

A STUDY OF THE SALES TRAINING PROGRAMS OF EIGHT STORES IN
DENVER, COLORADO AND THE KANSAS CITY METROPOLITAN AREA

by 7214

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B. S., Kansas State University, 1970

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

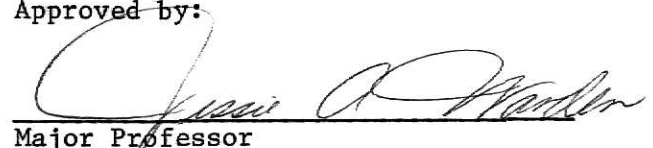
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Clothing, Textiles and Interior Design

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express sincere appreciation to Dr. Jessie Warden for her patience and guidance during the development of the study.

A special thank you is also extended to Mrs. Helen Brockman and Dr. Floyd H. Price for their helpful suggestions and for serving on the writer's committee.

Appreciation goes also to the retailers in Denver, Colorado and in the Kansas City Metropolitan area for their willingness to participate in the study.

A special expression of gratitude and appreciation goes to the author's parents, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Looney for their patience and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

Retail selling has the job of promoting a higher standard of living by stimulating the people to produce so that they may satisfy their wants and needs. Retail salesmanship is also important because it helps to keep the economy prosperous and it provides employment for those with varying educational backgrounds. Finally, retailing stimulates manufacturers to improve and discover new products (23, pp. 5-9). It would be hard to imagine what our society would be like without retail stores since retailing is one of the oldest, most necessary, and best known of all business organizations (26, p. 81). It is a large and complicated organization that has the job of serving all of the people.

Retail salesmanship is the most important function of retailing according to a number of authorities (3; 6; 22; 23). The salesperson is the one who has the job of helping the customers to make satisfactory purchases as well as promoting good will for the store. This job is not an easy one and at times it is discouraging and at other times it is rewarding. Since the salesperson holds one of the key jobs in any retail store (3, p. 2), the purpose of this study is to study existing sales training programs in Denver, Colorado and the Kansas City Metropolitan area to be used as a basis for improved training.

Sales employees learn to perform their important jobs in a variety of ways. It is the retailer's responsibility to train the salespersons. He may let the salespeople learn on their own, since it has been believed that a "salesman is born, not made" (22, p. 8). Many

retailers have discarded this idea and established training programs which would ideally enable each member of the store to understand what his job consists of, how to perform the job with the greatest amount of efficiency, and to motivate himself to use his abilities and skills to the greatest amount (25, p. 117). Training may become a very complex and detailed task but in the long run it can produce many benefits to the salespersons and to the retailers, as well as to the customers.

A successful retail operation is dependent on salespeople to know their jobs and to perform them efficiently. Retail training can provide this efficiency but researchers agree that the typical salesperson is "ill-mannered," "uninterested," "nonmotivated," and "poorly trained" even though the majority of retail stores have some training (20; 25). The sales personnel have this poor image because most of the retail training consists of store orientation and selling mechanics rather than salesmanship. A retail operation cannot operate under these conditions and still be as efficient and profitable as possible.

A successful sales training program can be very beneficial to a store. Some benefits of a successful training program are increased morale, and enthusiasm for the work and products (17, p. 65). When a store with a newly formed training program evaluated and compared the salespeoples' performances with their performances before the program was enacted, there were fewer errors in the paper details, register errors decreased, and letters from customers commenting on the courteous service increased. Improved employee morale and higher performance were also benefits for the store with the newly formed training program (20, pp. 45-46). Adequate training programs also result in lower selling

costs, increased employee earnings, reduction of employee turnover, and simplification of management's job of supervision (10, pp. 231-242).

The objectives of this study are:

1. To interview personnel directors in ready-to-wear stores in Denver, Colorado and the Kansas City Metropolitan area to find the type and amount of training given to newly hired salespeople.
2. To develop suggestions for improvements and updating the sales training programs for a more efficient and satisfactory sales force.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Since the beginning of retailing, there has been someone in every retail store who has sold the merchandise offered. When there were few sales employees, the training of these salespeople was limited. According to Harding, prior to World War II, retail salespeople normally did an excellent job of selling but today retail selling has almost become a lost art (11). In order for the salesperson to meet the expectation of the store to sell more merchandise, to extend services and courtesies to the customer, and to create good will towards the store, he needs to learn to sell.

Salesmanship

Salesmanship today is notably different from salesmanship around the turn of the century. The American Journal of Sociology in 1899, had a writer who defined retail salesmanship as, "To see that no one escaped without making a purchase" or "Let the buyer beware" (5, p. 17). Today salesmanship is regarded more highly than around the turn of the century.

There are a number of authorities in the field who have defined salesmanship. "Salesmanship is the art of providing products that won't come back to customers who will!" was George S. Jones' definition of salesmanship (6, p. 4). One of the great retailers, John Wannamaker defined salesmanship as "the art of so successfully demonstrating the merits of the goods and the services of a house that a permanent customer is made" (3, p. 143). J. S. Knox had a slightly different approach to

salesmanship. He said, "salesmanship is the power, or ability to influence people to buy at a mutual profit that which we have to sell but which they may not have thought of buying until we called their attention to it" (3, p. 143). These definitions and those offered by other authorities basically have two meanings. First, salesmanship is the method used to sell the goods and services of a store successfully, and secondly, it is the ability to sell the actual goods and services successfully (6, p. 2). It is also important to realize that successful salesmanship results in lasting satisfaction.

The Selling Process

The selling process includes the techniques and methods of successful selling. This process includes four major parts: the approach; the presentation of merchandise; the handling of objections; and the closing of the sale. In other words, the selling process goes through four operations: gaining attention, securing interest, creating desire, and helping with the decision (15, p. 167). Each part is important, not by itself but as a total operation.

The Approach. The approach or the opening of a sale is one of the most important steps in the selling process. The salesperson's first impression on the customer may determine whether or not a customer will become interested in the product offered (16, p. 131). The customer's first impressions are normally created by the characteristics of the salesperson. These characteristics include: the salesperson's actions which relate his attitude, his promptness in greeting the customer at the proper time, his ability of finding what the customer is

looking for without asking too many questions, and the salesperson's personal appearance (23, pp. 258-259). All of these factors help the customer make the first impression about the store and this impression may determine the outcome of the sale.

The Presentation of Merchandise. Now the sales approach has taken place, and the sale is under way, the presenting of the merchandise is the next important step. The customer's attention has been caught but the interest must be held in order to continue the selling process. Good sales planning is a must and the most important thing in sales planning is the knowledge of the merchandise in the department (7, p. 51). Some of the items included in the product knowledge are what is in the stock, where it is located, characteristics of the merchandise, and the history or a story about the product. Another factor in sales presentation is the showing of the goods after the customer's needs and interests are discovered. This includes the showing of the merchandise promptly, in the right price, quality and quantity (23, pp. 279-281). Unless the customer's interest is preserved throughout the sales presentation, a sale cannot take place. Proper product presentation and knowledge helps to preserve the customer's interest.

Handling Objections. During the sales presentation a customer may have an objection regarding the merchandise. It is important for the salesperson to be able to handle these. The salesperson should be aware of possible objections about the merchandise, and bring these out before the customer, as this tends to make the objection less forceful and tends to strengthen the sales talk (15, p. 181). When an objection

is made by the customer there are a number of paths a salesperson can take. One way is to turn the objection into a selling point, or the objection may be admitted and then a superior feature may be brought out, or the objection may be denied (23, p. 375). Handling objections takes a great deal of skill and knowledge of why the customer is really objecting to the merchandise. A sale that is about to be lost may be saved if the objections are handled properly.

Closing the Sale. The final step, closing the sale, needs to be handled just as carefully as the other three steps. Finding the proper time to close the sale is one of the difficulties a salesperson faces. The best way to overcome this difficulty is to observe the customer carefully (5, p. 230). A sale may be lost if the salesperson talks too long. Closing the sale may be done so by words, such as referring to the approval of the customer or by other reasons for buying the article now, or by actions, such as eliminating goods that were not desirable (15, pp. 193-195). After discovering the proper moment to close, the salesperson needs to take advantage of it and do so! Before writing up the sales receipt, the salesperson should suggest other merchandise and if other merchandise is not needed the salesperson needs to show appreciation to the customer and ask him to return (16, p. 173).

The Salesperson

Selling is the most important job in a retail establishment and the salespeople are the ones who fulfill this responsibility. They are the ones the store depends on to serve and sell its merchandise to the customers. A noted authority on store organization stated, "A whole

department store is nothing but each individual salesperson in front of the merchandise, with one particular piece of merchandise in her hand, discussing it with the customer. Every other activity of the store is legitimate in so far as it centers at that point and illegitimate in so far as it does not" (16, p. 4).

The salespersons are not only responsible for the selling of the merchandise, they are also responsible for the image of the store. The impression the salespersons leave with the customers may be the determining factor as to whether or not the customers return again (16, p. 4).

What characteristics does a retail salesperson need to have? The ideal salesperson might believe in a creed similar to one published in 1919.

I believe in the goods I am selling, in the concern I am working for, and in my ability to get results. I believe in working, not waiting, in laughing, not weeping, in boosting, not knocking; and in the pleasure of selling I believe that a man gets what he goes after and that no man is down and out until he has lost faith in himself. I believe in courtesy, in kindness, in generosity, in good cheer, in friendship, and in honest competition. I believe there is an order somewhere for every man who is ready to take one. I believe I'm ready, and ready right now (5, p. 2).

In 1918, 1921, and 1966 several authorities (15, 16, 23) on retail salesmanship defined some of the special qualities for a selling personality.

Retail selling is a difficult and complex job because it is dealing with human nature which is usually unpredictable. The salesperson needs a shrewd insight into the thoughts, feelings, and moods of the customers (16, p. 9). The retail salesperson is indeed a unique

individual with special characteristics.

Enthusiasm. One of the most important qualities a salesperson can acquire is enthusiasm. This includes enthusiasm for the store, for the merchandise, and for the salesperson's job. In order to achieve this quality, the salesperson needs to be thoroughly knowledgeable in his area (15, p. 117). Ralph Waldo Emerson in *Circles* said, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

Honesty. Good salesmanship includes honesty of the salesperson to his store and to the customer (16, p. 33). In order for a customer to receive the service he is paying for, the salesperson must be honest. Honesty includes "the fairness and the straight forwardness in conduct, thought, and speech" (15, p. 121).

Tact. No matter how much knowledge about the merchandise and the store a salesperson has, he must be tactful at all times. Imagination and mental alertness are the keys to tactfulness according to Ivey (15, p. 135). Tact includes consideration to a customer and the presentation of a pleasant image to him (16, p. 28). Tact enables the salesperson to meet the difficulties of selling situations and still promote good will of the store.

Courtesy. Other than enthusiasm, courtesy is the greatest factor in the success of a retail store (5, p. 68). Customers do not only buy goods, they buy service along with the goods, and courtesy is part of this service (15, p. 142). In order for the salesperson to achieve this courtesy to its greatest potential, the salesperson needs to be sincere

and treat all customers and employees with the same attitude (16, p. 40).

Promptness. Corbin has estimated that a salesperson who is prompt receives between twenty-five and fifty percent more business than the salesperson who is slower in acknowledging the customer (15, p. 46). Promptness also includes the ability to find what the customer is looking for in a short period of time (24, p. 123). "Promptness implies tact, enthusiasm, cheerfulness, and other positive elements of personality. Without them, promptness is indeed handicapped" (15, p. 160).

Cheerfulness. A successful salesperson is normally a cheerful person, but the successful salesperson is honest about his cheerfulness. It is a natural and spontaneous action not just an image of cheerfulness (15, p. 161). A store with a lot of cheerfulness is usually a success.

Memory. A salesperson needs to be able to observe and retain the important facts of his job. Customers' names and purchases, the merchandise and its special qualities, and the store's services and policies are some of the important items for the salesperson to remember when he is serving the customer (24, p. 129).

Not all salespeople have these qualities when they start to work in a retail store but they need to acquire the ones they are lacking. It takes an unusual person to acquire these, a person with a desire to learn and help others.

Retail Sales Training

Sales training in a retail store is a sizeable job. It takes a

great deal of planning and organizing in order to be effective but Crooks reports it offers the best opportunity for improving retail selling (9, p. 85).

Existing Sales Training Programs. Sales training differs from store to store. What is "right" for one store is not necessarily "right" for another store. The time spent on initial training, additional training, content of the program, evaluation methods and training techniques vary to some extent depending upon the store and its needs.

The time devoted to initial classroom training is one of the variances between training programs. Berkowitz did a study on training programs in eight large eastern department stores. He found that seven of the stores spent two to three days on training. The eighth store spent twenty hours spread out in five and one-half days in the initial training. During this time, all of the stores except one tended to stress the mechanics of selling rather than salesmanship. One of the stores only offered the mechanics of selling in the program. The emphasis of salesmanship for the most part was placed in the hands of the trainee's sponsor or the department head (22).

The teaching techniques of the eight stores were very similar. All used the sponsor system to help the sales trainees after the initial training. In one store the sponsor system applied only to the full-time employees, whereas in the other stores the sponsors were assigned to both full-time and part-time employees. Four of the stores used programmed instruction, a method of self-instruction. One store used programmed instruction exclusively. Other techniques used were classroom lectures, films and slides, and role playing. Most stores had a

sales manual pertaining to salesmanship and/or mechanics of selling (22).

There are some new techniques for teaching the sales trainee which are not as widely known as the ones mentioned. One of these techniques is the use of closed-circuit television. This technique is relatively inexpensive and can be used for both training and communication (13, p. 53). Another technique is the "talk-back film, endless loop films," which are produced to represent specific sales situations (17, p. 19). The sales situation represented allowed the trainee to answer the objection or problem before proceeding. After the trainee has answered, the group may evaluate him and comment on his strong and weak points. Programmed instruction although not entirely new to retailing is worth considering because of its benefits. Some of these benefits include: each individual is taught the same thing everytime but at different speeds; the individual's correct response is reinforced; and by the end of the program, it is safe to assume the individual has workable knowledge about the subject (21, pp. 74-75). There is one problem about programmed instruction and that is it should not be used alone. There should be other teaching techniques used with PI (22). There are other new teaching techniques but closed circuit TV, films and programmed instruction are especially applicable for retail training.

The evaluation of the training program is probably one of the most important activities in the training. The evaluation should include the trainee and the program. The eight stores employed similar techniques of evaluation but their methods needed to be standardized

according to Berkowitz. The stores studied all used professional shoppers at some time during the year. These shoppers would evaluate the salesperson's ability to sell the merchandise. Written examinations on the mechanics of the sale were also widely used as a method of evaluation. Mechanical errors and sales productivity figures were also used as methods of evaluation as were written reports from the sponsors, the department managers, and personnel representatives. All of these methods of evaluation can be improved to some extent and are only effective if the salesperson responds the same way on the selling floor, according to Berkowitz. The training program and the evaluations are only as good as the people they train (22).

Summary

It is agreed by most authorities in the field of retailing that the salesperson is the most important person representing the store, and the best way for this employee to do his best is through a training program that instructs in the areas of salesmanship as well as the mechanics of selling and store orientation. It is also agreed that retail sales training programs need to be up-dated and improved. A retail store is dependent upon the salesperson to sell the merchandise, provide service to the customer and establish good-will towards the store.

PROCEDURES

The interview questions were developed from reading, personal experience, and suggestions from people in different areas of retailing. The questions were divided into several categories: who is responsible for the training and who actually does the training; where the training is conducted; what teaching aids and techniques are used; what is included in the content of the training program; what types of evaluation of the trainee is given; how long the training lasts; and, what comments the personnel manager has regarding the successes and future of the training program. Beneath most of the questions were possible answers the personnel director might give. This was done so the recording of the responses would be quicker. After the revisions were made the questions were tested.

The questionnaire was tried by interviewing four store managers in Manhattan, Kansas. This was to see if the questions were clear and precise and to see how long it would take to interview the personnel managers. A letter of introduction was given to each store manager when contacted in the store. The questionnaire was not revised (see Appendix A).

A list of stores in the Kansas City Metropolitan area and Denver, Colorado was compiled. From this list the stores were chosen for study because women's ready-to-wear was carried in varying price ranges and because the organizations were large enough to have five or more branch stores in the city and its surrounding suburban communities.

A letter of introduction was given to each personnel manager or training director when contacted in the store (see Appendix B). If convenient, the interview was conducted at that time. In two cases, it was necessary to return the following day. Training directors were interviewed and in another store the store manager was interviewed. Assurance was given that the names of the stores and personnel would be kept confidential.

FINDINGS

The names of the stores and the personnel managers and training directors will not be mentioned in the study to ensure the privacy of the stores and the personnel. Both of the cities are large metropolitan areas with surrounding suburban communities. According to the 1960 Census of Population, each city had a population of over nine hundred thousand people. This does not include the surrounding communities. Combining the two cities and their surrounding communities, there were ninety-two department stores and nine hundred and eighty apparel and accessory stores according to the 1967 Census of Business.

The stores included in the study varied in the type and in the number of branches found in the city.

There were eight stores that were included in the study. Four of the stores were subdivisions of large department store chains, such as Federated Department Stores and Allied Stores. Three of these stores had five branch stores in the city and surrounding suburbs. One of these had six branch stores. All of these were full line department stores. Two of the stores included in the study were independently owned specialty retail chains. One store had five branch stores in its community and specialized in women's ready-to-wear and accessories. The other store had eight stores in the surrounding area and specialized in ready-to-wear for men, women, and children. The other two stores in the study were members of national retail and catalogue chain stores. These stores were full line department stores also with seven and ten branch

stores in their communities.

Store A--Division of a Department Store Chain

Store A was a member of a large department store chain which was independent from the parent company. The training was developed by the store to fit its needs. There were five branch stores in the city and suburbs.

The training director in this store had the responsibility of training newly hired sales employees. A security officer was the only additional store employee who talked to the sales trainees. The instruction was conducted in the store using a training room and the selling floor. There was no training conducted outside of the store.

Store cash registers and charge plate equipment were used during the initial training. A company manual, company brochures, and booklets were given to each trainee to keep and use. A similar manual was found on the selling floor to help the salesperson who needed to review the procedures regarding recording the sale. Films, slides and filmstrips, and overhead transparencies were used as well as the instruction manual. This store used lectures, demonstrations, discussion, and role playing as teaching techniques.

The information regarding store orientation was quite thorough. It included the history of the store, the store's policies and regulations, and its goals and ideas. The categories of products sold in the store was discussed and a tour of some of the departments was given. Opportunities for advancement and the trainee's hours and schedule were also discussed. Employee's benefits were briefly discussed but would be covered more fully after the employee was eligible for them. One unique

feature not included in other orientation programs, was a who's who of the store's personnel. This included an organization chart with the executives' names and positions on it. Security and safety were also discussed at this time.

Salesmanship was discussed briefly. Approaching the customer, analyzing the customer, and handling objections were the topics covered. Information regarding the customers were given at this time which included the problem customer, the customer of today, courtesy and responsibility to the customer, and the services offered to the customer.

Product knowledge was not discussed at all during the initial training. But at the end of the training the sales trainee was given two forms to fill out regarding two different products in his department.

The training director allowed the trainee to suggest ways of creating new sales approaches and ways of improving customer satisfaction. This proved to be most effective when the employee was brought back for retraining.

The sales trainee was not evaluated during the training, at the end of the training, or after the training. The training lasted one and a half days. Most of the time was spent on recording the sales. One and a half hours were spent on the selling floor to acquaint the trainees to the department. All newly hired sales employees were trained the same way no matter how much experience they had previously.

At the time, the main problem of the training program as expressed by the training director was the short period of time allowed for training. The program was constantly changing to stay up with the

changes made in the store. One new development was the trainee going to the selling floor before the training was completed.

Store B--Specialty Retail Chain Store

Store B was an independently owned ready-to-wear store for men, women, and children and had eight branch stores in the community.

This store had a unique situation, in that it did not have an organized training program. The floor manager had the responsibility of training the sales employee. Management personnel from the store's offices did not talk to the trainees during their training. The training was conducted entirely on the selling floor. No outside source was used for the training of sales employees.

Store equipment was not used in the training because the cashiers were the only ones who used any store equipment. No reading materials and audio-visual aids were used. On-the-job training and lectures were the only teaching techniques used.

Information regarding the store organization was included. The store's policies and regulations, its goals and ideas were discussed. Also, categories of products sold, location of departments, opportunities for advancement, employee benefits and selling hours and schedules were discussed.

Information regarding recording of the sale and salesmanship policies were not discussed but product knowledge and customer relations were. The information regarding product knowledge was quite thorough since the training was done in the trainee's department. Information ranging from price, brand names, sizes and fit, quality, special features, construction, and labels was discussed. For some products

the history was given.

Courtesy and responsibility to the customer was stressed. A bonus was paid to a courteous salesperson if a customer wrote to the store telling about his helpful performance. The salespersons were informed of services offered to the customer. The sales trainee was given an opportunity to make suggestions about improving customer satisfaction and improving the training program. The salesperson was also paid for helpful suggestions.

The trainee was evaluated by a written report from the department manager and the supervisor thirty days after the trainee started work. The trainee was also corrected on mistakes that he made during the day.

The initial training lasted about one hour but on-the-job training lasted as long as the person was employed. All salespeople are trained the same no matter how much experience or inexperience they may have had.

The store manager felt there were a number of things wrong with the program. He felt there should be a company training manual or booklets. He also felt there should be information regarding salesmanship in the form of classroom work. He thought that the sponsor system might be beneficial to the trainee in learning about salesmanship. At this time, the management personnel were working on a training program to improve the existing program.

Store C--Division of a Department Store Chain

Store C was a large full line department store with five branch stores in the area.

This store had a training director who was responsible for the training of the sales employees as well as actually training them. The training was conducted in the store in a training laboratory without the use of any outside source such as a junior college or vocational technical school.

Cash registers and adding machines were the store equipment used in the training. Company booklets and brochures and a company manual were used for selling information. Promotional materials from manufacturers were used as sample study material. Films, slides and film strips, and overhead transparencies were used as training aids during the initial training. Lectures and demonstrations were the teaching techniques used.

This store also had a thorough store orientation program. The history of the store, its policies, regulations, goals and ideas were discussed. Information regarding the categories of products sold and the location of the departments of the store. A tour of the store was also given. Opportunities for advancement, employee benefits, and the trainee's selling hours and schedule were discussed at that time.

Information regarding the recording of the sale included everything about the sale. The use of the cash register and the company charge plate were discussed as were counting change and figuring sales tax. All information regarding sales transactions and writing credits and refunds were also discussed.

"What is good salesmanship" was the main topic discussed regarding salesmanship. The trainee was allowed to suggest ways of approaching the customer. Briefly, samples of various products were shown but

other than that product information was taught after the initial training.

Courtesy and responsibility to the customer were also discussed. The sales trainee was allowed to suggest new ways of improving customer satisfaction. The trainee also had the opportunity to make suggestions for the improvement of the training program.

The only evaluation of the sales trainee was by observation of the training director during the one day of training. All newly hired employees were trained the same way so that they would learn the procedures of the store.

The trainer's opinion of the existing program was good even though there were some problems in the training program. The trainer felt the classes were too large for special occasions. The trainer also said the training would include role playing in the near future. Other improvements being made in the program were expanding the training department by adding more rooms and equipment. Also, the individual departments would be included in the training so the trainee would become acquainted with his department before starting to work on the floor.

Store D--Division of a Department Store Chain

The training manager which was an upper management position and the training coordinator which was a junior management position were responsible for the training of the newly hired sales employees. Both actually did the training. Other management personnel did not participate in the sales training. The initial training was taught in a room designed for sales training in the store.

This room was equipped with three types of cash registers as well as charge plate equipment. The trainee was given a company instruction booklet which included history of the store and other information about the company. This booklet was prepared locally. Films were used occasionally and a slide presentation was being prepared for store orientation. Lectures were the main teaching technique used although group discussion was recommended as well.

As a part of the store orientation program, a tour of the store was given to show the location of the departments. Opportunities for advancement and selling hours and schedule were discussed. Great detail was placed on the employee benefits.

The trainers emphasized the mechanics of selling. This area included the methods for recording the sale, use of cash register, counting change, use of company charge, writing of sales receipts, credits and refunds, and figuring sales tax. The location of where the sales tickets were to be placed was stressed.

Salesmanship and product knowledge was not discussed at the time of initial training. A sponsor was given the responsibility to do this. Information was included about the customer and customer relations. Courtesy and responsibility to the customer as well as services offered to the customer were discussed at this time.

There was no evaluation of the trainee during, at the end, or after the training. The training lasted one day as most of the information was taught after the trainee started selling.

At this time the training director felt the training program was too brief and retraining was needed after the initial training. It was

also felt that the older salespeople needed to be retrained. The newest development in the training program was the development of a slide presentation on store orientation.

Store E--Division of a Department Store Chain

Store E, a full line department store, had five branch stores in the community.

The personnel office in this store had the responsibility of training the sales employees. The staff in the personnel office was in charge of the training. Neither a buyer or other management personnel, at any time, came in to meet with the sales trainees.

The initial training was conducted in the store in a training laboratory which was equipped with cash registers and charge plate equipment. A company manual and company booklets and brochures were used. As a text, the store had an enormous amount of material on selling. Films were the only audio-visual equipment used. Teaching techniques included discussions and questions and answers.

The importance of the salesperson's job, store housekeeping, and safety were unique features in this training program and store orientation. The history of the store, its policies, regulations, goals, and ideas were discussed at the same time. The categories of products sold and the location of the departments in the store were explained. Opportunities for advancement, employee benefits, and selling hours and schedule were also discussed.

The total sales transaction was discussed in relation to recording the sale. The use of the cash register and company charge were discussed as was counting change. Sales receipts, credits, and refunds

and figuring tax were also included.

Salesmanship was discussed at the time of initial training. The entire selling process was covered as was personal appearance. Inter-departmental display techniques and policies were discussed but product knowledge was not discussed.

Emphasis was placed on customer relations and the customer. Courtesy and responsibility to the customer as well as the services offered to the customer were discussed.

When the trainee returned to the training room after six months of work, suggestions for creating new sales approaches was discussed. The training director felt the trainee had a chance to see how the customer may be approached. At no time was the sales trainee evaluated either in the first eight hours of training (initial training) or in the second training.

The trainer felt the training program was good but needed to be improved. He suggested to divide the training into two days in order to include on-the-job training.

Store F--A National Retail and Catalogue Chain Store

Store F was a full line department store with ten branch stores in the community.

The personnel department was responsible for the training of the newly hired sales employees in this store but the authority was delegated to the training director. Management personnel did not talk to the sales trainee during the training. The training was conducted in the store in a training room, which was equipped with cash registers and charge plate equipment. A company training manual was used during the initial

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RECEIVED FROM
CUSTOMER.**

decrease in labor turnover. It was felt this occurred because the store was people oriented. Since the only problem was the cost of the training, the store was willing to pay for this extra cost. There were no plans for change in the store because the parent store was the one who planned the training and this was done a year in advance.

Store G--National Retail and Catalogue Chain Store

Store G was a full line department store with seven branch stores in the community.

The personnel manager had the responsibility of training the new sales employees as well as actually training them. Management personnel did not talk to the sales trainees' classes. The training was conducted in the store in a conference room. The only time training would be conducted outside the store was when the trainee was in a specialized area, such as cosmetics.

The equipment used in the training included cash registers and charge plate equipment. Company booklets and brochures were used to explain the merchandise and show how to read the tickets. The booklets were required reading. Films and demonstrations were used.

Orientation included the store's goals and ideas and its policies and regulations. Employee benefits, selling hours, schedule, and checking in were also discussed at this time.

The entire process of recording the sale was discussed. Explanations were made on how to use the register and charge equipment, how to write all transactions, figure tax and count change.

Suggestion selling and merchandise location was the information included in the teaching of salesmanship. Product information was not

covered. The customer and customer relations were discussed. Topics included in this area were the emphasizing of the customer comes first or courtesy and responsibility to the customer and information regarding the services to the customer.

The initial training included on-the-job training. The sales trainees went to class for four hours and then spent the rest of the day on the selling floor. The next day, they would return to the classroom for another four hours of training. The trainees were evaluated six months after the training by a personnel training supervisor.

The personnel manager felt that the existing program was quite effective. If one of the trainees did not understand the information covered, he returned for the training again. The only change in the program was that the centralized training office was sending more training material.

Store H--Specialty Retail Chain Store

This store was an independently owned women's ready-to-wear specialty shop with five stores in the community.

In this store, the training director had direct responsibility for the training of sales employees and for the actual training of the newly hired sales employees. All training was conducted in the store in a training room for one day.

Charge plate equipment and a book of sales receipts were the store equipment used. Discussion on the use of the cash drawer was not given since not all salespersons would have direct contact with the drawer. Company booklets and brochures were also used as training aids. Audio-visual equipment included slides and film strips. Lectures and

demonstrations were used as teaching techniques.

The information regarding the store was included in a booklet. This information included the history of the store, its policies, regulations, goals, and ideas. Basic information was given about the categories of products sold and where to find the various departments. Employee benefits, hours and schedule were also discussed. Security was discussed at this time.

Most of the training was spent on recording the sale. Emphasis was placed on writing sales receipts, credits, and refunds. Verification of the company charge was also discussed.

The majority of information regarding salesmanship was found in a company booklet. This area stressed honesty and that the store was never undersold. The selling process was also discussed in this booklet as were suggestion selling and telephone training.

At the end of the initial training a booklet was given to the trainee that included information about the individual's department. Product knowledge was not included in this booklet except for the size ranges found in the department.

Courtesy and services offered to the customer were stressed during the training on the customer and customer relations.

Suggestions for new sales approaches, improving customer relations, and improving the training program were asked for during the training. There have been some suggestions regarding the training but normally this was given after the training. The only evaluation of the sales trainees was an observation of the trainee by the training director. The trainee was evaluated as either good, average or poor and this

was based upon the employee's reactions to what had been taught.

The training director felt the store needed two training programs for the sales employees. One program would be for the younger newly hired employee. This was suggested because of the differences in selling techniques used by the two age groups. At this time no changes were proposed but it was felt that there would be a number of changes in the near future.

Summary

The responsibility of training newly hired sales employees varied between the stores. The training director in three of the stores was responsible for the training program. In three cases, the personnel department was responsible for the training and one store had both a training director and a training coordinator who were responsible. In all, except one store, the same people actually did the training as well as being responsible for the training. The store that differed had the training director train rather than the personnel manager. None of the stores had other management personnel such as a buyer or merchandising manager come in and speak to the trainees.

Every store trained the salespersons in the store rather than using an outside source, such as a junior college or vocational technical school for training. One store trained the new employees exclusively on the selling floor and another used a conference room. Six stores held classes for the employees in a training room or training laboratory.

There were a number of training aids and teaching techniques used in the stores. Six of the stores used store equipment, such as the cash registers and charge plate equipment. The two stores that did not

use the store equipment as training aids did so because the salespersons did not use this equipment in their work. Each of these stores were independently owned and cashiers were hired for ringing up the sales rather than the salespersons. Four of the stores used a company training manual and three of these stores used company booklets and brochures as well. One store used programmed instruction as a means of reading material and another store used promotional materials from manufacturers. One store did not use any printed materials.

The teaching techniques varied from store to store: lectures were used in four stores; demonstrations were also used in four stores; one store used a type of programmed instruction; discussions took place in three stores; and one store used role playing. Most of the stores used one or two teaching techniques, but one store used a combination of four techniques. Audio-visual aids were also used in the training programs of seven of the stores.

The combination of audio-visual aids varied from store to store. Six stores used films and four stores used slides and film strips. The two stores that used overhead transparencies were divisions of large department store chains. Two stores used a combination of films, slides, and transparencies. The store which trained its sales employees exclusively on the selling floor did not use any audio-visual aids.

The content offered by the sales training programs also varied. All stores offered information regarding store orientation. The most common topics discussed were the history of the store, store policies and regulations, store goals and ideas, categories of products in the store, location of the departments, opportunities for advancement, and

employee benefits and schedule. Who's who in the store was offered by a national chain store and a division of a large department store. Information regarding security was discussed in the women's ready-to-wear specialty store and in a large department store chain division. The importance of the salesperson's job was discussed by one store.

Seven of the eight stores taught the salesperson how to record the sale. The one store that did not include this did so because the cashiers were responsible for the sales receipt, not the salespersons. Employees in every store were taught in the selling mechanics program, how to write all receipts and credits, how to count change and figure tax, and how to verify and use the company charge plate. Master Charge and Bank Americard were not used in any of the stores tested.

Salesmanship was discussed in varying amounts in five of the stores. The three stores that did not offer information about salesmanship were owned by each type of chain. The only store which covered the entire selling process which included the approach, analyzing the customer, handling objections, product presentation, and closing the sale, was owned by a large department store chain. This store also included interdepartmental display techniques. Two other stores included the approach, analyzing the customer, and handling objections. The specialty store included product presentation, suggestion selling, personal selling, and telephone training. Only one other store included suggestion selling techniques. Three of the stores included personal appearance in their salesmanship program. One store talked about what is good salesmanship.

Only one of the eight stores included product information. This

store had the opportunity to do this because the training was done exclusively on the selling floor. The information included in this area ranged from price, brand names, sizes, and fit to quality, use, special features, construction, and labels. Information about the history of the product depended upon the product.

All of the stores included information about the customer. Eight stores included information about the courtesy and responsibility to the customer. Seven stores included the services offered to the customer as well. One store where customers may come from a high and medium socio-economic groups also included information about the customer of today the problem customer.

Two stores did not allow time for creative thinking programs for the trainees. Three stores allowed the trainee to create new sales approaches. Three stores also let the trainee suggest new ways of creating customer satisfaction. Four of the stores let the trainee suggest ways of improving the training program. One of the specialty chains paid a bonus to the trainee for money saving suggestions.

Five of the stores evaluated the trainee either during or after the training. Two stores used written reports by the department manager and two stores used observation during the training. One store used written examinations.

Seven of the stores trained all newly hired salespeople the same--no matter how much experience or inexperience the trainee had. A division of a department store chain differed in this policy and that depended on the time available for the training and the number of trainees to be trained. The experienced trainee was not given as

detailed instruction as the inexperienced trainee.

The store which trained the sales employees on the floor reported that they considered the training program as "poor." The rest of the personnel managers and training directors said their programs were "good." Five of the stores' personnel directors reported there were some problems and three of the stores' personnel did not recognize any problems. The women's specialty store's training director reported that the biggest problem in this store was the difference in ages of the trainees and their different ways of selling. The personnel manager of a national chain store felt the cost of training was their biggest problem but the larger stores were willing to pay this extra cost. The training directors from two divisions of large department store chains felt the training was too short. The personnel of one store felt the classes were too large on special occasions, such as Christmas and special sales. Another felt that the program was disadvantaged without a training manual or booklets and for not covering information about salesmanship.

There were a number of new changes that were planned for the future of these training programs and changes the people responsible for training would like to make in the future. One change was dividing the program into two days and requiring experience on the floor. In another store the management personnel were developing a programmed instruction booklet on salesmanship. One was to start using role playing in the teaching of salesmanship. The training department of one store was being expanded by adding more equipment and room and including the individual departments in the store. In another store a slide

presentation on store orientation was being developed. In two stores the training program could not be changed until the central training office changed the program.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing the information by the personnel in the stores, certain trends became evident.

In the eight stores, most of the training time was spent teaching systems. Lectures and demonstrations were the teaching techniques used. In order to shorten training time, new methods and techniques should be combined with previously used methods and techniques. One method recommended for saving training time is to use a combination of lectures and demonstrations with programmed instruction. Although programmed instruction might be difficult for older trainees to adjust to, it is recommended as a means of saving personnel time if used by the younger trainees.

Salesmanship is normally given a secondary position in training. The examination of the eight training programs tended to show that salesmanship does play a secondary role, although this was not true in two of the stores. Lectures, demonstrations, and films were the methods of teaching salesmanship in the majority of stores although one store used role playing. The use of role playing is especially enjoyed by some of the more dramatic and aggressive trainees. Since the less aggressive trainees could learn by watching the others participate in the role playing, it is recommended as a means of teaching salesmanship. One technique not used by the stores which is similar to role playing is the "talk back" film. This method is recommended because it is inexpensive to use and the trainee is given the opportunity to practice selling.

All of the stores use weekly sales conferences or buyer demonstration meetings.

These meetings are successful as long as they are well organized. Since the sponsor system which was used in only one store allows the salesperson with years of selling experience to transfer this knowledge to the new trainees, it is recommended as a means of training sales employees salesmanship after the initial training.

The content included in the salesmanship instruction was limited in all but two stores. Since the selling process, product knowledge, and suggestion selling were included in two stores, it is recommended that these be included in the salesmanship instruction in order to increase sales. Good salesmanship also includes the salesperson's abilities in preventing shoplifting. Only one store stressed the importance of security in the initial training. Since shoplifting has become an increased cost to retailers, it is recommended that information about preventing shoplifting be included in the initial training.

In order for the salespeople to sell the merchandise it is important they have information about the product. Only one of the eight stores include product information. Since one store was successful in teaching product information, it is recommended that general information which applies to many products throughout the store be included in the training.

The salesperson is the most important employee in the store. In interviewing, lack of respect for the salespeople was evident by one of the training directors. If management personnel do not show respect for the salespeople, these people will not be able to promote good will and

sell merchandise. Management personnel should do everything possible to improve the self-esteem and respect for the individuals selling the merchandise. This new self-esteem and respect of the salespeople may decrease the labor turnover in a store as it was reported by one of the training directors.

The methods of evaluation were quite limited in the eight stores. One store used written examinations and two stores used direct observation during the training. Three of the stores had no methods of evaluating the sales trainee or the training program. Since professional shoppers were not used and can be objective, it is recommended as a means of evaluating the sales trainees on their selling abilities. Another method recommended for evaluating sales employees is by using written reports by department managers, buyers, and merchandising managers. This method was used successfully in two stores. More objective means of evaluating salesmanship and training programs was not used by any of the stores so it is recommended that sales productivity records be used. This method is only recommended if standards are set to fit the needs of the store and the departments in that store. The evaluation of systems taught was done by only one store. The method used in this store was written examinations at the end of the training. Since this method was successful in one store and is inexpensive, it is recommended that written examinations be used as a means of evaluating the salespersons. Since no store used records that kept track of the mechanical errors each salesperson made after the training, it is recommended a record be kept on the mechanical errors made by each salesperson. If properly done these methods of evaluation will evaluate the salesperson as well

as the training program.

A training program is only as good as the salespeople it produces. Each store needs to determine the needs of its store and prepare its training program to meet its needs. There are new techniques and combinations of techniques that can improve the existing training program. The suggestions made in this paper will not be possible for all stores to use but they can be incorporated to fit the needs of the store.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Will you take 15 or 20 minutes to answer a few questions about the training you give salespeople at the time of hiring? I am a graduate student at Kansas State University working on my Master's degree in Clothing and Textiles. For my Master's Report, I am doing a study on sales training programs in ready-to-wear stores. The main objective of this study is to find the type and amount of training given to newly hired full-time salespeople and to analyze the existing programs in Denver, Colorado and the Kansas City Metropolitan area. This is for my benefit since I have not been able to find any information regarding sales training in the mid west and west. This interview will be used as part of the data for the report and the results will be kept confidential. None of the stores' names used in the study will be mentioned in the report nor will the personnel interviewed. Thank you for your cooperation. If you would like, I will send you a summary of the results of the study. YES NO

1. First, I would like to know who is responsible for the training of the newly hired sales employees?

<u> </u> PERSONNEL DIRECTOR	<u> </u> ASSISTANT DEPARTMENT MANAGER
<u> </u> BUYER	<u> </u> SALESPERSON
<u> </u> ASSISTANT BUYER	<u> </u> MARKETING CONSULTANT
<u> </u> DEPARTMENT MANAGER	<u> </u> OTHER <u> </u>
2. Does this person actually do the training or does someone else?
 YES NO If no, who?
3. Does a buyer or other management personnel come in and talk to the sales trainees OFTEN SOMETIMES NEVER?
If so, who?
4. Is the training conducted in the store?
 YES NO If yes, where?

<u> </u> TRAINING LAB	<u> </u> OFFICE
<u> </u> SELLING FLOOR	<u> </u> OTHER <u> </u>
<u> </u> CONFERENCE ROOM	<u> </u>
5. Is any training conducted outside of the store?
 YES NO If yes, where?

<u> </u> HIGH SCHOOL	<u> </u> OTHER <u> </u>
<u> </u> VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL	<u> </u>
<u> </u> JUNIOR COLLEGE	<u> </u>

The next questions are about the store equipment, training aids, selling materials and teaching techniques used in the sales training.

6. Do you use any store equipment in the training?
 YES NO If yes, what?
 CASH REGISTER DISPLAY CASES
 CHARGE PLATE EQUIPMENT OTHER
7. Do you use any reading or other selling materials?
 COMPANY TRAINING MANUAL NRMA BOOKLETS AND BROCHURES
 NRMA TRAINING MANUAL PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL FROM
 OTHER TRAINING MANUAL MANUFACTURERS
 COMPANY BOOKLETS AND OTHER
 BROCHURES
8. Do you use any training aids?
 YES NO If yes, what?
 CHALK BOARDS SLIDES AND FILM STRIPS
 FELT BOARDS TAPE RECORDER
 FILMS TELEVISION
 RECORDS VIDEO TAPE
 SIMULATED SELLING FLOOR OTHER
9. What teaching techniques are used in the sales training?
 INTERVIEWS ON-THE-JOB TRAINING
 LECTURES CASE STUDIES
 DEMONSTRATIONS PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION
 PANELS OTHER
 DISCUSSION

This section includes specific information given in the sales training. Referring to store orientation, do you include the following?

10. HISTORY OF THE STORE
11. STORE POLICIES AND REGULATIONS
12. STORE GOALS AND IDEAS
13. CATEGORIES OF PRODUCTS SOLD IN THE STORE
14. LOCATION OF DEPARTMENTS IN THE STORE
15. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT
16. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
17. SELLING HOURS AND SCHEDULE
18. Do you include anything else relating to the store?
 YES NO If yes, what?

19. What items are discussed in relation to recording the sale?
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> USE OF THE CASH REGISTER | <input type="checkbox"/> WRITING SALES RECEIPTS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COUNTING CHANGE | <input type="checkbox"/> WRITING REFUNDS AND CREDITS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> USE OF CHARGE PLATES | <input type="checkbox"/> FIGURING SALES TAX |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COMPANY CHARGE | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BANK AMERICARD | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MASTERCHARGE | _____ |
20. Do you include anything about salesmanship?
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If yes, what? | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> THE APPROACH | <input type="checkbox"/> SUGGESTION SELLING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ANALYZING THE CUSTOMER | <input type="checkbox"/> SHRINKAGE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRODUCT PRESENTATION | <input type="checkbox"/> TELEPHONE TRAINING |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HANDLING OBJECTIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> PERSONAL APPEARANCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CLOSING THE SALE | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SELLING-UP | _____ |
21. Do you include any information regarding the products and their use at the time of initial training?
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If yes, what? | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LOCATION OF PRODUCTS IN THE | <input type="checkbox"/> USE OF THE PRODUCT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TRAINEE'S DEPARTMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> CARE OF THE PRODUCT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PRICE RANGES | <input type="checkbox"/> SPECIAL FEATURES |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BRAND NAMES | <input type="checkbox"/> HISTORY OF THE PRODUCT |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SIZES OF PRODUCTS | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSTRUCTION FEATURES |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FIT OF PRODUCTS | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> QUALITY | _____ |
22. Do you include information about customer relations and the customer?
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO If yes, what? | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> COURTESY AND RESPONSIBILITY TO THE CUSTOMER | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SERVICES OFFERED BY THE STORE AND DEPARTMENT | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER _____ | |

Does your training program include any of the following:

23. ☐ Ways of creating new sales approaches?
24. ☐ Ways of improving customer satisfaction?
25. ☐ Opportunities for suggestions by the trainee for improvement of the training program?
26. If your training program includes other topics, what are they?
- _____
- _____
27. Is the sales trainee evaluated ☐ during, ☐ at the end, or ☐ after the training?

28. If the trainee is evaluated, how and when is it done?

During End After

_____ By written examination(s)
 _____ By written responses as the trainee participates
 in programmed instruction
 _____ By standardized reports from department manager;
 from sponsor; from training supervisor (personnel
 representative); other _____
 _____ By professional shopper
 _____ By sales productivity figures
 _____ By figures of mechanical errors
 _____ Other

29. How long does the initial training last? _____

30. Do experienced salespeople and students who have had sales training receive the same in-store training as those with no experience?
 _____ YES _____ NO If no, how does it differ?

31. What is your opinion about the success of the existing training program?

32. Are there any problems with the existing sales training program?
 _____ YES _____ NO If yes, could you tell me about them?

33. Do you have any other comments or plans for the future concerning the sales training program?



APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

July 8, 1971

Dear Sir:

This is to introduce Miss Jerri Looney who is working for a Master of Science degree in the Department of Clothing, Textiles, and Interior Design at Kansas State University. She is doing a study on sales training programs in retail establishments and would like to interview personnel managers of several stores in Kansas City (Denver). The interview will take only a few minutes and all information concerning the names of the stores and their personnel will be kept confidential.

We would appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jessie Warden
Head of Department

A STUDY OF THE SALES TRAINING PROGRAMS OF EIGHT STORES IN
DENVER, COLORADO AND THE KANSAS CITY METROPOLITAN AREA

by

JERRI SUE LOONEY

B. S., Kansas State University, 1970

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Clothing, Textiles and Interior Design

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1971

The purpose of this study was to investigate existing sales training programs in women's ready-to-wear stores and make recommendations for up-dating these programs.

The study took place in Denver, Colorado and in the Kansas City Metropolitan area, where the personnel managers or training directors of eight stores were interviewed. The stores ranged from national chain stores to large department store chains and independently owned stores. All of the stores carried women's ready-to-wear and six of the eight stores were full line department stores. Each of the eight stores had five or more branch stores in its community.

The results indicated that most of the training was spent teaching the systems of the store. Salesmanship played a secondary position in the initial training. The methods of evaluating the sales trainees was quite limited although included direct observation during the training to written examinations and reports.

Recommendations were made to use a combination of new teaching techniques and old teaching techniques which could be combined with lectures, demonstrations and visual aids when teaching either systems or salesmanship. Sales productivity figures, mechanical errors, written examinations, written reports, and professional shoppers were recommended as methods of evaluating the salespersons and the training program.