point-of-sale customer data the retailer could quantify the monetary value it yielded. Their data showed customers who were offered several options spent 32% more than those customers who are not offered multiple options.

Across a period of six weeks, the retailer launched a new sales training program and communicated statistics to staff in order to encourage them to adopt this strategy. Post training the results were exceptional, even the poorest performing stores in the network were reporting an increase in weekly revenue due to ATV increases associated with the new sales approach and an added benefit overall customer satisfaction increased.

TruRating internal data also uncovered that customers who are impressed spend 13% more; while those who have a sub-par experience spend 29% less. In short, happier customers spend more, and staff are integral to driving in-store sales. The interaction between staff and consumers is pivotal to success in bricks-and-mortar stores, but it doesn't come for free. Retailers need to invest

in their staff, and all the evidence suggests that those brands who do are more likely to succeed.

Getting customer experience right is hard work. It's a continuous effort, and in some cases can require a bold re-think of existing strategies. But it's an investment with a clear pay off.

By taking the time to invest in staff, employers soon see the impact on customer experience and revenues. The ability to measure the impact of in-store initiatives in a fair and objective way is an integral part of this. By making it easier for staff to understand how they're doing, employers are making it easier for them to deliver the experiences customers expect and deserve. 🍷

Dylan Berrington is Head of TruRating ANZ. TruRating is a tech company specialising in customer experience and analytics that offers a flexible, multi-channel solution for engaging with shoppers. For more information visit [www.TruRating.com](http://www.TruRating.com)

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## DRIVE A SUPREME SALES TEAM

Effective performance stems from skilled leadership, and team leaders are the key motivators in ensuring that front line staff are able to meet expectations.

BY CHIARA LA ROCCA [ARA]

**T**eam leaders are imperative to the success of a retailer's staff collective. Without a proper path or staff motivation, front line figures are not going to be able to come close to matching targets that a retailer sets. In today's scene, Australian retailers are faced with fierce competition coming from online/omni-channel platforms, pop-ups and large international brands. To reassure a retailer has long term success and longevity, it is imperative that businesses invest in skilled leaders that can motivate and drive performance within the store, and in most cases, this is quite easy to achieve.

Ultimately a team isn't going to function to its full potential without direction and effective leadership. What sets the foundation of strong leadership is the quality of relationship the leader has developed with individual members within their team. With respect and trust underpinning relationships, the groundwork has been laid out, allowing staff to perform to their maximum knowing their direct leader is not only their champion, but supporter.

Gary M. Yukl established leadership behaviours that comprehensively define the fundamental behaviours. These are:

1. Building relationships
  - a. Networking
  - b. Supporting
  - c. Managing conflict
2. Influencing people
  - a. Motivating
  - b. Recognising and rewarding
3. Making decisions
  - a. Planning and organising
  - b. Problem solving
  - c. Consulting and delegating
4. Giving and seeking information
  - a. Monitoring operations and environment
  - b. Informing
  - c. Clarifying roles

Across these behaviours a level of interconnectedness seems to underpin the effectiveness of staff behaviours such as motivating staff to deliver sales performance. An effective leader utilises a combination of both directive behaviour and supportive behaviour when guiding their team. When working to drive a collective performance, retail leaders need to be aware of how they analyse the readiness of their sales teams and individuals to perform. A common assumption is mistaking a staff member's insecurity or apprehensiveness for being unmotivated. Leaders need to be able to level themselves and earn respect from their team, in-turn staff have the confidence to work with leaders on their personal development, contributing to building a stronger performing collective.

One of the first challenges a new leader is faced with is how to effectively motivate their staff. The best-case scenario idolises leaders creating an environment in which their team member's internal motivation will activate performance. In order for this to happen, leaders need to know their team, what motivates them and how to create such a climate.

A useful model leaders can use is Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs. When looked at from a retail perspective, Maslow's theory indicates that there are some very important leadership qualities that enhance workplace motivation. Staff motivation opportunities exist by motivating each employee through their style of management, role definition, organisation activities and recognition plans. Here are a list of motivation opportunities:

- **Self-actualisation:** offer challenging and meaningful work assignments that enable innovation, creativity and progress according to long-term goals.

- **Esteem motivators:** recognise achievements, assign important projects, and provide status to make employees feel valued and appreciated.
- **Social needs:** generate a feeling of acceptance, belonging and community by reinforcing team dynamics
- **Safety needs:** provide a working environment that is safe, relative job security, and free from threats
- **Physiological motivation:** provide ample breaks for lunch and recuperation and pay salaries that allow staff to meet their essential needs.

The most consuming part of a team leader's role is that each individual that they are responsible for is not motivated by the same needs. A team consists of team members who are at various points in their personal lives as well as careers, therefore it isn't logical to motivate each staff member using the same methods. If a leader can recognise the current level of needs at which retail employees find themselves, they will be able to effectively leverage those needs for collective workplace motivation.

Some areas that leaders can focus on to provide staff members with more satisfaction and drive in their work include:

- Job rotation
- Greater responsibility and duties in their role
- Semi autonomy
- Employee representation
- Increased training and development
- Profit-sharing initiatives
- Recognition as a motivator

Retailers can achieve phenomenal goals when they find the right formula that works in their store. It is imperative that their front line is well equipped with the resources needed to achieve such ideals. A skilled leader will effectively manage and motivate staff to work collectively as a team and should as such be given the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to do so. 🐼

Chiara is the Communications Administrator for the Australian Retailers Association and has a passion for sharing insightful and thought-provoking content to our members. See more at [blog.retail.org.au/newsandinsights](http://blog.retail.org.au/newsandinsights)



# New project set to make young people soar

Why retailers should look outside the standard resume for their hires.

BY KIM BAILEY [THE WAYSIDE CHAPEL]

**S**ydney's Wayside Chapel has recently developed an innovative program called the Wingspan Project to tackle youth unemployment, by providing paid hospitality traineeships in their new social enterprise café, Heart Cafe in Bondi Beach.

While we hear stories of university graduates who are unable to secure full time employment, imagine what it is like for people who have suffered long-term disadvantage? These young people may have been homeless, suffered abuse, had limited access to education, or failed to gain the skills and connections required to thrive in mainstream employment.

As an employer, there are great benefits to hiring these disadvantaged young people. Retailers have the ability to mould the new hire into the type of employee they are seeking. By training young people from scratch, the new recruit can grow into the specific role, rather than adopting institutionalised learning taught by a particular school or university.

For retailers looking to gain customers from a younger demographic, hiring staff from the same group, can attract new customers. Investing time in mentoring young people generally pays off well, because they are grateful for the opportunity, and understand the employer's needs. This enthusiasm has a

positive flow on effect to customers who support businesses that 'give back'.

Young people who have been given a chance are more willing to learn, build resilience, and think outside the box. Compared to people of the same age who may have had a more linear path with credentials, we often find they are more hardworking, and adept at facing personal and professional challenges.

So why don't retailers support more disadvantaged young people into jobs?

Common barriers are employers being unfamiliar with this demographic and training programs, lack of work experience and

education, negative stereotypes, or simply not seeing the benefits. Young people can unintentionally be screened out by the language in job postings. Some progressive employers now include language to target youth by using preferences such as "looking to build skills" or "no experience required."

While Wayside Chapel makes a case why employers should recruit, hire, train, and support at-risk youth, it also recognises that employers need a set of supports and tools to help them deal with both anticipated and unanticipated challenges of employing disconnected youth.

The Wingspan Project is a social enterprise program, adopting a commercial business model with the addition of mentoring and life-skills training that aims to take young people who are "at risk" to "at promise". By giving young people opportunities to learn practical skills and undertake training and paid employment in a commercial environment, it aims to break the cycle of unemployment. While retailers may feel they do not have the resources or expertise to employ marginalised youth, the Wingspan Project also provides end-to-end support for employers to build experience and confidence working with young people.

The three-phase employment initiative begins with an intensive six-month employment readiness program, followed by a 12-month paid traineeship in the Wayside

Chapel's Heart Café (or with another workplace partner) and the opportunity to gain a Cert II Hospitality TAFE qualification. A person has a real job, real work, with real wages.

Once the traineeship is completed, the trainee is then supported to find mainstream employment. A case manager is assigned to both the employer and employee for up to one year to provide support and guidance when challenges arise. They also provide employers with step-by-step guidance for recruiting, hiring, training, and retaining these young people. Case managers maintain close relationships with employees throughout the hiring and training process and ongoing employment.

By hiring these young people at-risk, we hope to show the wider community that when young people are exposed to positive experiences, we can breakdown the social stigma associated with long-term joblessness and create brighter futures.

There is also potential to create lasting positive social change through a reduction in the costs associated with criminal justice, unemployment, welfare benefits and re-offending. It brings real hope to the lives of young people who have been denied opportunities and reconnects them with their community. 🍷

For any retailers who are interested in becoming involved in the Wingspan Project, they can email [wingspan@thewaysidechapel.com](mailto:wingspan@thewaysidechapel.com) or visit [www.waysidechapel.org.au](http://www.waysidechapel.org.au)



Young people who have been given a chance are more willing to learn, **build resilience, and think outside the box.**





# Supercharge your mystery shop program

Using new reporting enhancements to resolve problems, not just uncover them.

BY KATE GORMAN [THE REALISE GROUP]

In today's world shoppers can research, compare and purchase products from different retailers with just couple of taps on their device. Therefore, creating an enhanced in-store shopping experience has never been more vital to the survival of retail. It's not surprising that as a result of this, it's impossible to read or hear industry data on retail without reference to technology.

Whether it is e-commerce, mobile point of sale devices, digital tools and kiosks, connected shopping experiences, location based mobile offers, intelligent fitting rooms or Artificial Technology (AI), these products are a game changer for the 'digital first' consumers and retailers who are trying to keep up with them in 2019 and beyond.

Despite these advances in technology, most would argue that the most important asset for is still non-tech. It's the team member, sales assistant, store manager, customer service representative and advisor – the front line team.

While there are countless front-end technological innovations to improve the shopping experience for your customers, often the HR and training processes are in the dark ages and improving staff performance is in the too hard basket. Finding a solution that is intuitive, user-friendly and reliable is key.

The familiar adage "what gets measured, gets done" remains relevant to the current retail market and one of the most reliable, objective and consistent methods for measuring employee compliance to training standards today, is still good old mystery shopping.

Gone are the programs of old which were labour intensive, inflexible and difficult to analyse. Mystery shopping reporting dashboards of today are interactive, personalised, customised, real time and mobile friendly. A great program doesn't just uncover the problems, it helps resolve them.

## KAIZEN ACTION PLAN

The Japanese word Kaizen means 'change for the better'. The everyday use of Kaizen can be applied as a one-time or continuous improvement across many different industries and in the retail space, and can be acknowledged as the perfect mantra for mystery shopping.

The latest reporting development in the mystery shopping world, is Kaizen Action Plan which allows retailers to plan, execute and review via an automatic scheduling process. The plan also enables retailers to follow up on tasks, track progress and resolve issues. It's an actionable and measurable and can be used to tailor coaching towards assisting employees to improve on their performance, as they are the ultimate brand ambassadors.

## BENEFIT TO RETAIL MANAGERS

With so many operational tasks to complete daily, this type of reporting system is time and cost efficient. The system automates the creation of an action plan for a survey based on low scoring or non-compliant survey elements, ensuring that insights are turned into actions in every store. When a report includes scored answers that are non-compliant, as defined by the plan, an action item is automatically created for each of those answers and relevant managers are notified. Regional and/or store managers have visibility to action items for which they are responsible and can then confirm remediation plans for dealing with any issues related to those answers.

A retailer can classify specific questions on their mystery shop survey as either critical, necessary or serious. Then if a nominated question is scored 0%, a notification about the new action item will be sent to managers specified in the action plan (for example the state, regional and store manager applicable). Managers can then visit the action item page for the question on that particular visit. The remediation plan and discussion of a resolution can then take place. Once the issue has been dealt with, the remediation plan can be closed and the action item will appear as resolved on the dashboard.

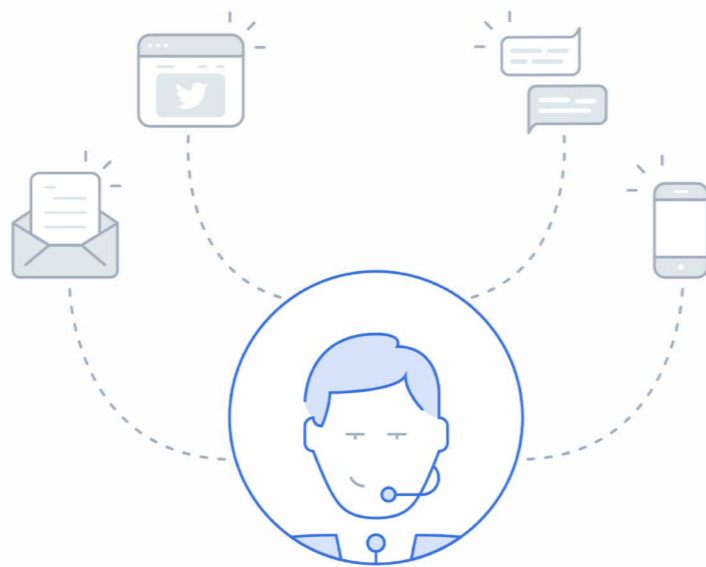
Like all business metrics, it's not just about collecting the data – it's what you do with it that counts. Kaizen Action Plan enables retailers to automate continuous improvement to your front line, ensuring you supercharge your mystery shopping ROI for minimal effort. Now that's a game changer. [www.therealisegroup.com.au](https://www.therealisegroup.com.au)



The familiar adage "what gets measured, gets done" remains relevant to the current retail market and one of the most reliable, **objective and consistent methods for measuring employee compliance to training standards today is still good old mystery shopping.**

Kate Gorman is the National Account Director for The Realise Group. Since 2000, The Realise Group has been helping some of Australia's leading brands understand their customer experience via Voice of the Customer and Mystery Shopping programs. Learn more at [www.therealisegroup.com.au](https://www.therealisegroup.com.au)

# HELP YOUR CUSTOMERS BY GIVING YOUR EMPLOYEES THE FULL 360



Support teams can be reinforced with efficient and reliable systems to allow themselves to be omnipresent.

BY **CHRIS WYMAN** [FRESHWORKS]

**I**magine you are a support agent for an online retailer and a customer reaches out to you regarding an order placed on the retailer's website. You promise to get back to them with a resolution, but you know it is a long winded process that requires the collaboration of multiple people.

Involving multiple people is certainly not easy. These folks could be working across different teams, in their own silos, and with their individual everyday goals, making collaboration a lot harder. You need to meet them, provide context to the problem at hand, and then get down to working on the solution. In case someone else from another team has to reach out to the customer to understand the problem better, the customer will have to spend their valuable time to repeat all that they said to you.

The result: an unhappy and frustrated customer and that's the last thing a business wants.

In a time and age where customers interact with brands across channels and mediums, it is really an uphill task to give a seamless experience. You need to be omnipresent and also carry forward conversations from where the customer left off previously in a different channel. Brands which fail to live up to this expectation might end up losing customers and reputation.

To address this very pain point, Freshworks, the leading provider of cloud-based business software, has come up with a fully integrated cloud bundle called Freshworks 360, which combines the power of sales, support, and marketing software together so that you not only communicate more effectively, but also keep track of the full 360 of your customer data.

Whether its voice, email, chat, messaging, or social media feeds, businesses can get in touch instantly through the channel preferred by the user. Freshworks 360 makes it simple for anyone to work on a ticket by effortlessly making sure that all the customer history is available at all times and across mediums. It also sets the required context.

No more scrambling for help.

Support teams are always aware of the background of any given customer whether they're engaged on the phone, through chat or social channels.

The final piece to further enhance your customer experience is Freshworks' AI-driven omnibot called Freddy. Together with Freshworks 360, the omnibot assists agents by automating simple, basic tasks and providing customers with quick responses, thus allowing agents the time to handle complex tasks. Freddy also assists agents by fetching historical data and providing the required context about the customer. 🗨️

The complimentary combination of Freshworks 360 and the AI-driven omnibot customer engagement will only get smoother, easier, and more efficient, and will be something retailers no longer have to stress about. Make sure you don't miss the bus. Sign up for the ultimate 360 experience at [www.freshworks.com](http://www.freshworks.com)

## LEVERAGING THE ABUNDANCE OF TECHNICAL TALENT

The critical skillset brands use to increase commitment amongst the team.

BY **PAUL FARINA**

**A**t seminars, Annual General Meetings (AGM's), and networking events it's easy to be surrounded by people with a deep knowledge and experience in their chosen sector, category or department. Industry knowledge amongst retail employees has never been higher, yet the battle for a highly talented and productive team is a conundrum that continues to challenge the industry.

With technology becoming increasingly influential each year, the importance of technical capability cannot be undermined. Art Markman's publication in the Harvard Business Review, demonstrates that leaders can only be effective if they have a strong level of technical knowledge, however the process of transitioning high performing team members into management positions can be an arduous task.

This notion can also be likened to the Super Chicken Experiment conducted by William Muir. In this study, the chickens that laid eggs at a prolific rate were grouped together, and the average chickens were grouped elsewhere. The expectation was that the 'Super Chickens' would be even more productive when grouped.

The reality was very different. The average chickens marginally improved. The 'Super Chickens' pecked each other to death. It was a mess!

Similar studies have been replicated several times, resulting in the conclusion that 'a team of champions does not make a champion team'. Winning at all costs, publishing league tables of team member performance in conferences, and constantly investing in capability has a limited return on investment and can even be counter-productive, it's like throwing too much wood on the fire and then proceeding to smother the flame.

By looking at performance through a different lens, there are opportunities to build robust teams that reach and set organisational objectives consistently with minimal friction. With so much technical talent across a variety of businesses, the critical skill employers need to foster, is to increase the commitment amongst the team. By practicing and investing in interpersonal skill levels in leaders and team members, there is a huge scope to improve innovation, a sense of belonging, and shared purpose.

If a team or department is lacking technical talent, then growing the business's reputation as a supportive, innovative, and progressive environment **will attract talented people as well as retain them.**

A difficult element to this is that it is hard to measure. A big reason why most brands will revert to technical training for staff is because it resides comfortably between the tangible and measurable and for most businesses, return on investment is imperative and should be tracked.

Incrementally investing in leadership, communication, and cultural development is the lever to pull when trying to maximise the capabilities within highly educated and experienced teams. These topics represent endless learning and are life skills that can benefit team leaders both personally and professionally.

If a team or department is lacking technical talent, then growing the business's reputation as a supportive, innovative, and progressive environment will attract talented people as well as retain them. 🗨️

Paul Farina assists operational teams to ramp up their performance and stay in power. Paul focuses on evolving teams into prepared and consistent performers full of contingency, capability, and cohesion. He is passionate in his delivery and detailed in his approach. To learn more about Paul visit [www.paularina.com.au](http://www.paularina.com.au)

# HOW TO ENHANCE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE THROUGH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

As studies have indicated time and time again, employee engagement and a successful and differentiated customer experience are intimately connected.

BY DR. PAUL WARNER [INMOMENT]

A recent study conducted by Gartner, showed employee engagement surfaced as a major concern in delivering improvements in customer experience (CX), with 86% of CX executives surveyed ranking it as having an equal or greater impact than other factors such as project management and data skills.

But how exactly can businesses improve employee engagement and in turn, improve the customer experience? Is it as simple as implementing employee perks like always-full snack cupboards, company games rooms, or an open policy on bringing pet dogs to work? The answer is no.

## KNOWING THEY ARE VALUED

To differentiate themselves as great places to work, companies are thinking further outside

the box than ever before. Employee perks are being stretched to new boundaries, such as unlimited annual leave and flexible working arrangements.

While initiatives like this matter immensely in the employee engagement formula, years of research and working with some of the world's leading brands has resulted in the idea that there is absolutely no substitute for making sure people know they are valued.

The importance of valuing employees stems from trust, respect, and being asked for input or opinions on important issues regarding the business.

A great place to start is asking for their honest insights on how to deliver a better customer experience (as well as what's preventing them from doing so). After all, employees occupy

a unique place between a business and its customers. As such, they can hear a customer complaint (or compliment) and map it to specific root-cause processes, policies and campaigns.

## VOICE OF THE EMPLOYEE

Customer experience (CX) is more than a soup de jour. It's a data-backed way to outpace your competitors. The employee's perspective on improving the brand's delivery of customer experience, known as Voice of the Employee (VoE), empowers employees to take ownership of CX outcomes. When employees are approached for their advice on improving CX (at established touchpoints and intervals, through ad hoc invites and 'always-open' portals) and then act on that advice, they know they're trusted, respected, and valued. They know this because the employer has included them as part of the solution.

While the traditional mentality focused on creating the right working environment for employees, this new model takes a collaborative approach to problem solving and innovation, asking "what can we do together...and how?" It moves away from asking employees if they feel valued to ensuring value is manifested through action. It's about getting to a point where employers know and do not have to ask. It's not just one-time feedback; it's the beginning of an ongoing conversation.

## TECH IS KEY

With technology, what was once a complicated, siloed, and often an ineffective web of processes can now be streamlined and expedited. Sophisticated listening tools now allow companies to systematically collect and run complex analyses on both customer and employee feedback, surfacing correlations and trends, and identifying both failures and successes.

Tech can even automate some tasks for employees: prioritising cases, routing customers to the places and people where they

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can get the right answers and serving up content personalised to their preferences. Automated systems can also arm front line staff with in-the-moment intelligence, empowering them to have the most effective interactions possible. And with processes like Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) built into some of the more innovative solutions, these systems get smarter and even more effective over time. In essence, technology is a value-building tool that empowers employees to be the greatest CX advocates.

The result: Employees are providing more value to customers and the brand, and they are more successful in their roles. In other words, employers are helping them be (not just feel) more valuable.

While a number of aspects factor into employee engagement, VoE goes beyond salary, benefits, and foosball tables. It provides employees with a permanent seat at the decision-making table. By making employees part of the solution, companies are rewarded with not only a passionate, empowered workforce but also new ideas and insights even their customers can't provide. 🍷

By Dr. Paul Warner is the Vice President - Customer and Employee Experience Strategy at InMoment, a cloud-based customer experience (CX) intelligence platform, arming brands with compelling customer insights to drive high-value business decisions and relationships with both customers and employees. For more information, visit [www.inmoment.com](http://www.inmoment.com)

# How mobile technology can solve the employee engagement crisis

Every industry should be concerned about employee engagement, especially the retail industry which suffers from particularly low levels of engagement.

BY GERALDINE OSMAN [STAFFCONNECT]

Employee disengagement has been statistically linked with many problems for retail organisation's, including an astounding high turnover rate. For part-time retail employees, a study by The Hay Group revealed a median turnover rate of more than two-thirds (67%). It's a vicious cycle, because this same employee churn that makes it harder for retailers to attract and retain talent also effects productivity and a retailer's bottom line.

Studies have shown that organisations with engaged employees have been proven to outperform companies without high engagement by 202%. Worker performance effects customer experience as well. In a report collated by Aon.com determined that retail stores with high employee engagement have 5% higher customer satisfaction scores than those with lower engagement. While research from Accumulate shows 65% of lost customers can be linked back to an employee who feel disengaged.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC SHIFTS OF SEISMIC PROPORTION

The retail business has literally been transformed over recent years. Deloitte's report *Global Powers of Retailing* 2018 points out that instead of bricks, or even bricks plus clicks, the industry is now a hybrid blend of online retailers and physical stores, which has created a highly competitive fight for survival. In this hodgepodge market, Deloitte notes that "consumers are channel-agnostic...bouncing between online and offline along the path to purchase."

It has become a turbulent landscape with an increase in staff absenteeism, recruitment challenges, and deteriorating internal communications. Additionally, casual employment is more common than ever before. A study from Gallup reveals that since 2012, the number of retail workers who work casual or part-time rose from 4% to 30%.

Determining how to increase engagement is important from a bottom-line business perspective. A study from Towers Perin revealed that companies with low engagement suffer from a 33% decrease in operating income and an 11% drop in earnings growth.



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## FINDING THE RIGHT TOOLS

With mobile technology retail employers can ensure their distributed teams receive the information they need, share two-way communication and feedback, and collaborate via an app whether or not they are co-located in a retail shop.

Remote workers no longer have to rely on an occasional email or quickly outdated internal communication tools such as message boards, intranets and newsletters to stay in the loop. Mobile engagement apps have the power to reach the entire workforce, regardless of role or location, quickly and easily. This includes the ability to recognise and reward retail employees via social media interactivity, offer employees the ability to suggest ideas for innovation and improvement. The aim is to obtain honest feedback from employees through quizzes, surveys and polling.

Mobile engagement apps have the capability to provide workers with easy access to training

materials and are an excellent platform to promote company events via an online calendar that all employees can have access to.

Mobile platforms can also aid in that elusive measurement capability that has been so difficult for retailers to wrap their heads around. Mobile apps can facilitate feedback and generate engagement-related insights and reports that retailers can then use to guide decision-making about what cultural changes are required to boost engagement.

Even though the industry's landscape has been turned on its head, employees must deliver impeccable customer service if the organisation hopes to compete long-term. It's no longer enough to have merely satisfied customers; you need employees who can truly delight the consumers they are serving.

How can the industry reconcile that everything about the way they do business has changed, yet the sector's overall challenges in

serving customers remain the same? Delighting customers can only happen with a fully engaged workforce at every point in your business, from customer facing staff to head office, to accounts the team and delivery workers.

With the right mobile application as a framework for engagement, retailers can benefit from an effective one-point solution to create a culture of engaged and positive employees. Engaged employees are your best brand advocates and will go the extra mile to ensure customers are highly satisfied and will support your business for years to come. 🍷

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By actively seeking to engage with employees on their needs when it comes to rostering and involving them in managing the administration of their shifts, **you can significantly reduce the problem and improve the working environment for all involved.**

For retail managers, an employee cancelling their shift or simply not showing up is one of the worst ways to start the day.

Managing unplanned absences is one of retail's biggest workforce management challenges, according to more than half of retailers surveyed in Kronos Workforce Institute's 2018 *Global Retail Absence Survey*.

On average, around 13% of retail hours are wasted, due to cancelled shifts or overscheduling to compensate for the possibility of employees not being available at the last minute.

Around 7% of hours are scheduled but not worked, while 6% are worked, but not needed. To date, the common response to absenteeism in the industry has been to overschedule staff, with 87% of global organisations taking this approach.

Absenteeism not only impacts the bottom line through reduced customer service, lost productivity and overspend on staffing, but employee sentiment is affected by a workplace where workers don't have sufficient support, especially during peak times when absenteeism is at its highest. This includes managers who are tasked with filling the gaps with just one to three hours' notice, on average.

Data analysis by Kronos shows a direct correlation between poor employee engagement and absenteeism. This doesn't mean you need more events on the company social calendar or 'joke of the day' in the break room, although it probably wouldn't hurt. There are simple steps and tools you can adopt to build rapport and respect about rosters.

**Remove the guess work:** Start accurate labour planning with a demand forecast.

56% of respondents to the survey said building work schedules that accurately align with the demands of customers, the business, and employees is one of the most difficult, complex, or time consuming issues.

# How to shut the shop on absenteeism

Unplanned absence is one of retail's biggest workforce management challenges, but better employee engagement can help reduce this rostering headache.

BY STEVEN VOLZ [KRONOS APAC]

The majority of respondents admitted to doing a bad job of scheduling staff, regularly finding themselves with either too few or too many staff during peaks and troughs of demand.

Systems such as Kronos Workforce Dimensions use historical data, known events and clever algorithms to simplify the labour scheduling process, aided by new machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) techniques to enhance accuracy.

**Ask for preferences:** Schedule staff based on the hours they have identified as most suitable to them. If their shifts fit with their schedule, they are less likely to need to change them or cancel because the shift is too hard to manage around other commitments.

**Give plenty of notice:** Publish schedules as far in advance as possible. This gives employees time to plan, and managers time to rearrange shifts if needed.

**Trust the data:** Use labour analytics to mitigate absence. These tools provide insight into the causes of absence, which can be used to inform rostering.

**Be fair:** Pay staff accurately and on time for work performed. If staff feel valued and well treated, they will be more inclined to do the right thing for the business.

**Implement self-service:** Empower staff to take greater control of their working lives with self service capabilities for time off requests, shift swaps, accrual balance visibility, requests to cover shifts.

AI now plays a role in helping employees manage their shifts and relieving the stress and administrative burden on managers. Technology helps employees find eligible and available co-workers to swap shifts by reviewing the employee's history, identifying who they usually swap with and which days other employees are available to work.

While the first instinct may be to take a punitive approach to absenteeism by imposing stricter rules and processes, it is unlikely to reduce the incidence and will probably just create a bad feeling between managers and staff. By actively seeking to engage with employees on their needs when it comes to rostering and involving them in managing the administration of their shifts, you can significantly reduce the problem and improve the working environment for all involved. 🍷



Steven is the Head of Retail and Hospitality at Kronos, Australia, New Zealand and South-East Asia. Steven is a highly experienced workforce management professional, with over 25 years' spent advising businesses on labour efficiency and utilisation best practices. For more information, visit [www.kronos.com.au](http://www.kronos.com.au)

# Creating a positive experience beyond customer service

It's now more important than ever for business to implement quality services in order to create positive customer relationships, consumer loyalty and customer experience and this all which starts with employees.

BY FLYN ROBERTS [LIFE INSTYLE]

**W**hen it comes to building relationships and customer loyalty, this is best achieved through curating a positive customer experience and the employees are the key component. As an employer, it's important to invest in a superior workforce, whilst also putting in place measures to train and encourage staff development. This will in turn, establish a healthy service culture and perpetuate strong business growth.

Social media has played a huge role in customer service for retailers. Online social media platforms have empowered customers to comment openly and publicly when a service disappoints them, and this makes the provision for excellent service to be consistent, imperative. The way in which staff approach and interact with customers ultimately cements the foundations surrounding the type of service offered, so it's important to get it right!

Recent advances in technology and the ongoing popularity of consumers opting to shop online has somewhat plagued the success of physical retailers. Despite this preference, many consumers still enjoy shopping in-store and the customer service experience. This ongoing success of physical retailers generally resonates largely with sales people who are essential to the ongoing growth and success of retailing.

Along with investing in a superior workforce and ensuring the adequate training and development of staff, it's important that employees know the product or service they are offering from the inside out. Employees are typically the first point of contact for customers and the face of the retail business, and customers rely on this. It's important that employees understand the product or service they are offering and are ready to provide further information or answer questions effectively. Staff development days and ongoing product and service training are great for creating exceptional employee services. In addition to this, they also an ideal way

of assisting employees in managing customer expectations and resolving any potential complaints.

It's also important that employees are trained not only in products, but how to best use digital technology and the platforms that now form part of the customer experience. Regular touch points such as social media platforms, chat functions and websites are now utilised by retailers all over the world and allow business to communicate directly with its customers.

The frequent use of digital platforms allows customers to access information immediately about not only the business, but also the competition. It's for this reason that retailers need to ensure their employees are actively creating a positive service that extends further than just in-store customer service. Consumers expect timely information about a product or service and it's important that employees are not only on top of this but are managing



The way in which staff approach and interact with customers **ultimately cements the foundations surrounding the type of service offered**, so it's important to get it right!

online platforms effectively. This also includes responding to customer enquiries or in some cases complaints in a professional and timely matter, in order to not only continue to create customer satisfaction and build brand loyalty, but also protect a brand's reputation.

With great service being a key component to retail success, It's important that retailers continue to invest in their employees, who are evidently the backbone of the retail industry. In what is an extremely competitive industry, employment training and staff development are all key factors in the growth and success of any business.

To assist retailers in navigating what can feel like an overwhelming area of business, Conversation Series is set to take place a Life Instyle Sydney this February, with a focus on fundamental skills for small business and retailers; leadership and training; as well as improving brand awareness and overall business engagement. 📌



Flyn Roberts is the talented Exhibition Manager of Life Instyle and has spent 10 years working on the event and within the industry. For more information, visit [www.lifeinstyle.com.au](http://www.lifeinstyle.com.au)

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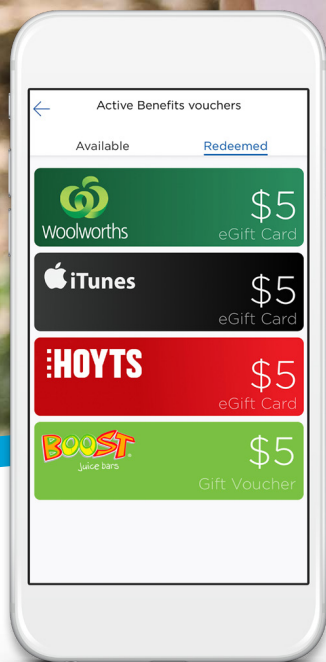


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