

# Training In Retailing

MAURINE O. STAACK

The objective of training is to develop and maintain for the store, an effective store-wide work force. The work force is effective when each individual within it understands his job, has the attitude, skills, knowledge and habits necessary to successful performance of that job, and is well adjusted and happy in his work. The Training Department's responsibility is to plan and administer a continuing program to assure the accomplishment of this training objective.

There is a mobile hanging in one of the training rooms at Sterling Lindner Davis which is the symbol of training. It is characterized by ease of movement—it quickly responds to stimulus—it is easily moved, changeable, and versatile. This mobile is a simple form of art, but it requires hours of work and patience to construct. Just one extra coat of paint on one little piece of wood can throw it completely out of balance. If you visualize this mobile as a training program, the facets will represent:

- Induction training
- Systems training
- Salesmanship and courtesy training
- Merchandise and fashion training
- Supervisory training

Follow-through of training  
Retraining

The success of a training program depends upon the balance of these facets of training. The amount of time spent on each facet and the administration of the program varies according to the type of store and the number of people who are performing the training functions.

## INDUCTION TRAINING

All associates (employees) attend a one-hour meeting during the first week of employment. Material discussed includes a brief history of the store, the organization, the executives, the relationship and dependency of divisions upon each other to maintain high standard of customer service, policies and procedures, and employee benefits. Employee handbooks are distributed at the completion of this meeting.

## SYSTEMS TRAINING

All associates who sell or handle sales-checks attend class for 9½ hours in a two-day period to learn how to operate a sales register and record sales transactions. A manual explaining and illustrating the sales transaction is placed in each salesbook for use on the selling

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MAURINE O. STAACK attended Iowa State Teachers College before going to England as Hospital Secretary of a Red Cross Unit in World War II. Taught crafts in spare time. She has a B.A. degree from Missouri University and M.S. degree from New York University School of Retailing. Worked as secretary to Director of Allied Purchasing Corporation in New York for a year prior to becoming Administrator of Junior Executive Training Program. In 1952, transferred to Sterling, Lindner, Davis in Cleveland as Training Director. Occasionally teaches night adult education classes for Retail Merchants Board.

floor. Sales-supporting associates are trained on the job by department managers regarding specific job duties.

### SALESMANSHIP AND COURTESY TRAINING

As each type of sales transaction is explained in systems training, salesmanship and courtesy are reviewed preliminary to recording the sale. Department managers continue this training with weekly meetings using material provided by the Training Department. Periodic meetings in the training room are held to show and discuss salesmanship films. Willmark shopping reports are reviewed monthly with individuals as a follow-up training technique. Contests and incentive programs are in progress almost continuously to stimulate sales and production and to improve service. Salesmanship manuals are loaned to associates from the Training Department.

### MERCHANDISE AND FASHION TRAINING

Merchandise training is primarily a function of the department manager, but the Training Department schedules films and meetings with manufacturer's representatives, distributes merchandise manuals obtained from manufacturers and fact cards for use by salespeople to stimulate interest in developing a selling facts vocabulary. Fashion training in cooperation with the Fashion Coordinator, is developed through half-hour monthly fashion meetings and three-hour fashion clinics and shows prior to each season. Fashion manuals are distributed monthly to sales personnel and department managers follow through

with fashion merchandise presentation in informal daily meetings.

### SUPERVISORY TRAINING

Training program results can be achieved only through the department supervisors. One phase of training is authorization training in a two-hour session developing the reasons for requiring a supervisor's authorization and defining the responsibility of the supervisor in completing each type of transaction requiring authorization. The attitude of a supervisor in okaying a transaction is vitally important in building good customer relations.

Another phase of supervisory training is the Junior Executive Course. College graduates and young people selected from within the store attend two classes weekly, 1½-hour each, for eight months while rotating through all divisions of the store for on-the-job training. In the second year after placement, they attend a training class for 1½-hour a week for four months for an advanced course of study in merchandising techniques.

### FOLLOW-THROUGH PROGRAMS

A daily function of the Training Department is personal contact on the selling floor to observe salesmanship and courtesy and check sales transactions.

The Training Department administers a sponsor training program. A sponsor in a department assists and advises new sales people during the first week of employment.

A sales error program with daily information provided by the sales-supporting departments and daily individual follow-up is the direct responsibility of the Training Department.

(Continued on page 31)

value of the training function. If the ideas and philosophies and goals of training are designed to contribute to the efficiency of the system within which they operate, then it becomes necessary to determine where they have or have not been successful. Subjective statements of value are not sufficient to indicate progress or failure. The use of specific measurement techniques as the method of identifying success is as important to training as the profit-loss statement is to determination of corporate success. The element of practicability should then be seen, in this instance, not in terms of negating the use of all measuring techniques but in terms of the selection of specific devices. Which technique, tool, or device will best serve in this instance?

The summation of this entire field of thought can be made in a statement of reality. As trainers, functioning within a corporate structure, we deal with practical men who measure the value of a program in realistic dollars and cents expended (or better still, invested) for the sole purpose of realizing a monetary profit through competitive endeavors. The value of training must be seen by them in terms of dollars saved through increased efficiency of those who receive the training. This can be done in only one way—an intense, objective evaluation that has its inception from the very beginning in terms of objectives—criteria—measurement. This cannot be done for self-aggrandizement or for establishing a halo for training but must be done to establish firmly the merits of training in assisting supervisors, managers, executives in increasing their efficiency as the needs present themselves.

## RETAILING

(Continued from page 27)

### RETRAINING

Dependent upon the need, retraining is accomplished through an individual conference, a department meeting, a division meeting, store-wide retraining when a major change in systems occurs, or department notices for follow-through by the department supervisor.

Training in retailing is not a task for one or two training specialists, but rather a store-wide operation. The results of training are reflected in the daily sales sheet, the monthly operating statement and the yearly profit and loss statement. The effect of training is judged daily by the customers.

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