A SYSTEM OF SELECTION AND HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
FOR SMALL RETAILERS OF APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Patricia LeMay Burr, B. B A., M. A.
Denton, Texas
May, 1973

The problem with which this study is concerned is that of constructing a system of selection and human resource development for small retailers of apparel and accessories.

The study has a twofold purpose. The first is to determine the extent to which organized selection and training practices exist in small apparel and accessory retailing establishments, and the general attitude which small retailers of apparel and accessories express toward the value of selection and training functions. The second is to construct a practical system which can be used in small apparel and accessory retailing establishments.

Both primary and secondary data were utilized. A judgment sample of one hundred retailing establishments was sampled in the Dallas Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area by means of a mail questionnaire. The data gathered in the primary research provided bases for the formulation of certain statements about the general attitude of the respondents toward the value of selection and training. The data also helped identify the extent to which formal
Selection and training programs exist in the respondents' retailing establishments. Secondary data was used in constructing the program of selection and the program of training.

The selection program was designed to include analysis of forecasting personnel requirements, criteria for selection, recruiting and selection, and the post-selection conference.

The training program was designed to include analysis of general job training, specific job training, the employee handbook, and continuous training.

Findings indicated that formal selection practices exist in very few situations in personnel administration of the respondents' retailing establishments. Little organized training exists, yet the respondents indicated the belief that sales personnel can have a great effect in increasing sales. Respondents indicated reactions to an outside-conducted training as usually not really necessary and too expensive.

Conclusions indicate that regardless of the quality of a written system of selection and training, significant resistance exists on the part of small retailers of apparel and accessories concerning actual implementation.
This study recommends that, in order to avoid some of the resistance which exists, an originator of such a system could provide the system to trade organizations, chambers of commerce, the Small Business Administration, or "Christmas seminars for part time employees" for implementation. In addition, a marketing research or management service organization could be of assistance in implementing the system.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF TABLES** ........................................ iv  

**Chapter**  

I. INTRODUCTION ........................................ 1  
  Nature of the Problem  
  Purpose of the Study  
  Research Methodology  
  Limitations  
  Order of Presentation  

II. THE CURRENT ATTITUDE OF A JUDGMENT SAMPLE OF ONE HUNDRED SMALL-SCALE RETAILING MANAGERS TOWARD TRAINING, THE VALUE OF PERSONAL SELLING, AND PERSONNEL SELECTION .................. 10  

III. SELECTION ........................................... 40  
  Forecasting Personnel Requirements  
  Criteria for Selection  
  Recruiting and Selection  
  The Post-Selection Conference  

IV. TRAINING ............................................. 101  
  General Job Training  
  Specific Job Training  
  The Employee Handbook  
  Continuous Training  

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .................... 168  

APPENDIX ................................................ 172  

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................. 174  

iv
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Number of Persons and Sales in the Population, 1967.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Frequency of Use of a Written List of Needed Qualities in Interviewing and Hiring Sales Personnel.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. The Perceived Effect of Sales Personnel's Efforts in Increasing Sales.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Factors Describing Current Training Efforts.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Factors Describing an Outside-Conducted Training Program.</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Managers' Evaluation of Quality of Current Personal Selling.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. Assessment of Effect of Sales Personnel's Efforts, Quality of Current Personal Selling, and Need for Training.</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nature of the Problem

Perhaps no other businessman is so dependent upon the selection and training processes of personnel to increase sales and build goodwill as is the manager of a retail establishment. The importance of selection and training has long been recognized in manufacturing in this country, but retailing managers have been slow to recognize and accept the important role which these two personnel functions play in the management process of a business.

Managerial emphasis has rested upon the buying and selling functions while other important aspects of the merchandising process have been given scant attention. In larger retailing establishments, there has been evidence of a growing realization of the importance of intelligent selling. Often, this has been accompanied by an increased interest in effective personnel management. In fact, "personnel management" as a distinct department often appears in organizational structures of such large retailing establishments.
Yet, too often, managers of stores such as the population being studied have concluded that "personnel administration" is a term unrelated to their business activities. As a result, selection is usually conducted in an unsystematic manner, and training is completely ignored.

The effect of such activities, or lack of activities, on the part of managers of such retailing establishments can be disastrous. This is especially true for the manager of a small store who relies on personal service as a strong competitive factor in lieu of a large advertising budget.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that a retailing manager who does desire to establish a system of selection and training within his store operational design does not have the advantage of the manufacturer or even the retailing manager of a large establishment. Much of the material which has been written for the retailer has been designed for use in a large retail establishment. Little material is available for the retailer of the small store to implement quickly in his daily operations.

The problem which exists is one related to the dearth of carefully-selected, well-trained employees involved in personal selling in small apparel and accessories retail establishments.
Further, assuming that retailers in small establishments have a desire and the financial ability to implement a system of selection and training, there is little material available for their use. Material which has been written could be of value for their needs only if it were carefully studied and dissected.

The need for qualified employees is a serious one. If the sales person is the vital link in the communication process between the buyer and the seller, then careful selection and training are mandatory.

If the sales person is to effectively serve in the communication process, he must be equipped with knowledge of the product, selling skills, a good attitude, and good work habits, in addition to other personality traits.

If the retailing manager of a small store is to increase sales, reduce selling costs, improve and standardize operating methods, simplify the supervision process, improve morale, and reduce labor turnover, a system of selection and training must exist which will help him to meet his management needs. It is becoming increasingly apparent that he must establish some control over these factors if he is to survive in a highly competitive economy.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a system of selection and human resource development to meet the personnel management needs of the retailing manager of small apparel and accessories stores.

The system provides for ease of implementation on the part of the manager. It is designed with consideration for simplicity and ease of understanding.

Much of the information involves basic personnel administration principles which are directed toward applicability at the retail level of business enterprise.

The current attitudes of the managers in the sample are studied to determine the status of selection and training in retailing operations of those retailers. Analysis of their attitudes provides a basis for constructing much of the system.

Suggestions concerning implementation of the system follow discussion of the system.

Following implementation of the system, the retailer can expect, among other things, the benefits of increased productivity, lower labor costs, better quality of service offered by sales personnel, and less supervision required on the part of management.
The retailer is justified in expecting improvement in these areas when the employees become equipped with the "tools" which will enable them to perform the job more competently.

Further, the retailer can augment or accelerate the improvement in his store operations through his understanding of the control which he can exert over his own selection and training process.

Understanding the value of the system as it is proposed here, the retailer can concentrate not only upon improving the decisions made at the buying stage, but also upon the performance involved in the selling stage.

Since the status of a "small retailer of apparel and accessories" is determined by operating with fewer than twenty paid employees, the significance for the business economy in the American market can be determined through utilization of census data.

The data presented in Table I pertain to the actual number of retailers in operation in 1967 in the defined population and the total sales volume in the economy made by the population. The employment level for that year is 100,626 persons, and the sales volume is reported as being $10,381,256,000.
TABLE I
NUMBER OF PERSONS AND SALES IN
THE POPULATION, 1967

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number of Persons</th>
<th>Total Sales (000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apparel and Accessory Stores with Fewer than 20 Paid Employees</td>
<td>100,626</td>
<td>$10,381,256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Research Methodology

The research sources in this study are both primary and secondary. Secondary sources are used in establishing principles for the management processes within the retailing establishments. The primary source of data is gathered by use of a questionnaire, which was distributed by mail to retailing managers in the Dallas Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area.

The Dallas Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area was chosen as the geographical area to be sampled because of its proximity to North Texas State University and the possibility of interviewing some of the retailers personally. The large number of stores in the defined population contributes to the desirability of distributing the questionnaire in that area.
The sample taken was a judgment sample. Telephone directories of the cities within the Dallas Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area were used to select the sample.

In order to avoid overrepresentation by any one area, the sections of the area sampled were plotted on a map. An attempt was made to distribute the questionnaire as equally in number as possible.

A judgment sample was taken because, after extensive research for a directory of all of the businesses within the area, it was learned from the Chamber of Commerce of Dallas that no such directory exists.

Therefore, the construction of a "representative sample according to subjective judgment"¹ was necessary.

Primary data gathered through individual interviews with many of the business managers provided bases for formulation of certain statements.

Because of the use of the sample, the questionnaire was designed to reveal whether those being sampled were, indeed, a true item in the population. When the responses were studied, those who indicated that they employed as many as twenty paid persons were eliminated from the study.

Limitations

The limitations of the study are as follows:

1. Since no measure exists for defining the true size of the chosen population, a judgment sample is used for purposes of obtaining and analyzing opinions of the retailing managers. Conclusions drawn from the analysis are not meant to be inferences concerning the entire population.

2. A small-scale retailing establishment is defined as being one in which fewer than twenty persons are employed for pay.

3. Small-scale retailing establishments engaged in merchandising apparel and accessories are excluded if the method of sale is primarily self-selection and/or self-service.

Order of Presentation

The problem is introduced in Chapter I. A discussion follows in Chapter II concerning the data gathered in the primary research. In Chapters III and IV, material gathered from secondary sources combined with data gathered in interviews with several of the respondents forms the basis of the presentation. In those chapters, the system is presented in two major sections. A selection system is proposed in Chapter III, while a training system is proposed
in Chapter IV. Finally, in Chapter V, conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made concerning implementation of the system.
CHAPTER II

THE CURRENT ATTITUDE OF A JUDGMENT SAMPLE OF ONE HUNDRED SMALL-SCALE RETAILING MANAGERS TOWARD TRAINING, THE VALUE OF PERSONAL SELLING, AND PERSONNEL SELECTION

Retailing is regarded as a low-productivity-growth area.\(^1\) In fact, since the post-World War II period, productivity in retailing has increased at an average annual rate lower than that of agriculture or manufacturing, and significantly lower than the average rate of productivity growth for the economy as a whole.\(^2\)

Why is this true? Partial answer to the question is that employee training is a rarity among retailers, especially among the smaller ones. Formal training increases productivity, but the absence of widespread educational programs of this nature among retailers contributes to making retailing a low-productivity-growth area.\(^3\)

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\(^2\)Ibid.

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 69.
In other segments of the economy, notably agriculture and manufacturing, an exploratory type of research, in addition to continuing education, has been an important factor in increasing productivity. Yet, little evidence exists to indicate the presence of such research and training programs in the retailing segment of the economy.

A survey was designed for the purpose of learning whether there exists, in the retailing segment being researched, a formal or written approach toward training. An attempt was made to learn characteristics of any training programs which might now exist in the sample of retailers being sampled. Further, it was hoped that the respondents would express their attitudes toward training and selection in general, and toward the value of personal selling.

Before the selection and training systems could be prepared, it was necessary to learn of the feelings, whether they be positive or negative, which retailers hold with respect to such activities. Such attitudes can explain the absence of training in the retailing segments of the economy, and can also aid a researcher in establishing methods of implementing a training and selection system.

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Accordingly, a judgment sample of 100 retailers believed to be in the population was chosen from the telephone directories within the Dallas Standard Metropolitan Area. Since no directory exists which defines and lists the total number of retailers within the population selected for study, the questionnaire was designed to establish whether a respondent were, indeed, a member of the population.

The definition of the population was established with two primary points of consideration. First, a small-scale retailing store with fewer than twenty paid employees was designated within the apparel and accessory industry because such a classification exists in the presentation of data in the 1967 Census of Business.\(^5\)

Second, within the above classification, a decision was made to include only those with fewer than twenty paid employees who are engaged in selling activities at least half of the time actually spent at work. The questionnaire was then designed in order to allow the respondent to indicate the number of employees currently being paid for their services within the store, and the number of the total actually engaged primarily in sales activity.

Of the judgment sample of 100 retailers who received the questionnaire, 58 responded. On the basis of the restrictions stated above, 54 returned questionnaires were usable.

Question number one in the questionnaire was designed to distinguish the sample items from those respondents who might employ more than twenty employees. All of the data presented in this chapter are data collected from the questionnaires returned by retailers who employ fewer than twenty employees. In order to avoid confusion related to the actual number of usable questionnaires versus the number of responses received, the data related to the first question in the questionnaire is not presented.

The point to be emphasized is that fifty-four responses were deemed usable, and the tables presented in this chapter contain data collected from the fifty-four designated responses.

Question number two was constructed to determine the approximate number of employees employed by the retailing establishments being sampled. However, because many retailing managers responded by stating percentages of the total number of employees in the store (and did not indicate in question number one the number employed) who were engaged in sales activities, the actual number of sales employees could not be determined.
### TABLE II

**FREQUENCY OF USE OF A WRITTEN LIST OF NEEDED QUALITIES IN INTERVIEWING AND HIRING SALES PERSONNEL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Per Cent of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data above reveal the responses concerning the frequency of use of a written list of needed qualities by retailing managers who are interviewing and hiring sales personnel.

The fact that 50 per cent of the respondents stated that they never use a written list of qualities needed in personnel when interviewing and hiring indicates that they tend to rely entirely on the factors which they can recall by memory.

It appears that if those respondents who never use a written list of needed qualities do attempt to use a recall list, then it is a list which they believe they can remember adequately enough to use without ever feeling the need to record it on paper. It also appears that, if those same respondents do use such a recall list, they believe they are well aware of the factors which should be considered.
and can adequately assess an applicant's ability with respect to the qualities without the help of paper and pen. Such claims were, in fact, made by some of the respondents who were later personally interviewed.

Question number four was constructed to determine the significance which retailing managers attach to the efforts which sales personnel might make in increasing sales. "Efforts" was not defined in the questionnaire. It was left to the definition of the respondent as to what constitutes "efforts" in increasing sales. In later interviewing, it was determined that retailers, in many cases, defined "efforts" on the part of sales personnel to be any kind of approach or sales technique involved in personal selling as opposed to "efforts" exerted on the part of management in the form of advertisements or other promotionals.

The responses related to the perceived effects of sales personnel's efforts in increasing sales are recorded in Table III.

<p>| TABLE III |
|---|---|
| THE PERCEIVED EFFECT OF SALES PERSONNEL'S EFFORTS IN INCREASING SALES |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Per Cent of Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Effect</td>
<td>92.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate Effect</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No effect</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It may be surprising to some retailing managers that anyone in business, especially another retailer, could possibly believe that sales personnel's efforts have no effect at all in increasing sales, but 2 per cent of the respondents answered to that effect.

Since none of the establishments sampled was believed to rely on self-service shopping, it would appear logical to assume that personal selling would play a very important role in increasing sales. The merchandise sold in every establishment sampled was apparel and accessory items, considered in a classification of consumer goods, to be shopping goods. Since, in the purchase of a shopping good, the consumer usually lacks full knowledge of pertinent product features before actually beginning to shop for the merchandise, it would seem that the sales person would play a vital role in helping the consumer to learn about the product, and in promoting the sale of the product.

The fact that a total of 8 per cent of the respondents believe the sales personnel's efforts to be either moderate in effect or have no effect at all suggests that the respondents are not realistically assessing the importance of personal selling in their establishments.

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In personal interviewing following tabulation of the data, more than one retailer expressed feelings surrounding a seemingly perplexing situation. In some cases, the retailers employed a particular person who had been working in the store for decades and was known as an employee who consistently irritated customers. However, the retailers were reluctant to take corrective measures because the employee was due to retire in the near future, and the retailers believed it would be unfair to consider firing an employee in that situation. It is interesting that this view was expressed by more than one retailer. Further, they stated that they tried to make themselves believe that the employee had no effect on the sales pattern in the store, either in a positive direction or in a negative direction.

Such a set of circumstances might explain, to some degree, the 8 per cent response toward a moderate effect or no effect category in question four.

The retailers hesitated to take corrective measures even though they stated that the employee in question did appear to irritate customers. Expressing belief that the employee might have a great effect on sales within the store could have been viewed by the retailers as confessing lack of managerial ability. That is, if they did believe
the effect of the particular employee's presence in the store to be great, they would have then felt obligated to either dismiss the employee or provide measures directed toward modifying the behavior of the particular employee. Since they did not feel receptive to attempting to change the behavior pattern, they compensated for the behavior pattern by stating that the employee's behavior in the store had no effect upon the store sales pattern.

It could actually be true in some of the store situations that the efforts of the sales personnel to increase sales had no effect upon sales. However, if that is the case, it is surprising in view of the fact that there exists a high degree of interaction between sales person and customer during a presentation of merchandise of the nature being studied. Because of the high degree of interaction, the probability is great that the sales person would have significant effect upon the sales pattern of the store---either in a positive direction or in a negative direction.

Question five in the survey was designed to identify the characteristics of the training efforts as they now exist in the retailing establishments being sampled. Eleven factors were listed and respondents were asked to check those which best describe their training efforts.
The data which the respondents believe best describe their training efforts are presented in Table IV.

**TABLE IV**

**FACTORS DESCRIBING CURRENT TRAINING EFFORTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Per Cent of Response*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conducted in Classes</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers Salesmanship</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily for New Personnel</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwritten</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involves Continuous Training</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers Nature of the Goods</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers Attitude</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Job</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Total exceeds 100% because of rounding.

Only .6 per cent of the respondents replied that any training efforts are characterized by class meetings. In later personal interviewing it was determined that many of the retailers believe that "classroom" instruction is something restricted to "big corporations." They do not feel comfortable asking employees to come into the store early one day each week for the purpose of receiving instruction related to their jobs.
Concerning classroom instruction, or meeting together as a group, the retailers often replied that it takes so much time it is unacceptable. They do not believe they can financially afford to pay the employees for time spent in training. As a result, the employees are expected to learn from other employees who have more experience in retailing and sales work. Further, the retailers expressed strong belief that the best way to learn how to sell is to watch more experienced sales personnel at work in the selling situation. "Experience" was emphasized again and again in the personal interviews as the most valuable asset of the sales person. The assumption here is that all experience is good experience, which, of course, is not necessarily true.

Eleven per cent of the respondents replied that their training efforts are characterized by instruction in salesmanship. It is surprising that any effort to teach sales personnel to sell would not include instruction in salesmanship. In fact, retailers often expressed amazement in the personal interviews that any manager in retailing would not constantly emphasize salesmanship, not only in training, but also in day-to-day sales operations.
One retailer personally interviewed expressed his conviction that the best way to teach salesmanship is to compensate sales personnel by the straight commission plan. Thus, "if they don't sell, they don't eat." In the store of the respondent who expressed this position, sales personnel are given little instruction but "a lot of correction." The respondent believed that customers enjoy a high-pressure sales technique and cannot envision a situation in which customers might be offended by such tactics. As a result, he encourages the sales personnel to apply as much pressure as necessary in order to make a sale. "Pressure" and "salesmanship" are synonymous in the mind of that retailer.

More than 3 per cent of the respondents conduct training efforts primarily for new personnel. Often, in lengthy letters of response returned with the questionnaire and in personal interviews, retailers expressed the belief that training should be only for new employees. They believe that employees who have been working in the store for a considerable length of time should be capable of training themselves. Such employees are thought to be skilled in the art of selling and should be responsible for maintaining their skills at a high level.
It is interesting to note that not one of the respondents pointed out his use of a written training program. In the personal interviews, an attempt was made to determine whether any part of the training program were written, and if so, what part. Usually retailers stated that they conduct their training programs from the material stored in their heads. "Occasionally" they would write down ideas related to material they wanted to cover in their programs, but the notes "usually got lost on my desk" and, as a result, little use was made of written material. When asked whether use was made of material received from outside sources such as the Retail Merchants Association, most of the retailers replied that they never had the time to read the materials to discover what topics were included in them. Usually, the retailers believed the information received from outside sources to be of value in teaching sales personnel better ways of performing their duties, but they believed they did not have the time necessary to help the employees learn the material.

When asked whether any outline were made of a general list of activities the employees should be able to perform after having received sales training, the retailers most often replied that such an outline was not necessary.
"Anyone who has ever sold knows what selling involves," was expressed frequently in the interviews.

Ten per cent of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated the use of unwritten material in their training efforts. It would appear that, in most cases, this means information passed by word-of-mouth. When asked in the interviews, not one retailer indicated that employees were ever asked to keep written notes of especially effective sales techniques. It was assumed that sales personnel would eventually discover an effective sales technique and remember it.

One would assume that a training program is either written or it is not. Yet, of the 22 per cent who indicated the presence of any on-the-job training, none indicated the presence of written material, and only 10 per cent indicated the presence of unwritten material. It cannot be precisely determined what alternatives are left in the minds of the respondents. One possible explanation is that on-the-job training is considered by the respondents to be something distinct and completely different from a written training program or an unwritten training program.

In the personal interviews, many retailers stated that "written" and "unwritten" are not descriptive of their
efforts. Yet, they could not explain their feelings with words descriptive of their programs.

More than 1 per cent of the respondents considered their training efforts to be formal. When asked in the interviews what was meant by formal, several retailers believed that it would be necessary to structure the training program for a definite time each week and have it conducted by someone outside the establishment. Those respondents who consider their training efforts to be formal did not identify themselves. "Formal" was left to the definition of the respondent and it can only be speculated that it is a regularly-scheduled, structured program, covering a list of carefully-selected topics.

Seventeen per cent of the respondents to the questionnaire emphasized continuous training in their training efforts. Several retailers, in explanatory letters returned with the questionnaires, stated that the selling process can never be completely learned. The learning of good sales techniques must continue daily, and efforts must be made by the sales personnel and management to keep employees alert to new techniques and sufficiently skilled to use those techniques within the daily store operations.
Fifteen per cent of the respondents indicated that they do include instruction concerning the nature of the goods being sold in their training efforts. Often, it was pointed out, printed brochures distributed by manufacturers and trade associations were valuable in this respect. It is interesting that many retailers emphasized their use of these brochures, yet none of the retailers sampled by the questionnaire indicated the use of written material in their training efforts.

Retailers often expressed the value which a salesman representing a manufacturer can have in spending several minutes with the sales personnel and offering them information about the nature of the goods which he distributes.

More than 18 per cent of the respondents indicated that they attempt to teach the importance of proper attitude in the selling situation.

In the interviews, many retailers expressed their feelings of hopelessness related to helping employees improve their attitudes in the selling situation. Retailers often believed that if, in the selection process, they cannot locate an applicant with what appears to be the "right" attitude for sales work, then it is almost impossible later on to attempt to help an employee
improve his attitude. None of the retailers in this category had ever sought outside help to improve attitudes within the store. It appears valid to question whether the attitude of an employee can be improved when he is working with a manager whose own attitude could stand improvement.

Five per cent of the respondents characterize their training efforts as casual. In the interviews, many retailers indicated the use of brochures, the use of on-the-job training, and even group instruction, yet still preferred to call it casual. The structure of a training program was present in some cases, yet there was hesitancy on the parts of the managers to imply that the program might be formal. "Formal" appeared to be an undesirable characteristic to associate with the training efforts of a small-scale retailing manager. The retailers often expressed desire to make their efforts formal, if they could continue to call them casual.

Twenty-two per cent of the respondents indicated the presence of on-the-job training in their establishments. As was pointed out earlier, none of these efforts was considered by the retailers to be a written program.

This would appear to mean that problems and possible solutions have not been recorded on paper, and that little preventive training exists for the employees. Further, it
implies that problem situations are dealt with as they arise in the establishments.

If the manager is constantly inside the store to deal with problem situations and to help the sales personnel cope with unusual circumstances, then, perhaps by the manager's standards, all is fine. However, if the sales personnel have not been trained to cope with unusual situations with their own abilities, and the manager is not always inside the store to control the situation, then what is the alternative for the sales personnel?

Where there is an absence of written information to serve as reference for the sales personnel, what right does the manager really have to expect effective performance from the sales personnel? There were few answers to this question in the personal interviews. The most-often given answer was, "I'll always be in the store," and the managers actually believed this to be true.

While many of the retailers interviewed agreed that failure to provide training for sales personnel is failure to provide an employee with necessary tools to do a job, most of them believed that, somehow, employees were becoming effective to perform at an acceptable level without being trained. The greatest emphasis was upon experience, as an
alternative to training. Yet, few retailers agreed that all experience is good experience. At times, retailers admitted, considerable time was spent trying to help an employee discard poor sales techniques. At times, the retailers being interviewed appeared to believe in the value of training, yet, at the same time, to be unable to accept the need for it in their own store situations. Many of them believed that employees in other stores probably did need training but the employees in their own store situations did not.

Question number six was designed to identify the reaction of the respondents to the idea of paying someone to come into the store to conduct an organized training program. Twelve factors were listed and respondents were asked to check as many as necessary to describe their reactions to the idea. The data gathered from the responses to question number six are presented in Table V.

Of the total number of responses to question number six, the two largest percentages are those related to expense and necessity. More than 19 per cent indicated concern for expense of the training program, and more than 28 per cent believed that such a program was not really necessary. On the basis of the responses, it appears that fewer retailers in the sample are concerned with the cost than with the necessity. That is, there is greater emphasis upon the
lack of need for training than there is upon the cost for it.

TABLE V
FACTORS DESCRIBING AN OUTSIDE-CONDUCTED TRAINING PROGRAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Per Cent of Response*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Based on 54 Responses)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Expensive</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessary to Increase Sales.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worth the Time Involved.</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Academic</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical and Worthwhile</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatively Inexpensive</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed Primarily for New Personnel</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complicated</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Really Necessary</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to Conduct</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too Time Consuming</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Idea, Probably</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The total exceeds 100% because of rounding.

During the personal interviewing, it was discovered that none of the retailers had ever obtained estimates for costs of conducting an organized training program within their stores. While they usually believed the cost to be great, they had never actually attempted to learn the costs of such a program, in most cases. In those instances where retailers had actually wondered about the costs of such programs, they had never obtained cost information because they replied that they had no idea of where to go to get
such estimates. Many replied that they had never heard of any individual or company which would come into the store to conduct a training program. In addition, many had never even heard of such a program being conducted and wondered how a company providing such a service promoted its service among small-scale retailers.

Such a series of responses might make one wonder less at the lack of training in the population being studied. Retailers in the sample who were later personally interviewed replied that they might consider the benefits of receiving such training if they could obtain accurate data related to its cost, duration, and effects. The answers raise a question concerning the effectiveness of individuals or companies who do offer a training service. If retailers are generally unaware of such a service, it is no wonder that they do not take advantage of it. Yet, it is unlikely that every retailer who would be made aware of such a service would take advantage of it.

Almost 3 per cent of the respondents agreed that such a program is necessary to increase sales and more than 5 per cent believed such a program to be worth the time involved. During the interviews, it was learned that one difficulty in scheduling training sessions or any kind of meeting for
sales personnel in retailing is that there is no good time to meet. Managers usually are reluctant to spend any portion of the store operation day in training sessions, it was learned, and they are reluctant to ask employees to come early or stay late, even when they are willing to pay employees for time spent in training. Many times, retailers stated that because of staggered hours and part-time employees, it would be almost impossible to have all of the employees meet together at one time on any day of the week. In general, many of them agreed that training is worth the time involved but did not express that view in their responses to the questionnaire because the time involved is impossible to find.

Nine per cent of the respondents to the questionnaire believed that a training program such as the one described would be too academic. It was often pointed out that practices and techniques taught by someone outside the organization would probably have limited value to the particular store operations in question. "Book instruction" was believed to be something unrelated to practical application. In written correspondence returned with the questionnaire, one retailer stated that his sales personnel would object strongly to having an outsider conduct such a program.
Nine per cent of the respondents indicated that such a training program would be practical and worthwhile, and more than 1 per cent believed it to be relatively inexpensive. Almost 4 per cent believed it to be complicated and none of the respondents believed it would be easy to conduct.

The reactions expressed above are interesting to note because in the personal interviews, not one retailer indicated that he had ever actually witnessed such a training program in operation. The responses appear to be feelings developed by the respondents on the basis of information passed on to them by other persons concerning the nature of an outside-conducted training program.

More than 2 per cent of the respondents replied that such a program would be needed primarily for new personnel, while more than 28 per cent believed such a program was not really necessary at all.

Nine per cent of the respondents were concerned that too much time would be consumed in such a program. As was pointed out earlier, retailers expressed often in the personal interviews that finding time to assign to training efforts is a significant problem in retailing. Since the population being studied consists of managers who are involved in small-scale retailing organizations, it is easy
to understand the concern expressed by those managers who operate their stores on a limited budget. Many of them do not believe they have the necessary financial strength to hire sales personnel and pay them an established salary while also financing a training program. They do not believe they can afford to pay for the time which would be absorbed into such a program.

More than 10 per cent of the respondents believed such a program would probably be a good idea. In the interviews, many retailers expressed a felt need for a training program and thought the benefit might be significant in their own store operations. Yet, they did not believe they could arrange the necessary time, and they were concerned about the cost of buying such services.

More than once, in written correspondence returned with the questionnaire, and in personal interviews, retailers stated, "We are too small" to even consider such a program. This statement suggests that there is a magic point in the minds of these retailers at which a store becomes large enough to need and benefit from training services. Before that point is reached, it would appear that such services are not really necessary.

In question number seven, the respondents to the questionnaire were asked to evaluate the quality of personal
selling in their stores. The data which describes the managers' evaluation of their sales personnel is presented in Table VI.

**TABLE VI**

MANAGERS' EVALUATION OF QUALITY OF CURRENT PERSONAL SELLING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Per Cent of Response (Based on 54 Responses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of more than 82 per cent of the respondents believed the quality of their sales personnel's performance to be better than average. In the personal interviews, many retailers made claims about what a "great job" their sales personnel are doing in the store. Such claims made with great enthusiasm could cause an interviewer to wonder whether confessed doubts about sales personnel performance might cause the confessor to have doubts about his own performance.

Even though almost 18 per cent of the respondents assessed the quality of their sales personnel performance to be average or below average, no such statements were acknowledged in the personal interviews. When asked whether complaints
were ever filed about performance of the sales personnel, a frequent answer from the retailers was, "Everyone can have a bad day."

It appears that there is some reluctance on the part of the retailers to acknowledge lower-than-great performance on the part of their sales personnel when they can be identified as having made the acknowledgement.

Cross-analysis of the data in the various tables provides some interesting comparisons. Of those 35 per cent of the respondents who rated the quality of current personnel selling in their individual stores to be excellent, every one replied that efforts of sales personnel to increase sales have a great effect in selling situations. Since, in order of presentation, the question related to sales personnel's efforts to increase sales appeared before the question related to quality of personal selling in the store, there may be some cause-effect relationship between answers to the two questions.

That is, those respondents who indicated that they believe the sales personnel's efforts are a very important factor in increasing sales might have felt committed to honor their own managerial abilities by assessing their own personnel performance as excellent. However, there is the
possibility that they sincerely believe their personnel do exhibit excellent performance in the selling situation.

Of the more than 17 per cent of the respondents who rated their personnel performance to be average or below average, every respondent except one indicated the effect of sales personnel's efforts in the selling situation to be great. It appears that this group does believe that sales personnel can greatly affect the volume of sales and the sales pattern in an individual store, and they further perceive the performance of their own personnel to be either average or below.

Within this group of respondents who rated their own personnel performance to be either average or below, three respondents noted in returned written correspondence that they had never actually assessed their personnel with respect to the effect they could have upon sales. One retailer, in particular, stated that he realized for the first time in his store's history that his sales personnel could be performing better than they were and the primary question in his mind was what to do about the situation.

Cross-analysis of data from three tables is presented below to reveal a possible contradiction in the pattern of responses. As shown in Table VII, over 17 per cent of the
First, many small-scale retailers included in the study have never made an organized evaluation of the quality of the sales efforts of their sales personnel nor the effect which those efforts can have upon the sales patterns in their stores. In responding to a question concerning effect of sales personnel's efforts, 92 per cent indicated that such an effect would be great. That is, they admit the possible effect which a sales person can have upon the volume of sales within the store.

Second, of the fifty-four usable responses, not one revealed data that any of the retailers sampled uses a written statement of needed qualities when interviewing and hiring sales personnel. Interviewing and hiring appear to be conducted in a nonorganized manner and the retailers sampled tend to rely on memory to help them determine needed qualities for the person being considered.

Third, most of the retailers whose responses were usable were unfamiliar with training programs and not one had actually even witnessed one in process. In spite of this, the retailers have decided opinions that to conduct such a program would be too expensive, too time consuming, and not really necessary. In addition, none of the respondents indicated that such a program would be easy to conduct.
Fourth, less than one fourth of the respondents conduct on-the-job training, and none of the respondents indicated the presence of a written training program. The retailers seemed generally unaware of the effect which a system of selection and human resource development can have. There was concern and hesitation to become involved in an outside-conducted program because some of the retailers perceive their operations to be too small to warrant such an investment.

Fifth, those retailers who seemed receptive to the idea of engaging their sales personnel in training programs (with some reservations) were unaware of firms or individuals who might provide such services. They were also unaware of sources of information related to buying such services.
Selection is defined as "the function of choosing workers for the job openings after considering all available candidates."\(^1\) The selection of an adequate working force is an important function in the management process of any kind of business enterprise. Because of a high degree of personal interaction between the sales person and the customer in the retailing process, the selection function becomes even more important.\(^2\)

It is true that the development of self-service organizations within the retailing structure has, in some cases, decreased the emphasis upon the selection function. However, in the buying and selling of shopping goods at the retail level, the sales person is the source of information about the merchandise. Since the customer is shopping to collect information about the merchandise before making a decision to buy, the job of the sales person becomes


\[^2\text{Ibid.}\]
significant. As a result, the decisions made at the hiring stage are important for the retailing manager who must rely upon the sales personnel to help him increase his sales volume.3

High labor turnover, both among full-time and part-time employees in retailing, represents a cause of concern for the retailer. The expense of finding, selecting, and training new employees is a constant for the retailer, not in terms of dollars, but in terms of the attention which must be directed toward the activity. Indeed, the expense involved is ever-increasing, and not constant.4 As a result, there is increased attention toward the selection function as a method of improving decisions made at the hiring stage. It is possible to reduce turnover among employees, thereby reducing the cost and time attributed to the selection process, by carefully choosing personnel who are not highly likely to terminate employment after a short time. However, an organized program of selection must be developed for the manager to use.

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3 For a discussion of the classification of consumer goods and the importance of providing information about the merchandise, see William J. Stanton, Fundamentals of Marketing, pp. 131-132.

By carefully determining the needed qualities which an employee should exhibit in order to perform the job well, the manager can more objectively choose personnel for the positions available. If the employees chosen are well-suited to the jobs to be performed, they are more likely to work longer periods of time without terminating their employment.\(^5\)

When employee turnover is reduced, employees have more time and experience within the store operation to increase their effectiveness and improve their selling skills. This allows time for the retailer and the employees to coordinate their efforts to achieve maximum employee efficiency.

In addition to directing attention toward improving the selection process as a means of improving job performance and reducing employee turnover, managers can expect, in the future, to find legal implications within the structure of the selection process in use in their store operations. Selection of employees will become even more important in the future as job-security provisions of collective agreements limit the freedom of employers to release employees.\(^6\) This means that under many current and future employment agreements, an employer will be strongly committed to the

\(^5\)Ibid.

continued employment of an employee who has successfully completed a probationary period. In such cases, the employee can be discharged only for serious cause and cannot be released and replaced simply because a more qualified candidate for the position appears.  

One might imagine that small retailing establishments are, for the most part, immune to such agreements because unionism has not developed to a significant degree in such enterprises. However, even before 1940, leaders of union locals were operating extensively in organizing retail sales personnel throughout the United States.  

Encouraged by favorable legislation, protected by friendly labor boards, and impelled by zealous organizers, collective bargaining has made astounding headway. . . . at the present time, every type of rank-and-file retail worker has been approached by organizers. No retail institution, regardless of its nature, size or location, is now immune from this type of employee participation.  

For the above stated reasons, the selection function deserves attention from the retailing manager who must also perform the duties of a personnel manager.


9Ibid.
Within a system of selection and human resource development for small retailing establishments, the importance of establishing selection policy is equally important as is the selection function.

The immediate success of a retail store such as the type being studied is dependent upon many factors. The merchandise available in the store is but one of the variables which retailing managers control. The employees who represent the store generally reflect information to the customers about the store which is as significant to the customer, if not more significant, as is the information related to the merchandise.

Retailers very often have established policies concerning the merchandise being sold, but seldom have selection policies for sales personnel who are to sell the merchandise. Sales personnel, just like merchandise, are an investment which should pay immediate dividends and which, unlike merchandise, should increase in value with continued time.

As a result, policy for the selection process is important. By establishing such policy, the retailer can provide definite guidelines for selecting sales personnel which are as definite and as appropriate to the store's character as is its merchandising policy.
Factors which can help the retailer determine the selection policy are (1) the type of store in question, (2) local standards of retail service, and (3) the availability of applicants.

On the basis of consideration for the three factors listed above, the retailer can establish policy concerning general areas such as (1) personality requirements of the sales personnel, (2) education and experience required, (3) sources of applicants to be used, (4) selection procedure to be observed, and (5) other relevant areas.\(^{10}\)

In establishing and executing a selection policy, the retailer can provide for a minimum service standard to be observed in the store operations. Such a service standard can be maintained if minimum service requirements are established for employees, and if those minimum service requirements are not allowed to fall below the store's minimum service standards.

The retailer can also provide for compensation of the employees on a level similar to that paid by managers operating similar types of establishments in the area.

\(^{10}\)For a discussion of selection policy, see National Retail Merchants Association, *The Retail Personnel Primer* (New York, 1940), p. 3.
He can also provide for various ways to include fringe benefits in his employment program in order to avoid encouraging employees to increase their compensation by other methods such as internal theft.11

In establishing a selection policy, the retailer can formulate considerations for hiring persons who might be overqualified for the position to be filled. In the population being studied, most selling positions are not rungs in a promotion ladder, and employees who are overqualified can usually be expected to terminate their employment in order to search for a more self-actualizing job. The retailer can attempt to avoid the employee turnover involved in hiring overqualified persons by establishing a sound selection policy and executing it.

Also, the retailer can plan such a policy to exist with consideration for external conditions, such as a scarce labor market. He can plan to be prepared to revise his selection standards when such external factors cause a change in the labor market.

When a retailer can establish an effective selection policy which meets his own personnel needs, he can rely upon it for use as a tool in his retail management process.\textsuperscript{12}

Forecasting Personnel Requirements

Forecasting is predicting events which will occur at some future time.\textsuperscript{13} Accurate forecasting offers the retailing manager the advantage of planning because greater effectiveness can be achieved when replacement and new position requirements can be anticipated in advance and organized steps are taken to fill those requirements on schedule.

Forecasting of personnel requirements can usually be conducted more readily in a large well-established organization than in a smaller or newly-established store. A manager with many years of experience in observing fluctuations in sales, and the resulting necessary fluctuations in personnel, usually has a larger fund of data available upon which to base predictions than does a manager without such experience.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Yoder, Personnel Principles and Policies, pp. 72-73.

\textsuperscript{13} John E. Freund and Frank J. Williams, Dictionary Outline of Basic Statistics (New York, 1966), p. 43.

\textsuperscript{14} Stone and Kendall, Effective Personnel Selection Procedures, p. 34.
At the same time, failure to utilize such data and failure to plan ahead can be more disastrous for the manager of a large store, where fluctuations may be great, than for the manager of a small store, where fluctuations may be small.

The principles are the same for organizations of all sizes. Orderly replacement can be accomplished best through careful and realistic forecasting of needs, and through intelligent planning for meeting future requirements.

It is not entirely necessary that a manager know his personnel needs five years hence in order to plan for personnel management during the next year of operation. In fact, a personnel system can often operate more effectively if concentration is directed toward the short run.

In planning for the next year's operations, most retailing managers can engage in effective personnel planning by analyzing sales patterns in either the individual store, or in the industry.

And in the planning process for the next year of operations, the manager can usually forecast his personnel requirements by (1) estimating the jobs in the store during the cycle of the year, (2) estimating manpower requirements in total based upon the above job estimate, (3) auditing the
present personnel resources in the store, (4) forecasting changes which will occur in the present work force, and (5) developing a manpower plan.\textsuperscript{15}

**Estimating the Jobs in the Store During the Cycle of the Year**

It is true that a change in the types or methods of distributing goods and services may be considered to be technological change which would affect the level of manpower needs or the number of jobs to be performed in an organization within a specified period of time.\textsuperscript{16}

However, in the apparel and accessory industry, self-service, as an example of such a change, is not likely to dominate selling techniques, and other technological changes which would affect the selling process at the retail level of distribution are expected to be slight. Personal service is of prime importance. This situation is not expected to change drastically in the future.


If this assumption is true, then the number of jobs to be performed in the store during the year would be in proportion to the volume of sales. Because the population being studied is primarily sales personnel, their jobs would increase or decrease with proportional changes in sales volume. Therefore, predictions could be made by the retailer regarding the number of jobs to be performed during the course of the year, if predictions could be made concerning the sales volume during the same period.

When a retailer can use his own sales data for the past several such periods as a basis, he can usually establish a trend of sales. Assuming the variable factors which would influence sales to be the same, he could make predictions into the future.\(^\text{17}\)

When a retailer has limited information on past sales, either because of inadequate record keeping, or because of a short history of sales, data for the industry can often be successfully used. Barring major fluctuations, data for the industry will usually represent the sales pattern for individual stores. Data for the year, 1971, are used here.

\(^{17}\) An explanation of this method of predicting sales can be found in Kyohei Sasaki, *Statistics for Modern Business Decision Making* (Belmont, California, 1968), Chapter 21.
to explain how industry data relates to the individual store sales pattern. Monthly sales in the apparel and accessory industry is presented in Table VII.

**TABLE VII**

MONTHLY SALES IN THE APPAREL AND ACCESSORY INDUSTRY: 1971*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Men's and Boys' Wear Stores (000,000)</th>
<th>Women's Apparel, Accessory Stores (000,000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>$347</td>
<td>$532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>663</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>1,160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


While there will be variations in sales from one retail establishment in the population to another in the population, valid assumptions can be made concerning the peak months and the trough months. Variations in such variables as advertising and other promotionals will affect the pattern in terms of real dollars of sales. Yet, those
factors can be considered by the individual managers and their effect can be included in the process of predicting sales. That is, a manager who, in the past, has noted that a specific type of promotional campaign has affected his sales pattern during a given period by 10 per cent, can consider that data in predicting his sales on the basis of industry data. He can consider the pattern for the industry and hope that the 10 per cent effect will hold true under similar circumstances. This means that he can anticipate that because of an expected advertising campaign during a specific month, his sales volume will be about 10 per cent above the industry-relevant figure for his store.

On the basis of industry data, the manager can attempt to establish some type of ratio or relationship between the number of jobs and the sales volume. 18

In retailing, it is usually wise to establish a sales/manpower ratio for the time period in which the retailer is currently operating. If the retailer has a sales figure of $3,000 during the month of March of 1971 and the industry figure for that same time period is approximately $300,000,000, he can record those figures together with the fact that he

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employs during that time three sales persons. These figures are, of course, easy to work with and that is the reason they are used.

The ratio of the individual store sales to industry sales is $3,000/$300,000,000, or 1/100,000. This is a ratio which the retailer can use in future months to determine how closely his own sales pattern follows that of the industry. After he determines the validity of the ratio for his own store operations, he can use the ratio and necessary modifications to predict his own sales pattern on the basis of industry predictions.

Once his store sales have been predicted, he can determine the implications for the number of jobs to be performed in his store. If, during the month of March mentioned above, his sales/manpower ratio was 3,000/3, or a volume of $1,000 average per each sales person employed, he can use his personal observations to record whether that was a practical number of employees for the store during that time, and modify the ratio for prediction purposes. This means that his ratio for that month of March might have been $1,000 average sales per employee. However, because he was in the store during that time, he was in the position to observe that that particular volume of sales
could have been made by two employees. The time in the store when the sales personnel were idle was great, and because of this, perhaps the third employee was not necessary.

As a result, a modified sales/manpower ratio for the store in question would be $1,500/1, or an average sales of $1,500 per employee.

On the basis of these computations, the retailer can usually predict the number of sales jobs to be performed during an operating figure. If industry sales for a particular month are expected to be $500,000,000, then, on the basis of the store sales to industry sales ratio mentioned above, store sales could be expected to approximate $5,000. Further, on the basis of the sales/manpower ratio discussed above, individual jobs in the store could be expected to be sufficient to employ three full-time employees, and perhaps, one part-time employee.

**Estimating Manpower Requirements in Total**

Since it is difficult to estimate the jobs to be performed with respect to retail sales without estimating the manpower requirements also, this section does overlap the preceding section dealing with the number of jobs to be performed. The consideration which deserves attention here is that of estimating the level of employment in supporting
services. Although this study deals with sales personnel, it is important to point out the changes which will occur in the level of employment of supporting service personnel when the sales pattern of the store changes.

As there are increases in sales volume, there might be an increased need for personnel in the stock room or in the alterations room. During the Christmas season, additional personnel might be needed for giftwrapping services.

The decision which a retailer makes with respect to the total manpower requirements is affected by his intention to have sales personnel perform such supporting services as giftwrapping, alterations, or stock counting. If sales personnel are expected to perform those services, then a manpower estimate will be affected by an increase in the level needed.

If during a month of December in a given year, sales in a specific store are predicted to be $12,000, then, on the basis of the sales/manpower ratio discussed, the employment level would approximate eight persons in sales. However, if the manager decides that all employees will be expected to perform giftwrapping services, then perhaps the manpower requirements will be for nine or ten persons instead of only eight. This is because each giftwrap completed requires time which is taken away from the sales floor. In reality, when ten persons are working in the store, only eight may be on
the sales floor at any given time because two will usually be engaged in giftwrapping services.

The retailer must learn to temper his decisions concerning manpower requirements with good judgement and not rely totally on the industry average, or his own past sales average for a given period. His decisions concerning duties to be performed can alter the manpower requirements and such a situation must be recognized and provided for.

After total manpower requirements have been estimated, the retailer can assess his present labor resources within the store.

**Auditing Current Personnel Resources**

The process of auditing current personnel resources calls for the appraisal of personnel by the manager. He must evaluate their performance of duties, the skills which they possess, the interest which they exhibit in upgrading their skills, their attitude on the job, and other factors which he considers to be positive or negative for his own store needs.

The manager, in his appraisal process, can determine the degree to which his current personnel resources were responsible for the sales volume achieved during the past year. There is no absolute prescription for doing this. The judgment of their effect is subjective, and although it cannot usually be quantified, its existence is very real.
If the manager believes that his sales volume for the past year was negatively affected by the presence of one particular sales person, then he must consider that factor in auditing or assessing his personnel resources.

**Forecasting Personnel Changes**

Determining plans which employees might have concerning their decisions to return to college, to change employers, or to reduce the number of hours they are available for work during the week, is often difficult for the employer.

It is important for the retailer who keeps his store open until late hours to know whether any of his sales personnel plan to enroll in evening classes during the coming time period. Employees often do not make decisions to alter their hours available for work until shortly before the change is made. As a result, the retailer cannot always know of coming changes in personnel available.

One approach the retailer can take in forecasting personnel changes is that of discussing with the employees their anticipated changes in schedules for the coming time period. He can explain to them that his decision to choose new employees for specific hours of the day or days of the week would depend upon their decisions, as current employees, to be out of the store during those time period.
Employees who are considering changing place of employment are usually reluctant to reveal their plans until the time comes to notify their current employer of a decision to leave. For that reason, it is almost impossible for the retailer to know whether employees will be leaving during the coming time period. If a military or job transfer of the husband is involved, the change is usually more predictable.

In the absence of indications that any employee will be leaving the store, the retailer can assume that all employees will remain. His past relationships with employees may provide data concerning employee turnover. If that is the case, and if current conditions are similar to those which existed in the past, those turnover figures can be used as a basis for predicting personnel changes. If such past conditions were that replacement of three employees was necessary for a one year period, then the retailer has the advantage of being aware of the turnover rate. Only by being aware of the rate of turnover can the retailer provide to replace those employees with other qualified sales personnel.
Developing a Manpower Plan

At this point, the retailer will have data before him concerning the number of jobs to be performed in a future period, the quality of his current sales personnel, expected changes in his personnel, and the total manpower requirements necessary to maintain a specific sales volume in a future time period.

In order to determine how many sales persons he should plan to hire, the retailer can subtract the number in the current work force from the number which is required to reach a greater sales level in the future, and add to that figure the number of persons which he expects to leave his employ before or during that time period.

If the retailer plans to reach a sales level which will require seven sales persons, and now has only four, he should plant to increase his sales force by three persons. Also, if one of his sales persons plans to return to school, and has already indicated such plans, the retailer can plan to increase the number of persons to be hired by one.

Because a manpower plan should have qualitative considerations as well as quantitative considerations, the retail can include in his plan provisions for choosing persons with specific skills. His audit or assessment of
present personnel can provide a basis for choosing his present personnel in the future. If, for example, he has not had a sales person available for night work who had a high degree of skill at making complementary sales, he can attempt to correct that in the future by choosing a person who appears to have such skills. If he has not had a sales person who was particularly adept at serving teenaged customers, he can provide for choosing such an employee in the future.

The manpower plan, in the final form, rests upon the retailer's honest analysis of his employees, his future sales, and the skills which he needs to achieve a hoped-for sales volume. The question concerning specific needed qualities in employees is ultimately determined by the manager, regardless of the time which he devotes to such an analysis. By carefully determining the nature of his store in the present and in the future, the retailer can simplify his selection procedure and, at the same time, select more effective employees.

Criteria for Selection

Unfortunately, for both the customer and the retailing manager, one of the most severe problems
among small businessmen today is the lack of able, trained employees. 19

Increased retail competition, decreased profits, a consumerism move at the retail level, and a heightened sensitivity on both sides of the sales counter concerning human relations are all important factors which the retailer must be aware of in choosing employees. 20 The manager's function of choosing a force of diligent and qualified workers is critical. 21

Many retailers are aware of their role in the selection process. They would like to be able to identify those applicants with ability and promise. And they would like to know how to determine which applicants have the potential to be successful. This, indeed, is the purpose of the selection process. 22

To personnel managers in manufacturing companies, the selection process might appear uncomplicated. However, what


many people do not realize is that the selection process in retailing has a unique personality. A prerequisite for effective selection is an accurate determination of the skills, abilities, aptitudes and personalities needed by an applicant to be successful in a sales position in retailing.

Determining the needed qualifications is often difficult for the retailer because criteria for success on the job is debatable. Sales volume has been used in the past as a measure of success on the job, yet several salespersons can have the same sales volume for a particular time period and vary markedly in their skills and personal characteristics. Willingness to perform other functions, such as sales-supporting activities, is important as a qualification for a sales person in retailing. Yet, willingness to perform those activities cannot be quantified and often cannot be related to sales volume of a particular employee. On the other hand, a sales person who achieves a high sales volume may be the source of interpersonal conflict among the other sales personnel. Still another high-volume sales person may be unwilling to work late hours.

Because of the number of important factors which are not related directly to sales achieved by a particular sales
person, sales volume alone cannot be used as the criterion for selection or success on the job.

**Job Analysis**

Even though it is difficult for the retailer to determine criteria for selection of sales personnel, he can still develop a sound selection program. A job analysis, or a study of a job to determine what duties are performed, what responsibilities and organizational relationships are involved, and what worker characteristics are required, can provide a retailer with a valuable selection tool. By utilizing job analysis, the retailer can describe and define the distinctions among various jobs which exist within the structure of his own store.

Job analysis can be thought of as a procedure for obtaining pertinent job information. The information is usually recorded in two forms to make a permanent record. One form is called a job description and the other is called a job specification.

At times, these two terms are used to mean the same idea. However, it is more practical for purposes of this study to differentiate between their meanings. The term

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"job description" is used here to refer to a summarized and organized statement containing the name of the jobs, its location, the operations, duties, and responsibilities involved, working conditions, and, in some cases, wages and hours. Job descriptions can differ greatly from company to company with respect to the amount of detail included. The "job specification" is used to specify the qualifications which workers must have to be selected for the job, including mental characteristics, physical characteristics, and any special skills and knowledge necessary.²⁴

The description of the job is considered in most instances to be an objective listing of the relevant factors. The specifications for the worker are considered to be value judgements.²⁵ It is true that the specification for human qualities is actually derived from the description by translating the job activities and requirements into particular skills and abilities. But, to a certain extent, the level of ability demanded is dependent upon management policy and standards. It is understandable that two managers could take the same job description and, from it,


²⁵Dale S. Beach, Personnel: The Management of People
construct two completely different job specifications. Because the job specification is, to a certain degree, a value judgement, each retailer can attempt to construct job specifications which are most relevant for his own particular store situation.

Following is a discussion of the job description, the job specification, and methods of implementing them in the retailing environment. As will be pointed out, each one can be of value to the retailer who wishes to avoid a great deal of formality in his selection process. That is, in large measure, their value for the small retailer.

Job Description

Before selecting an applicant to fill a sales position, a retailing manager should be able to describe the types of duties to be performed, the kind of information involved, specific skills needed, and the experience necessary to allow the applicant to manage the job.26

In order to develop a job description, a retailer can observe his own store activities, and revise them according to the degree to which they help him reach his objectives.

A retailing manager who has for his objectives the general concept of maximizing profits and minimizing losses might observe that, in order to reach his objectives, he must reduce theft, provide limited services such as alterations and giftwrap, design display windows, construct aisle display, and engage in a number of other activities. In the course of analyzing how he is to reach his objectives, he also must be aware of the individual activities which are to be performed in the total store environment.

After having defined the total group of activities to be performed, the manager can group activities to be assigned to individual sales persons according to the complementary or similar nature of the activities. This process provides job descriptions for the individual sales persons.

A guiding definition of a "sales person" appears in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles for managers who seek a point of departure in constructing their own such definitions.

Displays, describes, and sells to individuals, merchandise, such as hardware, furniture, and garments, utilizing general knowledge of the characteristics, quality, and merit of items sold. Sells merchandise from sales floor. Ascertains make, type, and quality of merchandise desired by customer. Displays merchandise and suggests selection-
to customer. Emphasizes selling point of article, such as quality, style, and utility. Prepares sales slip or sales contract. Receives payment or obtains credit authorization. Places new merchandise on display. Prepares inventory or stock. May requisition merchandise from stockroom.27

Since the population being studied in this paper is concerned with sales personnel in small apparel and accessories stores, a more narrow definition is needed.

Two job definitions relevant to this study are those classified in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles as "Sales person, Women's Garments," and "Sales person, Men's and Boy's Clothing."28

A sales person of women's garments is defined as an employee who

Sells women's clothing, such as coats, suits, formal gowns, and dresses, performing duties described under "sales person." Advises customers as to current fashion and recommends style of garment to suit age and figure. Answers questions regarding weave, washability, durability, or color fastness of various fabrics. Suggests types of garments for all occasions. May make repairs or alterations.

A sales persons of men's and boys' clothing is defined as an employee who


28Ibid., pp. 620-621.
Sells men's and boys' outer garments, such as suits, trousers, and coats, performing duties as described under "sales person." Advises customers of prevailing types and suitability of garments. Answers questions relative to texture of design of garment. Selects standard-sized garments nearest to customer's measurements. May mark garment for alterations. May advise customer concerning attire for various social functions.

Although the word "definition" is used in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, the descriptive data serves the same purpose as does the job description. The word "definition" is a different word to introduce the same information which a job description would. This should not confuse the reader. Since "definition" is the term used in the source, it is also used in this study. However, it is intended to mean job description in this study.

When a manager discovers that the sales positions in his store involve activities in addition to the ones listed in the job descriptions cited above, he can add those activities to the list. When one employee is to serve as assistant manager and sales person, duties such as opening and closing the building at appointed hours can also be added to the list.

Such a basic job description can be easily altered to meet the needs of any retailer. Because of this, the manager can modify a basic job description for a sales
person to meet his needs, and thereby construct a tailor-made job description.

Retailers can also further define their own needs in terms of job descriptions by asking their sales personnel to write down their individual duties as they perceive them.29

The activities noted by employees will not only serve as a starting point for formation of a job description, but they can also help the manager to understand how to modify a basic job description. Further, the manager has the advantage, in the process, of determining how effectively he has communicated the job activities, as he perceives them, to the sales personnel.

Once the job description has been constructed, the manager can achieve the greatest effect by providing that they are written and kept up-to-date for all of the positions which exist in the store. Such records, accurately maintained, can facilitate the interviewing process and help a manager match an applicant's qualifications with a job calling for the applicant's qualifications.

The job description can further serve the retailer in the interviewing process if the activities are listed in

order of importance. Such orderly arrangement helps the manager place emphasis where it is most important, and allows him to evaluate the applicant in terms of which skills are most sought-after for the job to be performed.

**Job Specification**

While a job description explains what a job entails, what the specific duties and responsibilities are, what general conditions and situational factors are involved, where the job is, and how the job is performed, the information recorded on a job specification describes the amounts of various qualification factors which job holders must possess in order to perform their work adequately.  

The job description serves as a source of reference for the manager who interprets that data into an opinion statement of the qualities which appear to be necessary for the worker who accepts the position. Since the job specification is thought to be a value judgement, and can change even though the job description for the same position remains unchanged, it is wise for the retailer to formalize his job specifications into written records. Such records

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provide the retailer with a form which he can revise to better suit his needs in the future. Also, setting down human requirements on paper will help the manager sort out the expendable factors from the vital ones—the "wished for" from the "must have." Using a written job specification in the interviewing stage can reduce the misunderstandings which often occur between the interviewer and the interviewee as to what the requirements for the job actually are.

According to the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, a sales person of men's and women's clothing and accessories should be equipped with the following characteristics in order to perform their jobs well. 32

Aptitude.—The employee should have the abilities described in the categories related to

1. Intelligence: General learning ability and average ability to understand instructions and principles are required. Average ability to reason and make judgements is necessary.

2. Verbal: Average ability to understand meanings of words and ideas associated with them, to use them effectively, and to present information or ideas clearly is needed.

32 Department of Labor, Dictionary of Occupational Titles: Definitions of Titles, pp. 615-625.
3. Numerical: Average ability to perform arithmetic operations quickly and accurately is needed.

4. Form perception: Average ability to make visual comparisons and see slight differences in shapes and shadings of figures, widths, and lengths of lines is necessary.

5. Clerical Perception: Average ability to perceive pertinent detail in verbal or tabular material, and to avoid perceptual errors in arithmetic computation is needed.

6. Motor coordination: Average ability to make a movement response accurately and quickly is needed.

7. Finger Dexterity: Average ability to move the hands easily and skillfully is necessary.

8. Color Discrimination: Above average ability to perceive or recognize similarities or differences in colors or to match colors accurately is necessary.

9. Manual Dexterity: Average ability to move the fingers and manipulate small objects with the fingers rapidly or accurately is necessary.

Reasoning development.—The employee should be able to "apply common sense understanding to carry out instructions furnished in written, oral, or diagrammatic form," and should be able to "deal with problems involving several concrete variables in or from standardized situations."
Mathematical development.—The employee should be able to "make arithmetic calculations involving fractions, decimals and percentages."

Language development.—The employee should have comprehension and expression sufficient to "file, post, and mail such material as forms, checks, receipts, and bills."

Interests.—The employee should have a "preference for activities involving business contact with people, and for activities concerned with people and the communication of ideas."

Temperament.—The employee should be able to relate to "situations involving influencing people in their opinions, attitudes, or judgments about ideas or things."

Physical demands.—The employee should be able to perform "light work," and should be able to endure walking and standing to a significant degree.

These factors are general in nature and the retailer has the advantage of revising them or modifying the list to suit his own store needs. Such a list, when permanently recorded, can be used for many purposes. Even after the selection process is completed, the retailer can use the job specification as a source of information in the store for the employees. When the sales personnel are aware of what they
are expected to be able to do, the retailer is more likely to get better performance from them.\textsuperscript{33}

Recruiting and Selection

Once the manager has determined the job duties and the human requirements, he is prepared for the actual selection process.

Factors which deserve attention in a discussion of recruiting and selection are securing applicants, the written application, the employment interview, reference investigation, and testing.

Securing Applicants

Since the selection process involves screening or eliminating those persons not considered suitable for employment, a manager should have a larger supply of applicants than he will actually plan to hire.\textsuperscript{34}

The manager can usually successfully develop and maintain an adequate source of manpower by carefully analyzing sources of qualified applicants in his own geographical area.


\textsuperscript{34}Small Business Administration, \textit{Human Relations in Small Business}, p. 19.
of distribution. A list of such sources could include the following:

1. Present Employees: Whenever possible, a manager can inform employees of vacancies and suggest that they tell their relatives and friends. A competent employee often has friends and acquaintances of similar character and capacity. Further, a satisfied employee is the best recommendation that a retailer can have when he is securing applicants.

2. Former Employees: Frequently, former employees who left of their own accord can be rehired, or they may be in a position to refer the manager to other applicants.

3. Chance Applicants: From time to time, applicants may come into the store to inquire about employment. At such times, the manager can ask them to complete application forms, or to leave their names, addresses, and other relevant information.

4. Educational Sources: Trade schools, schools of business, and some universities often maintain employment services for students and alumni who are interested in securing full-time or part-time employment.

5. Customers and Suppliers: Soliciting the help of customers and suppliers in locating applicants with selling
skills may help the manager in his recruiting campaign, and build goodwill, as well.

6. Clergymen: Ministers can often be of help in recommending suitable recruits.

7. Employment Agencies: State and commercial employment agencies can be a valuable source of qualified applicants. Normally, agencies will even do the initial screening ordinarily performed by the manager.

8. Advertising: Classified and display advertisements can be an effective method of recruiting applicants.

9. Window Cards: Help-wanted signs are still used in many retailing establishments to inform passers-by of job vacancies. This method of securing applicants is one of the most economical.

10. Miscellaneous: Managers who have significant seasonal fluctuations in sales and the personnel level can use special means to supplement their standard recruiting procedures. Handbills inserted with monthly statements to be mailed in October or November may be used to inform their customers of part-time vacancies in the store during the holiday season.

In considering applicants, managers who have, in the past disregarded the qualifications of persons such
senior citizens or handicapped applicants, may find it to their advantage to reconsider. Older employees are believed to be more reliable than younger workers, and handicapped persons can become excellent performers, provided the job is suitable for their abilities.

Because of the cost involved in selecting a new employee, the choice of sources and techniques to be used should not be based upon hunches, prejudices, or immediate convenience. The retailer should attempt to critically appraise each source and each device in terms of the comparative advantages for securing qualified personnel, and for receiving the greatest return for each dollar invested in the recruiting process.

The Written Application

The written application form is used to obtain information, often in the applicant's own handwriting sufficient to identify him and to allow the interviewer to make tentative inferences regarding his suitability for employment. Factors such as name, address, telephone number, age, education, past experience, and names of references are usually included.

— Small Business Administration Report 35
Primary concern in constructing the written application form should be centered around such questions as, "How the application form can be used, what kinds of questions to include in the application form, and what kinds of questions to avoid in the application form."

The written application form can be used for initial screening in situations where all applicants are required to complete the application form, and in situations providing for applicants to submit a job application by mail. It is intended to be a selection tool which the manager can use to obtain the necessary information involved. Such an application form, when properly constructed and properly completed, can allow the interviewer to make an appraisal of the applicant's qualifications for the vacant position.

An application form which permits prompt detection of positive and negative factors can reduce the time required for a pre-employment interview. The information provided by the applicant in the application form can serve as the major point of discussion in the interview, and a clear understanding of the applicant's abilities can be reached by the interviewer.

Retaining completed application forms can aid in formulating a waiting list of applicants. And can avoid
a permanent record of action taken with regard to the applicants who completed the forms.

The greatest strength of the written application form is its ability to aid the manager or interviewer in his decision to select a particular applicant. The manager has necessary information to make a decision as to whether an applicant can perform a particular job with a minimum of training, and whether the applicant can adapt to the store environment and become a part of the effective sales force.

Any written application form used by a manager should be tailored to fill the needs of the individual manager. Questions utilized in the preparation of the application form should be job-relevant, and should be constructed on the basis of data accumulated by the manager during the job analysis phase of the selection process. Factors which are important in the performance of the job should be identified in the application form. It is at this point in the selection process that the value of the job specification becomes apparent. Questions can be prepared to reveal the degree to which applicants possess those qualities which the job specification lists.

Questions appearing on the application form should not be prying, and questions which are not job-relevant should
not appear. Superfluous questions, and questions which, by their wording encourage dishonest answers, should not appear.

Local, state, and federal legislation require that some questions relating to one's sex, marital status, race, religion, or nationality of parents are not job-relevant, and cannot be defended when they appear on application forms. Also, questions which appear to give different considerations to men and women should not appear in the application form.

When the application form is completed in the store environment, the manager can observe the applicant's speed and interest. Even when the application is completed out of the store and returned in a completed form, the manager can often determine the applicant's ability to follow simple instructions and the degree of care with which he completed the form. These benefits can accrue regardless of the construction of questions for the application form. Yet, preparing the application involves an investment of time and money, and the manager can construct a valuable selection tool if he can prepare an application form to suit his own store needs.
The Employment Interview

The employment interview can be described as a "conversation with a purpose." The broad purpose of the employment interview is to match people and jobs. Within this broad objective, three specific objectives which can guide the interviewer in conducting the employment interview exist.

Whether the applicant is ultimately employed or rejected, the interview should serve as a means for creating good feeling toward the company and its management as represented by the interviewer.

The employment interview should be an occasion for giving job and company information in order that the applicant have a factual basis for accepting or rejecting employment, if offered.

The employment interview should provide the interviewer with an opportunity for obtaining from the applicant, data which are relevant to the employment and placement decisions and are unavailable from other sources.

The employment is a necessary step in the selection process even though its use is sometimes limited. It can, in most situations, help a manager to eliminate applicants not suitable for employment, but it cannot be relied upon completely to indicate which applicant is the best suited for the job.


37 Stone and Kendall, Effective Personnel Selection Procedures, p. 204.
The interview should be conducted in privacy, and since the applicant is usually nervous, the interviewer can attempt to help him relax by describing the business in general and the job in particular. In describing the job, the interviewer can emphasize the advantages and interesting facets of it. Since the interviewer should have studied the completed application form before the interview, he can also point out qualities which the applicant possesses that are particularly job-relevant.

In reviewing the application form with the applicant during the interview, the interviewer can complete any gaps which might exist in the employment record and more fully discuss all work experiences. At times, unaccounted for periods in the applicant's background may be the most pertinent in terms of qualifications for employment. Also, unaccounted for periods may prove to be periods which the applicant would like to forget. Knowledge of those periods is important to the interviewer.

During the interview, the interviewer can determine the applicant's reasons for leaving previous jobs. Also, in investigating the applicant's past jobs, the interviewer can determine the duties performed and how the applicant regarded the people with whom he worked. Such knowledge can be
important for the retailer because the applicant who believes he has always worked with and for ineffective and unfair personnel is likely to carry that attitude into his next position. The applicant who enjoyed working in past positions and who found his co-workers to be interesting will probably demonstrate similar attitudes in his next position. During the interview, the interviewer has the opportunity to determine the applicant's attitudes toward supervision, working with people, and cooperation on the job.

The length of the interview will depend upon the type of job being filled. One point to remember is that a manager who expects to keep an employee as a long-term member of the firm should want to interview him as carefully as possible.

Since personal prejudices are likely to influence first impressions, other persons' impressions can usually add objectivity to any evaluation made of the applicant. For this reason, it is a good policy to have the applicant interviewed by at least one other person. The assistant manager of the store can usually perform this function.

From the applicant's point of view, being interviewed by more than one person creates a favorable impression of the importance attached to filling the position. Further, an
employee who participates in the employment interview is apt to feel some responsibility for selecting an employee who will become an asset to the store operation.

When several persons interview the applicant, it is wise to have a pre-arranged method of rating each applicant. A number of schemes can be devised for the rating process, and can range from very simple to very elaborate. The rating should reflect the interviewer's opinion concerning how well he believes the applicant's abilities to match those sought by the manager. One simple rating scheme might be the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer's Rating of Factors</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superior</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Average</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promising</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promising, with training</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Average</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very promising</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employable, with reservations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployable, at this time</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Any rating of an employee should be based upon the criteria mentioned above. That is, how well the applicant's abilities match those needed according to job analysis.

If, during the interview, the applicant appears to be totally unsuited for the job, it is usually a good idea
to bring the interview to a close promptly and courteously, and to say nothing that might cause the applicant to feel any loss of self-esteem or antagonism toward the manager or the store. Some applicants might be customers; others might become customers. Even if neither statement is true, it is still important to treat all applicants with dignity and respect.

Comments such as one or more of the following can be used to terminate the interview and still maintain a cordial relationship with the applicant:

We have seen many applicants and cannot employ all of them. Our selection will, therefore, be made on a competitive basis. You will be notified in the next few days (or by a specific date).

You are the first applicant we have interviewed for this job. Naturally, we will want to make our selection from a number of applicants who will call as a result of our job opening announcement. If you are selected for further interview, we will notify you within the next few days.

We wish it were possible to tell you that we have an opening for you, but your qualifications exceed our requirements for the job. In our organization, it is our policy to fill the higher level job, for which you appear to be qualified, by promotion from within.38

If the applicant is one in whom the retailer has further interest, a good course of strategy is to explain

the care with which selections are made, to discuss any testing procedure which is used, and to discuss the job, itself, in greater detail.

If the manager chooses to administer tests to the applicant to determine the degree of skills which are present, a date can be set for the testing. Also, the manager can make an appointment to meet with the applicant after the tests have been scored to discuss the test results and inform the applicant of any decision which has been made by that time concerning his being selected for employment.

Between the time of the employment interview and the time set for testing, the manager can further study the application responses and spend time contacting the references listed in the application form by the applicant.

Reference Investigation

The primary purpose of reference and background investigation is to evaluate the accuracy of information given by the applicant and to obtain additional data from persons such as former employers as to the skills and abilities of the applicant. The best source of information concerning an applicant's past performance is a former employer.
No one is in a better position to furnish information as to the applicant's work habits, his performance, and his ability to get along with people.\(^{39}\)

Previous employers are in a position to supply information regarding quantity and quality of work produced, ability to cooperate, dependability, initiative, and interpersonal relations with associates and with supervisors. Further, information given by the applicant concerning tasks performed, wages received, wage increases, and reasons for leaving can be verified. Previous employers can be asked whether they would be willing to rehire the applicant. If it is learned that the previous employer would not be willing to rehire the applicant, the manager can attempt to learn why.

It is customary in reference investigation for a manager to mail an inquiry form to obtain needed information from previous employers. Usually such forms will include a notation that the information will be kept confidential. In spite of this statement, some employers are reluctant to write anything critical or unfavorable about an applicant.

Previous employers will sometimes give information to a reference investigator in a personal visit which he would

\(^{39}\text{Ibid., pp. 369-370.}\)
be reluctant to write. When time permits a reference investigator to make personal calls to get information from previous employers, the advantage enjoyed by the investigator is that of receiving more complete verbal responses in addition to receiving body language expressions from the previous employer.

When time does not permit the reference investigator to make personal visits, or when distance involved is too great, telephone interviewing of previous employers can provide a quick means of obtaining information. Often, the investigator can still receive information in addition to the verbal responses of the previous employer by means of listening closely to tones of his voice and the manner or hesitancy with which he answers the questions.

Often, in either personal visits or telephone visits to obtain reference information, the investigator has the opportunity to closely observe the source of information. As a result, responses which are either strongly positive or strongly negative can be evaluated as to their validity on the basis of the perceived reliability of the previous employer to tell the truth.

Many applicants who come into retailing directly from schools have little, if any, previous work history. In such
cases, reference information furnished by the school assumes more importance than would otherwise be the case. Teachers and principals have had the opportunity to observe the applicant in the classroom and can usually give some indication as to the initiative and integrity of the applicant.

In other situations where the applicant has a short work history or none at all, greater consideration should usually be given to other factors such as personality, perceived ability to sell well with training, and even degree of work devoted to volunteer causes. Leadership and ability to cooperate are often manifested in volunteer causes which can be converted into effective performance on the job.

**Testing**

A test is a systematic procedure for comparing the behavior of two or more persons. Tests can be used in the selection process to determine the degree to which the applicant possesses the skills needed by the manager.

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The various types of tests which can be used in a selection process are (1) aptitude, (2) achievement, (3) personality, (4) interest.41

Aptitude tests measure the latent or potential ability to do something, provided the individual is given proper training. Achievement tests, which are also called proficiency tests, measure an acquired skill or acquired knowledge. Ordinarily this acquired skill is obtained as a result of a training program and on-the-job experience.

When a training program is conducted for selected employees, aptitude tests are necessary to measure what employees will ultimately be able to do. If the employee is expected to have achieved a certain level of proficiency before being selected, achievement tests are appropriate for measuring the level of skills and abilities which they already possess.

Because more is required of the salesperson than being able to make sales, personality tests have value in retailing management. The success or failure of sales personnel is strongly determined by their personalities and how they interact with other people. Because of this, the

41 Beach, Personnel: The Management of People at Work, p. 234.
manager should usually administer personality tests to
determine such characteristics as emotional maturity,
sociability, ascendancy, responsibility, conformity, nervous
symptoms, and objectivity.\(^42\)

Tests to determine an applicant's interests are more
useful for individual vocational guidance than they are for
employment selection.

Some general ideas concerning the use of tests can help
the manager determine, for his own purposes, the extent to
which he can rely upon test scores in the selection process.

Tests should usually be used as a supplement to other
selection devices, and not as a substitute for them.
Because tests can provide only a small sample of a person's
total pattern of behavior, credence should be given to
information derived from other procedures, such as interviews,
the application form, and background investigation.

Tests are more accurate at predicting failures than
successes. If an applicant fails tests of capacity and
ability, it can be reasonably concluded that he is unable
to perform the work satisfactorily. However, if he does
pass the tests, he may still be a poor performer because

\(^{42}\)Ibid., p. 235.
of lack of adjustment to his supervisor and associates, lack of motivation, lack of interest in his work, family difficulties, and other factors which are difficult to predict at the time a person is selected for employment.

Tests are most useful in selecting a group of people who are likely to succeed on the job from among a much larger group. The ability of a test to reveal with certainty that a particular individual will succeed on the job is limited. When a manager is successful in maintaining a large source of applicants, testing can be used to determine the smaller group within the total group of applicants which can be expected to perform well on the job.

A test must be validated in the individual organization to be of any value to the manager or the store operations. The test can be validated in the organization if it is administered and a pattern of responses emerges which differentiates the successful performers from those who do not exhibit successful performance. Thus, the test can be validated if it measures what it is intended to measure. This means it will, with reasonable accuracy, predict success or failure on the job.

Managers who administer tests in an employment situation and then make decisions whether to hire or not.
are cautioned not to consider the numerical score from the test to be a precise or exact measure of the characteristic being tested. Tests are not so accurate that a manager can be certain that an applicant with a score of ninety-two is significantly better qualified than another applicant with a score of ninety. It is possible for an applicant to score a number of points below the passing score on a test and still be a successful employee.

When several applicants pass a selection test, those with the very highest test scores are not necessarily a better choice than those with lower scores.\(^{43}\)

Some of the more widely used tests for employee selection are the Otis Employment Tests, Wesman Personnel Classification Tests, Wonderlic Personnel Tests, and A captivating Test.\(^{44}\) These are standard tests which can be purchased in bulk and administered by an experienced personnel manager. Because these tests often do not meet the needs of managers who employ a small number of persons, and because managers of the population being studied are not usually experienced in administering such tests, a better course of action to take in testing is to develop

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\(^{43}\) Beach, Personnel: The Management of People at Work, pp. 224-226.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., p. 236.
a test, validate it with current and, perhaps, past employees, and use it as a selection tool.

The tests to be developed can be constructed in conjunction with the job specification, or the list of qualities believed to be necessary for successful performance on the job. If, for example, the job specification calls for an employee who has average ability to perform arithmetic operations quickly and accurately, a test of such abilities can be devised, compared to the abilities of persons who are successful on the job, and a range of acceptable scores can be established for selecting new employees.

In the area of personality testing where the manager's ability to devise a test may be limited, standardized tests can be used as a selection tool. Many tests of personality of the objective type can be used because they are suitable for group testing and can be scored objectively. 45

It is true that, in some cases, tests have been misused. Yet, in other cases, they have been applied in a scientific manner with the impact of reducing turnover and increasing the effectiveness of the selected work force. Tests can be developed to suit the individual needs of the

store operation and can be successfully used in the selection process.

The manager who administers tests for selection purposes is cautioned that since the 1964 Civil Rights Act, hiring procedures have been carefully scrutinized where conscious or unconscious discrimination was suspected.46

Because unvalidated employment tests have been negatively received by federal agencies who have investigated discrimination charges, some managers have completely eliminated employment testing and have considered their decision to do so a part of the organization's solution to the selection problem.

A manager who eliminates testing without investigating validity may be well intentioned, but he lacks foresight. In discontinuing valid employment tests, he not only increases expenses by higher employee turnover and poorer performance, but he may increase the probability of unfair employment practices caused by increased human judgment required in interviews and reference investigations.47


The Post-Selection Conference

A critical period for new employees is the first few hours, and even days, on the job. If the employee begins the new job with the attitude that he is a valuable addition to the organization, he is more likely to attempt to achieve a high level of performance. 48

The basic purpose of the post-selection conference is to provide the employee with information to help him feel comfortable in the organization while he is becoming familiar with the operations. It is an opportunity for the manager to help the new employee adjust to a new environment. The confidence which the new employee can develop in such a conference will help him begin the new job with a positive attitude.

During the post-selection conference, the manager should attempt to

(1) acquaint new employees with the general history and organization of the store,

(2) provide employees with basic information relating to their work in order to minimize the confusion often experienced by a new employee during the first days of the job,

(3) assist new employees to realize the importance of their new jobs, and

(4) acquaint new employees with appropriate sources of information relating to their work, the store, policies and products, which will help them solve their problems as they develop.49

As a part of the post-selection conference, the manager can notify the other employees that the new employee is to begin work soon, arrange for a first-day lunch companion, and introduce him to the personnel with whom he will be working.

There are many specific topics which the manager could plan to discuss during the post-selection conference. Specific job duties, hours of work, salary, rest periods, lunch periods, pay day, deductions from salary, and vacation periods are subjects worthy of discussion. Policy relating to absences, dress code, safety regulations, and customer relations also deserve to be included in the post-selection conference.

The manager can use the conference time to answer questions which the new employee might have. As a result, there will be less cause for the new employee to interrupt the work of fellow employees with unanswered questions at a later date.

49 Small Business Administration, Employee Induction (Washington, 1970), p. 84.
If the new employee feels appreciated for his ability, and understands the store operations and what is expected of him, energy which might otherwise be spent in conflict and confusion can be directed toward achieving high levels of performance on the job.
Training is the "organized procedure by which people learn knowledge and/or skills for a definite purpose."\(^1\)

The "definite purpose" aspect of the definition means that the training program is beneficial for a manager and his store operations only if it aids him in his struggle to reach his objectives. Otherwise, it is a wasted expense.

The manager can utilize the data related to his job specifications in determining what he expects performance levels to reach as a result of the training program. He can also state general objectives which he believes should be reached as a result of the training program. Such objectives might be improvements in interpersonal relationships among employees, fewer customer returns, fewer customer complaints regarding service, reduced shrinkage, and improved employee morale.

The manager could also expect to increase sales, reduce selling costs, improve and standardize operating methods, increase productivity, simplify personnel administration procedures, and reduce labor turnover.

Expected areas of improvement will vary from store to store, and each manager is most familiar with his own store operations. By identifying weak points of his store's operation, he can usually identify specific areas of needed improvement.

Training can play a significant role in increasing effectiveness of the employees within the store. Yet, working conditions, organization climate, attitudes and competency of the manager, and other factors can influence performance just as much if not more than the absence or presence of training. This means that a store manager who starts a training program must be willing to support it. If he is not willing to improve himself and correct some of his own shortcomings, he is setting a pattern for his employees to follow.

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The basic areas of discussion in the training program of retailers of apparel and accessories, as it is proposed here, are (1) general job training, (2) specific job training, (3) the employee handbook, and (4) continuous training. Within each basic category, several specific areas of personnel development are discussed.

**General Job Training**

General job training is defined as initial training for new employees which will enable them to start working on the sales floor. It is distinguished from continuous training, which is the regular training of all employees to keep them informed of changes in store policy, acquaint them with new merchandise and new methods of operation, and maintain effectiveness at the desired level.⁴

Initial job training for new employees could be organized into the areas of store policy, store service standards, attitude development, and general salesmanship.

**Store policy.**—Regulations of store operation can be explained to new employees at an early date in the training program in order to help them avoid making costly errors in...

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carrying out their duties. Further definition of store policy and regulations can be written into the employee handbook. The employees who are in the store at times when the manager is unavailable to answer their questions can use the employee handbook as a source of reference.

Familiarizing a new employee with store policy is largely a matter of helping him understand the decisions which have already been made concerning how the store will be managed. These decisions often involve such matters as store hours and working hours, employee entrances, recording working time, lunch and rest periods, absence and tardiness, personal shopping and discounts, vacations, holidays, fringe benefits, retirement, accidents while on the job, termination of employment, promotion and personnel evaluation, grievances, dress code and pay.

**Store hours.**—During the past decades, store hours have been extended to make the merchandise available to consumers who work eight hours a day and are free to shop only after five o'clock, or even later during the evening hours. This change of store hours has, in turn, affected the working hours of many employees. And, in spite of the fact that store hours do not necessarily represent one individual employee's working hours, both should be explained to the new employee.
Employees can be made aware that getting to the store before the store is actually open for business is just as important as being there during the course of the day. As a result, it is wise for the manager to state the employee's working hours in terms of the exact time to be in the store and the exact time to leave. Stating an employee's working hours in terms of nine o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon is the traditional approach. Yet, when the manager uses this approach, he usually finds that he must add instructions to the employee to be in the store fifteen minutes before nine o'clock and expect to leave about fifteen minutes after five o'clock.

Often employees resent being asked to extend their hours immediately after they have been instructed that the working day begins at a certain hour and ends at a certain hour. The employer can avoid creating friction between himself and the new employee by starting the working day in terms of, perhaps, 8:45 a.m. until 5:15 p.m. Then the new employee will not feel he is being asked to work additional time for no additional pay.

With respect to setting the real working day for the new employee, the manager can use his past experience in opening and closing the store as a guide. If he has observed
that some customers will usually remain inside the store until fifteen minutes after the designated closing hour, then he can state the employee's working day to include that extra time. When the employee expects to stay until fifteen minutes after the closing hour, the tendency to hurry customers out the door will be reduced.

The number of hours during the work week which an employee will work may be affected from state to state by legislation. Even in the absence of legislation setting maximum hours to be worked (for non-exempt employees without being paid overtime), a manager might find it advantageous to avoid employing a sales force composed entirely of full-time employees. Part-time employment opportunities for personnel can allow a manager to significantly extend his manpower resources. He might find that in employing part-time sales personnel he can employ college students and housewives who have valuable sales skills but are not free to work full-time.\(^5\)

The psychological effect of working a full-time work-week can be negative for employees who have other time commitments, yet accept the full-time job. Many times,

employees will work the full workweek rather than ask for part-time employment for fear of being terminated completely.

The retailing manager can solve this problem for the established employee as well as the new employee by scheduling working hours on a permanent half-day arrangement, or some other arrangement, such as two and one-half days of work each week. This permits mothers who have small children in morning classes freedom to be at home in the afternoons with their children. Wives and college students might find it attractive to work part-time three days during the week and be free for their own commitments during the weekend. Free of the psychological pressure of devoting their whole week to the store, part-time employees may prove to be high-performance sales personnel.

**Employee entrances.**—The manager of a small retailing establishment might be less concerned with setting policy to regulate employee entrance, than would a manager be in a large department store with over one hundred employees. Small stores typically have two entrances—one entrance to the street, and one to the alley way. Since the number of

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employees arriving at the beginning of the day and leaving at the end of the day will be small, the front entrance is usually acceptable as the employee entrance.

Rear entrance for the employees can depend upon the presence or absence of such factors as available parking facilities, mud in the alley way, time schedules of sanitation trucks, and lighted passways. The safety factor is important in any consideration of asking employees to leave through the rear entrance, also.

Recording working time.—Most managers are concerned with knowing the hour at which the employees arrive and leave the store, yet an electric time-clock may be too expensive for the budget of a small retailer. As a substitute, a pocket of time cards can be used and employees can be requested to record their hours by pen. The cards can be maintained at the cash register or at some other convenient place in the store where the employees have ease in signing them.

The decision of the manager to request employees to sign their time cards as an indication of the total time spent for lunch break should depend upon the individual situation in the store. Some managers do request this, and others request employees to indicate the time they
spend during the coffee break. Such a policy can be the cause of friction in interpersonal relations when employees believe they are being spied on or ordered about like soldiers.

Lunch and rest periods.--With a small number of employees, scheduling of lunch and rest periods is far less complicated than with the number of employees in a large department store. The manager can schedule lunch breaks on the basis of requests of the employees, or he can construct a time schedule providing for two employees to have lunch from eleven o'clock to twelve o'clock, and two employees to have lunch from twelve o'clock to one o'clock (if he has four employees). Within that time structure, employees can make their own decisions concerning when to take a lunch break.

When a thirty-minute rest break is required of each employee each day, the manager can explain such a policy to employees. If policy allows an accumulation of break time for two days, and the employee can take a one-hour break one day and not take a break the next day, the manager can define how the policy is to be observed. If break-time accumulation is not permitted, the manager can make new employees aware of that before the policy is broken and a new employee is embarrassed.
Absence and tardiness.--When the manager differentiates between "sick leave" and "emergency leave" for purposes of payment of salary, there should be different policy set for observing each category. Factors related to evidence of illness required, retention of any employment rights during sickness, provision of medical and hospital benefits are of concern to all employees.

"Emergency leave" should be clearly defined, and provisions for payment of salary should be stated in writing for all employees to observe. If "emergency leave" is given with payment of salary in the case of a death in the immediate family, then "immediate family" can be defined in terms of family members. Such an explanation can be written in the handbook, also, to insure that employees have a clear understanding of the policy.

As for tardiness, almost every manager knows that failure to get up on time and missed transportation connections as reasons have varying degrees of legitimacy. The importance of being on time should be explained to the employee and he can be made aware that continuous tardiness will necessitate finding a replacement who can arrive at work on time.
Personnel shopping and discounts.—Naturally, managers would like their employees to be seen wearing merchandise bought in the store. Such purchases add to the sales volume and produce a certain degree of promotion in favor of the store. If the employees appear to approve of the merchandise by buying and wearing it, then customers of the store are likely to receive positive reinforcement in their decisions to shop there. In order to encourage employees to make purchases within the store, managers can provide a fringe benefit of a shopping discount. Some managers find it to their advantage to grant such discounts to dependents of employees, also.

When one employee makes a purchase, the ticket for the sale should be written by another employee. If the manager believes it to be necessary, he can ask that all purchases made by the employees (either inside or outside the store) be kept in one designated place in the store until the end of the working day. Cluttering can be eliminated, and encouragement for internal theft can be diminished.  

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Vacations.--The need for employees' vacation is recognized by managers, yet no universal schedule can be set which will meet the needs of every retailer. The length of vacation should show some relationship to length of service in the store. One scale might provide for one day of vacation for each six month period of service in the store. Another scale might provide for one week of vacation for employees who have been employed at least one year, and one day of vacation for each six month period of service to be added to that after the employee has been employed more than one year. It is almost a universal practice in business that vacation time granted to employees be granted with pay.

Seniority of employees can serve as a basis for determining which employee shall have first choice in selecting the week or weeks of vacation. Depending upon sales patterns of the store, the manager can choose those weeks of both the winter and the summer season when sales are least, and the employees can choose their vacation periods from those low-sales periods.

Holidays.--Holidays such as Christmas Day, Thanksgiving Day, New Year's Day, and Independence Day are traditionally observed in retailing. In addition, it is wise for managers
to observe particular occasions when retailers in the surrounding area are closed. If a manager knows that a majority of the high-volume stores surrounding his store will be closed during a particular event, then he cannot hope to attract the usual number of shoppers which would be in the general area if all of the stores were open. In such cases, it can be more economical for the manager to close his store also.

Even though it is not necessary to close the store at election times, provisions must be made to allow each voting employee time to leave the store to cast a ballot.

Fringe benefits.—A program of fringe benefits can be sufficiently important for the manager to give him an advantage in hiring even though the salary may be less than a prospective employee would like. The employee discount is one type of fringe benefit which has come to be a condition of employment. Insurance benefits, educational opportunities, stock options, retirement benefits, and all other benefits should be emphasized.

Retirement.—Deductions made from pay checks for payment into retirement funds should be carefully explained to employees. A schedule of the retirement income can be
be discussed even though the employee is well under retirement age.

**Accidents.**—Even though accidents may be few in number in retailing, accident insurance to provide coverage for accidents received while on the job is a good investment for managers. Further, establishing a relationship with a physician to provide emergency treatment of minor accidents can minimize confusion concerning treatment at the time of the accident. The name, telephone number, and address of the physician can be entered in the employee handbook as well as posted near the store telephone.

**Termination of employment.**—Terminating an employee is usually, at best, an uncomfortable process for a store manager. Conditions warranting layoff, termination, and even reprimands, however, can be objectively discussed with the new employee and entered into the employee handbook as a written record. Seniority rights and severance pay policies can also be discussed without intimidating the employee. The employee should be told the length of notice he will be given in case of termination, and should be aware of the notice which he is asked to give the manager in case of voluntary termination.
Promotion and personnel evaluation.—Since promotion is largely an academic concept for personnel in the small store, the real emphasis should rest upon personnel evaluation as a basis for reward and recognition. Evaluation provides an avenue for rewarding valuable employees and modifying the behavior of marginal employees. Time of evaluation, factors to be rated, and the relation of ratings to salary adjustments are all areas which deserve the attention of the manager during the initial training period.

Grievances.—Far too often in small stores, employees are left to express their grievances by way of the grape vine. If, and when, the manager finally learns of the grievance, the content and proportion of the grievance probably will be significantly different. Employees should be assured that expression of grievances is acceptable in the organization. Mere knowledge of that fact can encourage employees to organize their thoughts about the grievance for purposes of presenting it to the manager. And, in the process of organizing the thoughts, the employees often solve their own problems. Even if the grievance is ultimately presented to the manager, it will more likely be understood, and it will be easier for the manager and the employee to solve it together.
Keeping communication channels open among the manager and the employees can be an important factor in reducing internal theft. Hostility on the part of the employees who do have grievances can cause them to express their anger by stealing merchandise. And even though internal theft cannot be eliminated merely by good communications in business, employees can learn to express their feelings with words and not damaging actions on the sales floor.

**Dress code.**—The physical appearance of the employees can affect sales in the store, yet there is a limit as to the restrictions a manager can enforce concerning dress code. Since the employee is likely to dress on the job in the same manner as he dresses for the interview, some screening can be performed by the manager in the hiring stage. That is, the manager can usually get an accurate impression of the dress the applicant would wear in the store, on the basis of the dress worn during the interview stage. Afterwards, appealing to the good judgment of the employees is usually sufficient to maintain proper dress in the store.

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Pay.—In order to eliminate confusion and questions on paydays, the manager can carefully describe to the new employee the method of computing his pay, the time and the place of receipt of pay. If a weekly pay period is to be used, a specific time such as "Monday afternoons" can be designated as time of distribution of checks. When employees are requested to receive their checks personally in the manager's office, they should be instructed to that effect. The salary which an employee receives is usually a private matter and he will appreciate the privacy which a manager provides for him when he receives his pay.

Store Service Standards

Maintaining store service standards is, for some managers, a matter of retaining the store's good image and goodwill with customers and the general public. To do so, a manager can develop certain standards related to both merchandise and service. A manager can select two or three service areas in which he has the capacity to excel and place major emphasis on developing them and projecting them throughout the community or market area.⁹

The process of defining service standards can involve developing and improving the personality of the store. This process is often dependent upon the nature of the merchandise which the manager has chosen to sell. For example, if the store is known for its stock of exclusive, high-priced, fashion-leadership merchandise, then service standards are somewhat defined by the merchandise, itself.

As a result, customers patronizing such a store usually expect courteous personnel, merchandise in very good condition, the right to return merchandise, and pleasant and spacious surroundings.

Personnel should be expected to help portray the image and help develop the personality of the store to the best of their abilities. And personnel must be made aware of store service standards if they are to be effective in helping to maintain them.

In setting or maintaining store service standards, the manager can define general service standards for the employee to observe in order to be effective in serving customers. Such standards might be

1. To help customers define and understand their needs, wants, and problems;
2. To assist them in locating the best possible answer to the problem by selecting suitable items and showing them willingly, and by explaining just how and why the goods will yield the desired satisfaction.
3. To serve in an educational capacity by acquainting customers with new merchandise developments and by passing on the necessary facts about the proper use and care of the items purchased;

4. To serve customers in such a way that shopping becomes a pleasant experience and the customer is left with a real reason for wanting to patronize the store further.\textsuperscript{10}

Using these basic service standards as a guide, the manager can define specific duties to assign to individual employees to help them reach their objectives in the store.

\textbf{Attitude Development}

The manager and the employees must all have a positive attitude toward the store, its merchandise, and the customers in order to perform well in the selling process. Yet, many managers spend little or no time at all discussing with the employees the effect which a negative attitude can have upon sales.\textsuperscript{11}

A manager can organize efforts to improve the attitude among his employees by concentrating upon their attitude toward customers and their attitude toward sales.\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{11}Dun and Bradstreet, Profitable Management for Small Business, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{12}Richard R. Canarroe, "How to Succeed in Business by Being Smart," Sales Management, CIX (September, 1972), 51.
Attitude toward customers.--The impression which a shopper receives from one sales person is the impression which the shopper has of the entire place of business. In fact, the impact is sufficiently strong to easily cancel the promotional efforts of the manager which prompted the customer's visit to the store.

Customers will cease to be customers of a place of business when they are consistently treated with abruptness. Even when customers do not make a purchase, their goodwill toward the store and the manager is important, and the sales personnel should attempt to build that goodwill. Reaction of shoppers to sales personnel is manifested in studies showing "poor treatment by sales people" to be the number one reason that customers do not patronize certain stores.

The sales person must let the customer know that personal concern for customers is a top priority of the total sales force. The employee in a small retailing store can win return customers and make extra sales by

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personalizing the sales message and showing sincerity in servicing customers. 15

Because of the wide-spread availability of substitute merchandise, it is likely that a customer could easily find satisfactory items at more than one store in a market area. The personal sales factor can make the difference in increasing sales and profit margins for the retailing manager.

Since there is no precise method of measuring the cost to a manager when a sales person with a negative attitude loses sales, it is, likewise, impossible to measure the value of an employee with a positive attitude in terms of dollars and cents. Yet, as most managers would say, the attitude of the sales person permeates the sales transaction and the customers have a keen sense for detecting a positive or negative attitude on the part of a sales person. 16 Even though a manager would not deliberately hire an employee with an apparently negative attitude, he might do so accidently. Attitude and training and development can often help the

15 L. Perry Wilburn, "Don't Sell Yourself Short!" Speciality Salesman, LXI (May, 1972), 5.

16 Homer Rosenberger, Organizing and Administering an Employee Training Program, p. 4.
manager and the employees to become more positive in their sales efforts.17

Effective training can give the employee a feeling of importance and dignity. Through training, he can learn to perform his assigned duties correctly, easily, and with the pleasant manner required of a successful sales person. When receiving attention and training, employees are inclined to have more interest in their jobs and to perform them better.

Attitude toward sales.—Developing a positive attitude toward the sales process can be thought of as raising the employee's sales consciousness. This concept is not one of learning how to sell, but rather it is one of developing and maintaining the employee's positive frame of mind toward the entire selling procedure.18

A positive attitude toward the sales process is reflected in the quality of an employee's work and in the interpersonal relations between him and the other employees. When an employee can learn to display the enthusiasm of a successful


sales person, he will find that some of that enthusiasm becomes real. The positive attitude which he can develop will manifest itself in his daily performance of duties, the notes he writes to customers, and any other services he performs.

The employee signals information to customers involuntarily concerning his attitude toward the sales process, and if the customer does not accept the employee's attitude, he will not accept the merchandise which the employee is offering. In that regard, the employee is somewhat like part of the merchandise, and one factor which makes up the total personality of the retailing establishment.

The value of an employee with a high sales-consciousness takes on new meaning when the manager realizes how customers enjoy observing an enthusiastic sales person in action. Since there is no "born sales types,"\(^{19}\) it can be assumed that behavior and attitude toward the sales process can be modified. The spirit involved in making the sale is often the factor which differentiates a high-performance sales person from the others in the store. An through attitude

\(^{19}\) Dun and Bradstreet, Inc., Profitable Management for Small Business, p. 58.
training and development, enthusiasm and positive attitudes can be encouraged in the sales force.

**General Salesmanship**

Although it is believed by authors and researchers that there is no secret formula which can automatically make a person become a good sales person, there are basic patterns of selling merchandise.

One basic pattern which is believed to be appropriate for the population being studied involves topics related to planning the sales story, opening the sales conversation, telling the story, demonstrating with showmanship, handling objections, and closing the sale. In addition, making telephone sales, accepting returned goods, and working with customers on a personal basis are topics which deserve attention in a training program such as this one.

**Planning the sales story.**—The quality of a planned sales story usually far exceeds that of an extemporaneous presentation. By planning, the sales person can seek the best approach to use in adapting the sales presentation to each individual customer. He can mentally identify probable objections and consider plans to overcome each one. The presentation, as a result of having
both believable and complete enough to close the sale.

The sales person should attempt to avoid memorizing a short delivery. Rather, he should consider the fine points of the merchandise and be prepared to focus on those points when a sensitive moment arrives at which the customer needs information.

By planning, the sales person can provide for and anticipate customer participation in the sales conversation. By anticipating and encouraging an exchange of thoughts about the merchandise, the sales person can determine the customer's positive thoughts as well as doubts concerning the merchandise. In planning to listen, the salesperson can often find a clue in the customer's responses to some need for merchandise. Also, the customer will often make statements which can serve as a basis for the revision of the sales person's message. Through continuously revising and adapting the sales message to the customer's needs, the sales persons can further personalize it.

Rather than being a "canned" sales message, the planned presentation should be a tool for the sales person which can help him present himself and the merchandise in a positive and meaningful way.
when the sales person is forced to grope for information and stumble through the sales presentation because of lack of preparation for the sales process.

Opening the sales conversation.—Once the shopper is inside the store, the sales person's first function is to find out what is needed by the customer. It is assumed that the customer already has some intention to buy. Since the first thirty to sixty seconds in a sales conversation can often determine the outcome, it is essential that the prospect's immediate reaction be favorable toward the sales person. Not only must the salesperson secure the undivided attention of the customer during that time span, but he must also secure a positive attitude on the part of the customer. When the attention turned toward the sales person is unfavorable, a barrier is immediately created between the two parties.

In attempting to secure the positive attention of the customer, the sales person cannot permit himself to display indifference toward the merchandise or the customer. Whatever enthusiasm the sales person expresses during the first

seconds of the sales conversation usually has a positive effect upon the customer. Even when no sale is made, a returning customer will remember the enthusiasm of a particular sales person.

How, then, can a sales person open the sales conversation, secure the positive attention of the customer, and establish a favorable impression for the store, the merchandise, and himself. Even though there is no absolute answer to this question, several approaches are known to be highly accepted in stores such as those in this population.

Since it is assumed that the customer has a need for some of the merchandise such as that in the store in question, "May I help you," is unacceptable as an opening remark. That, it is universally assumed, is the purpose of the sales person. Instead, a greeting such as "Good morning" or "Isn't that a handsome suit?" should be used. When the customer is actually inspecting merchandise already, a greeting such as "Isn't that ___ handsome?" focuses the customer's attention on the merchandise and the sales person enters into the sales conversation in a positive manner.

"May I help you try that?" is a greeting which reinforces the customer's attention toward the merchandise and allows the sales person to enter the sales conversation without
diverting the customer's attention toward the weather or some other idea.

Customers are usually favorably impressed when greeted by name. Because of this, a greeting such as "It is so nice to see you again, Mr. _____," can be very effective in opening the sales conversation. Remembering a customer's past purchases and asking about their service can also remind a customer of his importance.

Whenever possible, a sales person should attempt to greet a customer and show merchandise at the same time. When a customer is visually inspecting merchandise and not actually handling it, the sales person can approach him by remarking, "Would you like to inspect these _____ more closely?" While he is greeting the customer with this remark, he can actually be handing the merchandise to the customer for his inspection, and assume that the answer to his greeting would be, "Yes." This opening remark is an especially effective way of getting the merchandise into the customer's hands.

Some of the standard openings to avoid include remarks such as: "Who's next?" "Something for you?" "Are you
just looking or did you want to buy something?" "Are you with him?" and "What's for you today?"\textsuperscript{21}

**Telling the story.**--Because of the increase of legal regulations of merchandise labeling, much of the story telling has been shifted from the sales person to the merchandise labels. Yet, only the sales person can answer questions which the customer might have regarding other aspects of the merchandise. Because the customer is usually buying total satisfaction rather than simply a piece of merchandise,\textsuperscript{22} the sales person can concentrate on emphasizing benefits to be derived from buying the merchandise. In the case of apparel and accessories, much of the discussion of benefits to be derived from the purchase is self-explanatory once the customer agrees to try the merchandise. In the trying process, the customer can see how he looks wearing the merchandise, and actually feel the comfort of the fit. Accessory items which are not tried can often sell themselves when they are handled and inspected by the customer.


The most sought-after benefits can be emphasized early in the story even though they may be written on the merchandise label. If the garment is "wash and wear," the sales person can reinforce that point, regardless whether the customer reads that information on the label. Fiber content, special stitching, hem length, button quality, and other factors such as weight of the garment can be emphasized. Extra buttons and provisions for alterations are also of special interest to many customers.

In telling the story, a sales person should encourage the customer to express his ideas and reactions to the merchandise. When the sales person succeeds in developing a real conversation between himself and the customer, he can learn how to meet objections and answer questions which satisfy the customer. Thus, the sales person must exercise a great effort to listen and let creative silence help him sell. This communicates to the customer that the sales person is sincerely interested in the customer's statements.

The sales person should develop the art of asking questions. Tactful questionning can contribute much to the presentation and sale of most merchandise. And, asking questions is one approach to keeping the conversation open and alive. Only by communicating effectively with a
customer can the sales person learn of the objections which he must meet and overcome.

Telling the sales story must be adapted to various situations in which the customer may or may not have decided on what he needs; the customer is "just looking"; the sales person attempts to "trade up"; the sales person is serving several customers at the same time; the customer is really a group of persons shopping together.

Decided and undecided customers.—In serving customers who have decided what merchandise is needed, the sales person can limit the sales conversation. The merchandise can be quickly put into the hands of the customer and a lengthy sales conversation can be avoided. Answers to questions can usually be brief and to the point.

Customers who are undecided as to the merchandise needed usually want assistance from the sales person. The sales person, in this case, can begin to show merchandise immediately and, at the same time, ask questions as to the suitability of what is being shown. Meanwhile, the sales person can attempt to analyze the customer's manner and appearance to estimate which price lines would be appropriate. Two or three items in middle price can be shown with one
item in a higher price line. From the moment the customer sees the items together, he will reveal, either overtly or subtly, his attitude concerning color, price, and other factors. This provides the sales person with some guide as to what the customer is interested in.

"Lookers."—In many stores, well over half the customers consider themselves to be "just looking." When planning a course of action, a sales person can base his behavior on one of the following assumptions: (1) the "looker" does not intend to buy now and his wish is to be alone to look at the merchandise; (2) the "looker" does intend to buy something but is not sure what and would like to be alone to make his decision; (3) the "looker" is a shoplifter who wants to be left alone with the merchandise. 23

At times, the sales person can let the customer be alone with the merchandise and hope that the merchandise will sell itself. If the customer, however, is a suspected shoplifter, such a course would not be appropriate. The sales person can keep close proximity to the customer on the premise of being near to offer assistance.

When the "looker" expresses interest in a general line of merchandise such as sports wear, the sales person can direct him to the area of the store where that line is kept. Specific brands or types of sports wear can be pointed out and unique features of different styles can be emphasized. The customer can be invited to feel completely at home and assured of prompt assistance when it is needed. Special sales or extremely popular items can be pointed out, but regardless of the course of action selected, the sales person should make a special effort to secure the goodwill of the shopper and convince the shopper that service and assistance is available when needed.

"Trading up."—Trading up merchandise poses a problem for the sales person because he must be prepared to promote an item of merchandise which the customer has not requested. Some customers may be offended by a sales person who attempts to switch their preference to a higher-priced item, or switch their preference from the one item requested to a package containing multiples of the merchandise. Trading up must be done with gentle persuasion and caution.

Factors to emphasize in the trading up story include better quality of the higher-priced item, longer warranties or guaranties, free giftwrap with higher-priced purchases,
and the economy of buying three items at less cost per unit than one unit alone would cost.

**Substitution.**—Substitution is a process in which a sales person will find himself involved when the store does not have in stock the item or brand requested by the customer. It differs from the trading up process in that the price of the substituted good may be the same as the price of the requested good. It is a process in which the sales person is expected to promote an item of merchandise which the customer has indicated is not his first choice. Yet, it offers an opportunity for the sales person to fill the needs of the customer even though the requested item of merchandise is not one sold in the store.

"Come with me and let's see what we have in stock," is one positive approach to leading the customer to the area where the substitute goods are displayed. When a sales person answers a customer's request with a remark such as, "No, we don't have that but we do have . . .," he is announcing that he is attempting to sell the customer merchandise which he has not requested. Some customers may become defensive and end the sales conversation at that point.
Instead, the customer can be shown the displays of substitute goods, and if a substitute good is accepted, it will appear to be at the suggestion of the customer himself. The sales person should not say, "This is all we have in stock," nor "I'm sorry, we don't have what you requested." He can respond, "This is what we have in stock." Unless the customer persists in requesting the first choice merchandise, the sales person can assume that a substitute may be acceptable.

The sales person should avoid ever using the word "substitute," but rather he should stress the positive points of the merchandise and offer it to the customer for inspection.

It is easy to talk the customer out of making a substitute purchase and the sales person should avoid making remarks such as, "This item will be just as serviceable as what you requested." A positive approach should be taken to let the customer decide which merchandise will fill his needs without reminding him that he is considering purchasing something other than his first choice.

Serving several customers.--It can be straining for a sales person when he is required to serve several customers
at the same time. Situations can be expected to arise, however, during certain periods of the day when some employees may be out of the store and the volume of shoppers requires that one sales person serve several customers, when the sales person must stretch his talents. Promptness and sequence of attention are important to consider and each customer expects immediate service on many occasions such as this. Customers should receive attention in the order which they entered the store, usually. The sales person can direct them to the merchandise which they request and give them time alone to consider their choice. During their time of consideration, the sales person can offer service to the next customer. A remark of recognition such as, "How are you today? I will be with you in just one moment," can help customers to relax while they are waiting for assistance. At least, their presence is recognized and they can feel assured that they will receive help shortly.

Serving a group.—Serving a group of several persons shopping together poses a problem similar to the one of serving several individual customers at the same time. When a group is comprised of several friends or several family members, the customer will often be influenced by
other members of the group. As a result, serving the customer is almost parallel to serving every member of the group. In serving the customer, the sales person should not ignore nor neglect to answer questions which other members of the group might ask. It is logical to assume that the customer attaches significance to the opinions of the group members, else, he would not have come shopping with them. The sales person can attempt to determine which member of the group is the dominant influence and direct his sales conversation toward the shopper and the dominant member.

**Demonstrating with showmanship.**—One of the unforgivable sins of retail selling is the failure on the part of the sales person to show the merchandise to the customer. When conditions permit, the sales person should lead the customer to the area of the store where the requested merchandise is displayed and demonstrate the use of the merchandise. Demonstrating the use of the merchandise can be a matter of helping the customer try the garment or explaining the characteristics of the accessory items. Pointing and directing the customer to a general area of the store is sometimes necessary when the sales person is attempting to serve several persons at the same time. Yet, such efforts
are usually insufficient to really sell the customer the merchandise.

Concerning how much merchandise to show, the best judgment of the sales person can be the guide. If he does not show enough, the customer may feel limited in his selection, and not sufficiently informed of alternatives to make a decision. If shown too many items, the customer may become confused.

The sales person can attempt to choose several items which he believes will suit the needs of the customer. In addition, he can assure the customer that an unlimited number of items may be tried if that is the customer's wish (even though the number of items in the dressing room at one time may be limited).

Customer participation is necessary for the sales person to show the merchandise effectively. Statements such as "Feel the texture of this fabric," or "Did you notice the seam allowance in this garment?" can often encourage the customer to physically inspect the garment. The sales person does not need to swoon about how lovely the garment is, or how lovely the customer looks in the garment. In fact, some customers resent this kind of sales treatment. Instead, facts related to the merchandise can be emphasized in a
positive manner which will demonstrate the desires to be gained from purchasing the merchandise and the value judgments of the sales personnel can be kept to a minimal.

**Handling objections.**--Objections will be encountered almost every day by sales personnel. Such objections might concern price, quality, color, or other factors. Some objections will be based on valid shortcomings of the suitability of the merchandise, while others will result from a misunderstanding in the communication process.

The first step the sales person should take in handling objections is to listen carefully to be sure the objection is understood. The objection is usually a serious concern of the customer and not a signal for a debate or argument on the part of the sales personnel. To argue is to lose the sale and, perhaps, goodwill, too. It is hopeless to antagonize someone and, at the same time, try to influence him favorably. Instead, the sales person can be far more effective by asking questions which might expose a hidden objection. When verbal objections are a mask for hidden objections, the sales person can concentrate on discovering the real basis of the objection. Once, the objection is clearly understood, the sales person can remain diplomatic and not put the customer in a defensive position. In fact, the objection can often
serve as a basis for emphasizing positive points about the item which were not previously made. If, for example, the shopper objects to the quality of the item, then the warranty or guarantee can be pointed out. When the objection is related to price, the quality aspect of the merchandise can be emphasized, or the sales person can demonstrate a similar item in a lower price line.

If the sales person can successfully utilize the "Yes . . . but" method of meeting objections, he can avoid creating an irritating situation for both parties. He can show respect for the customer's opinions and still make his own points by saying, "Yes, you have a point there, but let me point out something which is frequently overlooked about this particular item."

Although many sales persons dread serving a customer with many objections, much can be learned from clearly understanding, remembering, and defining answers for objections. The sales person can learn from meeting objections how to construct explanatory and positive responses for many standard objections. And by learning, the sales person can put his thoughts to work in the future to compose and be ready to use those responses to increase sales.
Closing the sale.--Closing clues in selling can usually be found in the customer's own words and actions concerning price, size or installment terms. In fact, some authors believe that the instant the customer asks about the price, a sale has been made and only the details are left to arrange.24

Actions indicating strong interest or a decision to buy can include changes in facial expressions, reading of the label on the item, studying of the size, or moving from side to side to study the item from different angles.

As the sales person senses the approach of the closing, he can become more positive and express confidence in the product and the customer's decision to buy it. No new merchandise should be shown at that point. If the customer is making a final decision, three of the items which appear to be preferred should be left out while the others are quickly removed. This minimizes confusion in the decision making process for the shopper. The sales person, however, should not try to hurry or press the shopper to buy.

In closing, the sales person can utilize such statements as, "Would you like it gift-wrapped?" "Would you like a box or bag?" or "Will this be cash or charge?" Such statements encourage the customer to make a decision and the sales person does not appear to be hurrying the customer to do so. Such statements can finalize the sales conversation and prompt the customer to agree to buy.

Once the customer has agreed to the purchase of the merchandise, there is still an opportunity for the sales person to increase the dollar volume of the sale by suggestion selling, that is, encouraging the shopper to buy complementary merchandise which he had not previously expressed an interest for.

Merchandise best suited to suggestion selling might be a major group of related items such as suits, shirts, shoes, socks, ties, and hats. Also, unrelated items which are moderate in price and the "specials" of the day can be sold effectively by suggestion selling. Merchandise which is timely because of its relationship to certain dates such as Valentine's Day is often a natural choice of merchandise to be suggested to the customer.

In addition, merchandise which is physically displayed at the point of purchase can often be successfully suggested because its examination and purchase take very little time.
While the sales person is wrapping the purchase, he can mention "specials" in other departments in the store which the shopper might not have been aware of. Customers often express appreciation for such suggestions.

Even after the total choice of merchandise has been made, the selling process does not stop. The manner in which the customer is treated after the sale has been made can be an important factor in determining the fate of the next sale, even months in the future, when the customer returns to the store.

As a result, packaging is one aspect of closing the sale which deserves attention. Customers value their newly-purchased merchandise and enjoy seeing the sales personnel treat it with respect. In fact, the package can be thought of as a fanfare which sends the satisfied customer out the door convinced that he made a wise decision in shopping in that particular store. Customers who leave the store with such an attitude can usually be relied upon to return.

In closing, counting the change to the customer and expressing thanks for the purchase are both important to remember. When a customer uses his charge account for buying merchandise, the opportunity exists for the sales person to call the customer by name when inviting him to return soon.
Telephone sales.—A sales person can often make use of telephone selling to expand his market considerably. During periods of cold or wet weather when there is little traffic in the store, the sales person can use a list of potential buyers for making verbal contact with the market. It is true that some customers would not like to be telephoned at home by sales persons of retailing establishments. When a personal relationship can be maintained between sales persons and their customers, this is less likely to be the case.

A list comprised of charge account customers would insure that the customers telephoned have shopped in the store and have become familiar with the inventory.

A sales person who makes a sincere effort to remember customers and their purchases has the advantage of saying to a potential buyer on the telephone, "I know how much you like brown sweaters, and I want you to know that we have just received a new shipment of sweaters including some very nice brown ones in your size." Being able to identify some particular item of interest helps the sales person change the telephone call from a sales call to one of personal interest.

Keeping a record of a customer's visits to the store can give the sales person an advantage of expressing personal
interest in the customer's company. A customer who enters a store and is greeted warmly with a statement such as, "It's nice to see you again after so many weeks," will remember it. This is especially true of customers who have strong loyalty to the store and like to be recognized for their loyalty.

Accepting returned merchandise.--Accepting returned merchandise again and again can be a serious problem for both the sales person and the store manager. Yet, returned merchandise must be handled in most cases even though such processing can constitute a significant cost factor.

A large volume of returned merchandise may indicate a situation in which buying and selling in the store is not efficiently performed. The buyer may be responsible for buying merchandise which proves to lower in quality after it is worn than it appeared on display in the store, or which tends to be faddish and become out of date quickly. Sales personnel may be making greater claims for performance of the merchandise than are actually valid.

Since it is often difficult to determine the real cause of returned merchandise, the most a manager can hope to do is maintain the customer's goodwill toward the store and cause him to go away mad or upset. A harsh reaction toward a
customer who has a valid complaint about an item of merchandise can turn him away quickly and permanently. If he is made to feel guilty about returning the merchandise, he is sure to take his business elsewhere.

The manager should assess his policy on returned merchandise periodically. When alterations are poorly made, the customer is justified in returning the merchandise. If, however, the garment was taken out of the store on approval and damaged, then accepting it back into the stock can cost the manager significantly in the long run. When the manager is satisfied with a liberal policy of accepting returned merchandise and believes it is justified in terms of the increased sales it encourages, he may be wise to maintain the policy.

Working with customers.—Customers most often stop patronizing a particular store because they find the sales personnel to be ignorant or incompetent, uninteresting, or uninterested in the customers, and not because of the store's merchandise, prices, or customer services.  

Even when customers are tolerant of a sales person's ignorance of the merchandise, the "indifference" expressed toward the customer usually ranks high on a list of causes of customer loss. As a result, sales personnel should learn to exercise self-management in working with difficult customers and pleasant customers, alike.

Self-management of time and ability to communicate to customers can help the sales person learn to present himself in a manner which will make customers feel as guests and not intruders. This can include a self-study (not in the realm of psychoanalysis) to learn about causes of lost sales and lost customers. An irritating personality, unkempt person, or even bad breath could be the cause.

Other factors such as too much aggressiveness or too frequent attempts at substitute selling can drive customers away. Self-study can often help the sales person identify that he possesses the negative points and positive points discussed in this paper. If he can be honest in his self-study, he might realize that he often misrepresents the quality of the merchandise. By being aware of his negative selling points, a sales person can strive to improve himself and make himself more effective on the job.
Being friendly makes customers feel responsive to a sales person. In addition, being able to call customers by name can reward the sales person with increased sales because people enjoy being addressed by their names in the buying process. The wide use of charge cards makes this increasingly possible for sales personnel.

Remembering color or style preferences of individual customers adds a personal touch to the communication process in selling. Some sales personnel find it to their advantage to keep a record of purchases of their most loyal customers with date of last purchase, significant items purchased, and other important data. Such data can help the sales person develop an effective relationship with the customer and can be valuable for use in telephone selling.

By exercising self-management, the sales person can help build his own career. Improvement of the selling process is always possible. Usually, sales personnel can develop particular sales techniques which are successful with certain customers and it is to the advantage of the sales person to keep searching to make his own selling approach more effective.

In working with difficult customers, sales personnel are usually required to be extremely gentle in their
communication processes. Some days, a majority of customers may appear to be difficult ones, that is, those who express some degree of hostility or antagonism toward the sales person or the store for no apparent reason.

Even though it is often difficult for the sales person to restrain his own emotions, whenever he comes in contact with a difficult customer, he should do whatever he can to avoid adding to the customer's antagonism. When a sales person attempts to handle the situation by "meeting the customer on his own terms," then he usually creates an unpleasant scene on the sales floor, drives a customer away permanently, and creates a significant amount of ill will for the store.

Sales personnel who can learn to assume the role of a host will usually find it easier to control his own tendency to be unpleasant with a customer. The worst course of action a sales person can take in serving a difficult customer is to let himself become angry. Often the final result is that the customer may demand to see the manager and the sales person will get reprimanded for causing a scene which was not entirely his own doing.

Sales personnel who can listen quietly and sympathetically can usually make the customer relax. Gentle, positive
responses can help turn the situation into a comfortable exchange of feelings and thoughts. Whether any merchandise is sold in such a situation is often irrelevant. Goodwill can usually be created and the sales person can develop a certain strength for handling such situations in the future.

Specific Job Training

In addition to the general duties which sales personnel are expected to perform well in the retailing establishment, specific duties are often assigned which may vary from store to store, and from individual to individual in the sales force.

The two primary categories of concern are those related to the nature of the stock being sold and the specifically-defined duties which are assigned to the individuals in the sales force in order to make the selling process more effective.

Nature of the Stock

Knowledge of the merchandise is almost mandatory if the sales person is to fully develop his sales ability in retailing. Also, knowledge of sources of information about the merchandise is often important for the individual sales person.
Product knowledge.—Successful sales persons are often those who have a high degree of product knowledge. Yet, product knowledge, alone, is inadequate. Knowledge of the technical aspects of the merchandise is helpful for the sales personnel only if it can be translated into customer benefits during the sales conversation with the customer.

Excessive knowledge of the technical aspects of the merchandise can often be harmful. The more a sales person knows about the technical features of his product, the more apt he is to talk about the technical features and fail to answer the customer's question (not always verbally expressed) "What will it do for me?" 26

Customers will usually ask sales personnel questions about the merchandise. In fact, customers will even ask the sales person for opinions, preferences, or personal convictions concerning the merchandise. In such instances, the customer is assuming that the sales person is knowledgeable about the product and can convert his knowledge of the technical aspects into buyer benefits.

Specific product facts which should be familiar to the sales person include the identity of the manufacturer, garment construction, finish, style, price, size, color, and model. Further, the sales person should know how the merchandise can best be used, its performance and its limitations, the care it requires, and the services, if any, which are available with the product.

As price of the merchandise lines increases, the knowledge which the sales person is expected to have also increases. It is particularly important in the merchandising of apparel and accessory items that the sales person be equipped with knowledge of garment care. Since care instructions are now permanently attached to the garment, the process of acquiring such knowledge is greatly simplified. In fact, the sales person need only point out the care label as it appears on the garment, itself.

As the sales person's knowledge of the product increases, it will be easier for him to present the merchandise in a positive manner and meet objections (up to a point). Product knowledge can also give a sales person self-confidence and make him more at ease in the selling process.

Assuming the importance of product knowledge, being aware of sources of product information is equally important for both the manager and the sales personnel.
The most obvious source of information is a study of the merchandise, itself. Labels and other descriptive material can be studied; construction patterns can be noted; hidden values such as stitching, reinforcing, and button work can be analyzed.

The printed materials which are attached to the merchandise can be studied by the sales person and even used as a reference for the customer when questions are asked relating to that material.

The manager functioning as a buyer is a good source of information in that he selected the merchandise at the apparel market. He probably has very good ideas as to sales features of the merchandise as it was pointed out to him at the market. When merchandise arrives at the store from the manufacturer, the manager can brief the sales personnel concerning positive features.

Information concerning product use and care is often passed from more experienced sales personnel to new employees or from customers to sales personnel. Such information is often helpful to the sales person when he is asked questions concerning product use.

Manufacturers of the merchandise are usually more than willing and able to provide product information for sales personnel. Descriptive brochures, guided tours through the
factory, and question and answer sessions are all valuable for the sales person in his quest to increase his product knowledge.

Trade journals published for the various merchandise fields contain information on products, current manufacturing processes, new uses for products, and specific sales points.

The Small Business Administration has prepared many brochures which can be an aid for sales personnel.

Advertising which appears in newspapers and magazines contains information about apparel and accessories. Sales persons can even clip pictures showing merchandise being worn and display the clippings in the store area near the relevant merchandise.

**Specific Duties**

Specific duties can be assigned to individual employees because either the duties do not warrant the attention of all employees or one specific employee possesses a special talent for performing the duty in question.

Ignorance of responsibility for specific duties can cause a sales person to quickly fall from favor of the manager. Even though a sales person may be aware of the general sales duties involved in his job, he may be totally
unaware that he is responsible for performing any specific duties which the other employees do not perform.

Knowledge of responsibility for specific duties is important in the sales process and the maintenance of good human relations within the store. When each employee is aware of the individual duties assigned to him, there will be less cause for failure to perform because of poor communications between manager and employee.

If the manager has utilized a job description in the selection process, then the duties to be performed and the employees responsible for their performance will already be determined. Many managers, however, do not use such job descriptions and still assume that each employee knows exactly what is expected of him, even though he has never been told exactly what he was selected to do in the store other than "sell."

Duties which appear to be overlooked often in the process of assigning duties are those which are not particularly time-consuming or those which appear to require no particular skill. It is assumed that "anyone can do that" and that "someone will do it." Such a list of duties might include setting the stock in order every morning, cleaning sales counters, replacing stock from the fitting rooms,
mending garments when a button is loose or a stitch is torn, or straightening the stock during the course of the day. These activities must be performed and they can be performed with a great deal of ease when it is clearly understood the time at which they are to be performed and who the responsible employee is.

Often, the manager will assume that everyone should be responsible for straightening the stock at the beginning of the sales day. He might assume that but that is usually not what happens. To make it easier for the employees and to insure that the stock gets straightened, the manager can list that duty on the job description for each employee who is to assume that responsibility. Completed job descriptions should be posted in an area accessible to employees only. Then, daily acquaintance with the posted descriptions will remind employees of their duties, and there will be little confusion concerning who is responsible for which activity.

The Employee Handbook

Handbooks can provide a formal means of informing employees of many important aspects of relationships with the employer. Three primary purposes exist for the construction and distribution of such a handbook.
A handbook should introduce the employee to the store in order that he may become more familiar with it quickly and effectively. A short history of the store and plans for its future can be included for this purpose.

A second purpose of the handbook is to provide information to the employee concerning rules and procedures and benefits the store has to offer. Specific items such as reporting absences and utilization of store discounts can be explained in detail.

The third purpose is to provide for the employee a ready source of reference wherein information may be sought when the need arises. 27

In fulfilling these purposes, the handbook can cover a wide range of subjects such as purpose of the handbook; a welcome to the new employee; history of the store; employee benefits, privileges, services, and facilities; job information such as pay, hours of work, suggestion system, training, sources of product information; and general information related to parking facilities, legal regulations which affect employment, and other subject areas relevant to employment in the store.

In addition, information can be included concerning addresses of all employees, action to take in case of an accident on the premises, making discount sales to employees, fire prevention, uses of telephone for personal calls, resignation and termination policies, names and addresses of companies which provide service for the heating and cooling systems in the store.

The name, address, and telephone number of the "house physician" should be included for employees who may need medical attention during store hours.

Additional subject areas can be included as the manager believes them to be necessary.

A handbook need not be a large bound volume which costs the retailer considerably to have printed and distributed. It can be mimeographed copies and consist only of sufficient length to say whatever the manager believes should be said. Rather than making the handbook an item for display, the manager should strive to make it a communication tool.

The tone of the handbook can do much to help the employees follow the policies. If the handbook is largely negative in tone (don't do this or that), then a negative tone is established in the employee's mind. If, however, the handbook is worded in a friendly manner which expresses
the concern of management, then policy enforcement may be easy for all concerned.

The real value of the handbook lies in its ability to serve as a written guide for the employee. If the sales personnel and other employees can find answers to their questions in it and define a course of action without relying on the suggestions of other employees, then rumor will not rule the company. There can be a savings of words, dollars, and time for everyone involved.

Continuous Training

The initial training provided by the manager at the time of a new employee's selection can do much to aid in the selling process and provide greater effectiveness for the new employee in the store. Yet, it cannot be assumed that training is forever finished at the time the initial training program is completed.

Rather, to maintain the effectiveness of the employee at a high level, reinforcement is needed in the form of continuous training. It can be arranged at regular intervals or as needed in order to improve effectiveness of the sales personnel and, in some way, modify their behavior on the job.

In the case of the population being studied here, continuous training can be achieved through general
reinforcement and through seasonal orientation, which is usually mandatory because of the seasonal nature of apparel and accessories and the high degree of fashion obsolescence.

The need for this continuous training can often be determined when the manager conducts an employee performance appraisal to determine which aspects of employee behavior are highly effective and which need modification.

Performance Appraisal

Before the need for general reinforcement can be established, a performance appraisal should be conducted to determine how closely the employees are conforming to the effectiveness level desired by the manager. A question for concern here is, "How can performance really be appraised in retailing?"

Some factors of job performance can be measured statistically. These factors include sales, percentage of merchandise returns, attendance records, and selling costs per employee. Other factors can be measured subjectively. These include job attitude, attention to detail, loyalty to the store, interpersonal relations with other employees, willingness to improve sales techniques.

Because the job of the retail sales person includes so wide a range of duties, any fair appraisal of a sales
person's performance should take all of these duties into consideration and not only the sales figure.  

In the small retailing establishment, the appraisal process may be informal. The formality of the process is not so important as is the effectiveness of the process. The knowledge among employees that they are being judged fairly, and that superior performance is recognized and rewarded, contributes to high morale. In that regard, almost any relevant systematic rating method, properly used, can be helpful.

No method can automatically yield an absolute appraisal of any employee. The value lies in providing a consistent basis for comparing one employee with another, and each employee with the established levels of expected performance.

The rating method used should provide for a short, simple, and easy to use scale. Factors which are considered significant in the individual retailer's store situation should be included in the rating process, and not necessarily factors which other retailers are using.

The use of a printed or written form for appraisal is encouraged for several reasons. Such a form forces a manager to think in terms of many factors which lead to high performance. Otherwise, he might think of only one
or two. Without a written form, the manager is likely to concentrate on the sales volume achieved by individual employees. With a form, the manager is likely to include other factors such as customer relations, job attitude, and others.

When several rating factors appear on a form in front on the manager, he is less likely to make generalizations concerning their performance. If a scale of one to ten is used, some assignment of performance levels is required and the manager is required to form a more concise opinion than to say, "Sue is selling about as well as Mary," or "Sue is selling about as well as she did last year."

The written rating scale, when used in the performance appraisal, can provide a permanent record against which the progress of the sales person can be charted.

Because one of the primary functions of performance appraisal is to provide feedback to the employee, the data accumulated in the appraisal process is of little value in changing the employee's behavior unless each employee is told frankly how he stands in the ratings. It is essential that employees know to what degree their work is acceptable and satisfactory.

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In discussing the ratings with the individual employee, the manager should attempt to cite specific instances of superior performance and point out areas in which the employee could improve his sales effectiveness. Specific suggestions on improvements can do much to help the employee actually increase his effectiveness.

Despite the manager's attempt to make the performance appraisal process objective, complete objectivity can never be achieved. No rating system can ever be more than a tool. Yet, performance appraisal, when conducted fairly, can provide the manager with a fairly accurate profile of his employees' performance.

The recorded appraisal forms can serve as permanent records for discussions concerning promotions, pay increases, and other awards and honors. They are the manager's best substantiation for action he takes related to any employee's change in status.

The appraisal process can help the manager organize his own thoughts about employee performance and he can, through feedback, help employees modify their behavior and improve their selling abilities.
General Reinforcement

Each time an employee learns to do another job or improve his skills beyond the skills he presently possesses, both the manager and the employee can benefit. (That is, unless the employee becomes overqualified for the job and terminates his employment.)

Almost any basic skill can be improved upon, and when it is, the manager has an advantage over the employer who is satisfied with status quo.

In order to benefit most from continuous training, the manager, himself, must remain ready to learn new skills and upgrade his already acquired skills. His willingness to change can set the tone of acceptance for employees when the time for continuous training comes.

In the small store, general reinforcement may occur one morning each week when the employees are requested to arrive for work early (with pay). During this time, the manager may teach needed skills and discuss valuable information such as new developments in merchandising, strategy of increasing sales during an approaching season, apprehending shoplifters, or opening new charge accounts for teenagers. Such dialogue can be used to develop the employee's thought process concerning methods in which
individual sales persons can work together to become more effective.

Developing selling abilities or the facility for working with customers can center around a weekly discussion of difficult customers. When sales persons have the opportunity to relate to the manager and other employees details of dealing with difficult customers, the impact of such an incident lessens and allows the sales person to concentrate upon the selling situation and not the unpleasant incident. A group discussion concerning how to best serve difficult customers can provide a helpful therapy for the discussants. Knowing that he has the moral support of the manager and the other employees, the sales person might find it easier to remain neutral during the next such situation.

Whenever a salesman representing a manufacturer comes into the store, general reinforcement can be provided if the manager will encourage the sales personnel who are available to listen to the delivery and sales points of the representative. The exposure to and storage of valuable product knowledge can help the sales person later when he is showing the merchandise to customers.

General reinforcement can take the form of instructing employees on the use of a new cash register, a bank charge unit, new sales tickets, or revised layaway forms.
Any occasion which causes a manager to remark, "I wish my sales personnel knew how to . . ." can serve as an incentive for organization of continuous training. Whatever new activities demand to be performed, the manager can provide training for the employees who are expected to perform those activities. Effective performance of any activity can hardly be expected when the employee has not been shown how to perform the activity.

**Seasonal Orientation**

Because of the seasonal nature of the apparel and accessory industry, seasonal orientation is of great importance to the retailing manager. Fashions, fabrics, and emphasis change from season to season. It is important that sales personnel be able to advise customers concerning the popularity of fashions for the coming season as well as for the current season.

A tour through the garment factory can provide seasonal orientation for the manager and the employees. Visits to trade shows, buyers' markets, and related industry factories can sharpen the employee's seasonal understanding of the apparel and accessory industry.

By inviting employees to attend the buyers' market,
he selects, instruct the employee as to the arrival date of the merchandise, and provide advice concerning how to receive the merchandise into the store.

When the selected merchandise actually arrives at the retailing establishment, the manager can meet with the sales personnel to discuss characteristics of the merchandise and points to emphasize in the sales process. By the time the merchandise is placed in the garment racks for sale, the employees are equipped to sell it effectively because they have become familiar with it before the season began.

Seasonal orientation can also be used to encourage employees to sell marked-down merchandise. If the manager is anxious to clear a particular garment rack because he expects the arrival of new merchandise, he can utilize seasonal orientation to discuss with the employees methods of directing customer attention toward the merchandise which is out of season.

Other seasons such as "the rainy season," "Easter season," or "the back-to-school season," are examples of times when the employees can benefit from sessions in which their selling skills are directed specifically toward a promotional idea.

Seasonal orientation should equip the employee with sufficient confidence and communicative skills to allow
him to increase his effectiveness during a seasonal period. It can serve to reinforce general training and can be a significant aid to the manager who is trying to keep abreast of and introduce to the employees seasonal developments.

General job training, specific job training, the employee handbook, and continuous training are the important aspects of training which have been studied in this chapter. The training program which appears here is thought to be an integral part of the proposed system of selection and human resource development.

Further, retailing managers who can implement the training program will find the advantages to be numerous. Such a list of advantages included increased sales, reduced selling costs, standardized operating methods, increased productivity, greater ease in personnel administration activities, increased morale, and lower labor turnover.

The remaining aspect which deserves attention in this study is that of implementation of the system.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective personnel teamwork in small retailing establishments where apparel and accessories are sold calls for more than a collection of individuals doing the best they can. It calls for a system of selection and human resource development. This means, among other things, effective regulation of forecasting personnel requirements, recruiting and selection, testing, training, evaluation, and retraining.

More is called for than haphazardly selecting employees. Qualified employees should be matched to the various tasks to be performed, and a program should exist for training the employees to help them better perform their duties.

Tabulation of the primary data in the study revealed that of the fifty-four usable responses, not one respondent uses a written statement of needed qualities when interviewing and hiring sales personnel. Further, not one of the respondents has a written training program, and not one has ever witnessed one in action.
Interviewing and hiring appear to be conducted in an unorganized manner and the retailers who responded tend to rely on memory to help them determine the degree to which employee qualities suit the needs of their own store situations.

Even though 92 per cent of the respondents believe the effect of the sales personnel's efforts to increase sales is great, less than one fourth of the respondents conduct on-the-job training in their store, and more than 28 per cent perceive no need for such training.

Yet, if retailing managers are to compete, they must consider their sales personnel's quality as a competitive tool in the retailing process.

The system of selection and human resource development proposed here can help the manager improve the quality of sales personnel. The serious question for consideration at this point concerns implementation of the system.

Since there exists a great reluctance on the part of many retailers to allow anyone to "interfere" with his daily operations, great care must be exercised to implement the system and provide assurance to the retailer that no attempt is being made to incite his employees.
A "Christmas Seminar" could be organized as one method of implementing the system. It could be established for the purpose of training part-time employees for Christmas employment. Such a seminar could be designed to provide ten hours of instruction and training for each person participating, and managers who have already hired these persons could be asked to pay a nominal tuition for each person enrolled. At the end of the employment period, the retailer could be invited into a seminar for the purpose of discussing the material taught in the seminar. He could also be asked to rate the employee on the basis of degree of proficiency shown in specific areas of performance on a scale rating. If the manager perceives effective performance as a result of the seminar, then it could be suggested that such an arrangement could help improve performance among the full-time employees in his store.

A second method of implementing the system is that of providing it to a marketing research or management services organization for implementation. A manager might be receptive to the idea of contracting with a research organization for the services more than he would to working with one individual who has written it and desires to implement it.
In addition, the system could be provided to trade organizations such as the National Retail Merchants Organization for implementation. The system could also be made available to the local chamber of commerce, or even directly to retailers.

The Small Business Administration is one source which could benefit from the system in that loan recipients could certainly benefit from the service.

There is no absolutely fail-proof recommendation for implementation of the system. Yet, it is hoped that one of the above mentioned avenues would open in order that retailers in the population being studied be able to increase employee effectiveness and compete in today's market place with a greater skill.
APPENDIX A

1. How many paid employees are working in your store currently?
   Fewer than 20 _______ Twenty or more _______

2. Of those currently employed, about how many are engaged primarily in sales activity? ______

3. When you are interviewing and hiring sales personnel, do you use a written list of needed qualities?
   Always______ Usually______ Seldom______ Never______

4. Do you believe your sales personnel's efforts are a very important factor in increasing your sales?
   Great effect______ Moderate effect______ No effect______

5. Which of the following factors best describe your training efforts? (Check as many as needed)
   Conducted in classes______ Covers salesmanship____
   Primarily for new personnel______ Written____
   Formal______ Involves continuous training______
   Covers nature of the goods______ Unwritten____
   Covers attitude______ Casual______ On the job______

6. Generally, when you think of paying someone to come into your store to conduct an organized training program, which of the following factors do you think of? (Check as many as needed.)
   Too expensive______ Necessary to increase sales____
   Worth the time involved______ Too academic______
Practical and worthwhile ______ Too time consuming______
Relatively inexpensive______ Complicated___________
Needed primarily for new personnel________________
Not really necessary________ Easy to conduct_______
Too time consuming_________

7. Generally, do you believe the quality of personnel in your store is:

Excellent____ Good____ Average____ Fair____ Poor____
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