Retail to Careers in Adjacent Industries

COMMON SKILLS FOR **EMPLOYABILITY** AND **PATHWAYS** TO **ADVANCEMENT**

Fall 2017

WHY EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS MATTER

Retail employment provides workers the opportunity to develop skills that can easily transfer to other occupations. Workers may not appreciate the impressive range of skills they develop that are valued across industries. These "common employability skills" can help them make a transition to other jobs, both within retail and in other industries.

Common Employability Skills are defined here as the skills and competencies valued in successful workers across jobs and industries.

Employers can also benefit from supporting the development of key employability skills. Identifying which skills are most valuable in a strong entry-level employee helps employers hire, retain, and promote the right people. This guide summarizes the ways retail employees are developing common employability skills, defines those skills, and develops pathways from common retail jobs to others within and outside of retail.

- **Hiring:** Employers can improve the quality and productivity of their front-line staff by identifying the skills that make them successful. Employers can then develop methods to recognize those skills during the hiring process.

- **Retention:** Developing workers' skills and recognizing their growth can help employers retain their most successful team members. Communicating and rewarding the transferrable skills they are developing may help them value and extend their time with that employer.

- **Promotion:** Hiring and training for employability skills provides employers with a more qualified source of talent within their own organization for advanced responsibility and promotion.

HOW LEARNING OCCURS IN RETAIL

Developing employability skills can take many forms, from trial and error to structured training. The workers themselves may be responsible for their own learning, or it may be driven by managers, coworkers, or the company. The following are some ways in which front-line workers can develop skills through their professional experience in the retail industry.

On the Job Learning
The most informal, but commonly used, form of learning is through on-the-job experience. Retail workers develop skills through trial and error, watching others, and teaching themselves while engaging in their day-to-day work activities.

Coworker Driven Learning
Workers often rely on support from their coworkers to help develop their knowledge and skillsets. This method of learning can take different forms, including informal assistance, job shadowing, and formal mentorship between new and experienced employees.

Manager Driven Learning
Manager driven learning is an important way for workers to develop their skills and one that is often underutilized or inconsistently applied. This approach may include advice on or off the floor, informal "tutoring", and formal coaching.

Company Driven Learning
Most workers undergo some form of company required training for new-hires, but on-going company-driven professional develop occurs to varying degrees across employers. Training methods can include videos and online training modules, printed or oral information sharing, and hands-on demonstrations. Regular performance reviews with managers are a common way to continually work on advancing workers' skillsets, but some employers have found success in non-traditional methods of training, such as employee journaling, competitions, and games.

WHAT WE DID

CAEL produced this guide with support from the Walmart Foundation as part of its Retail Opportunity initiative. The guide synthesizes and builds on research conducted by other grantees on the skills and competencies that are needed in various occupations within retail and non-retail industries.

How Learning Occurs (page 1): CAEL summarized the findings on training methods from Walmart grantees, primarily utilizing the research conducted by FHI 360 in 2016. Through their effort promoting career advancement for retail employees, FHI 360 conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews with retail employees and retail and adjacent sector employers. The aim of these focus groups was to better understand employers' perspectives on retail workers and retail employees' experiences.

Common Employability Skills (pages 3-6): CAEL structured the Common Employability Skills around the National Retail Services Initiative (NRSI) Competency Model, created by the ACT Foundation in. The NRSI Competency Model aims to define what leads to successful careers in retail and related industry jobs. The model was created based on expertise from employers, industry representatives, educators, and subject matter experts. CAEL drew on skill definitions created by Walmart funded grantees or used in their work, including FHI 360's Job Skills List, National Network of Business and Industry Associations (National Network) Common Employability Skills, Lominger Standard 67 Competencies, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Competency Framework, and O*Net Skills and Abilities for retail employees. The above sources developed definitions by subject matter experts and in some cases, like FHI 360, validated by retail employers and employees.

Pathways to Advancement (pages 7-10): CAEL primarily utilized work developed in early 2017 by Burning Glass Technologies for the McKinsey Social Initiative. Burning Glass used job postings and other data sources to define career ladders from retail and occupational profiles for retail and adjacent industry jobs. In addition to pulling from select career ladders, we used their occupational profiles to create skill gaps and overlaps. We also incorporated information from the National Network's Hiring for Competency, which provides occupational profiles for competency based job descriptions created in partnership with Burning Glass Technologies.

COMMON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
IN RETAIL AND BEYOND*

ENTRY

COMMUNICATIONS

Competencies related to the ability to convey and receive information, transfer knowledge, and resolve differences with customers and coworkers.

- **Listening:** Gives full attention to whomever is speaking. Does not interrupt. Asks clarifying questions when necessary.
- **Non-Verbal:** Looks customers, coworkers, and supervisors in the eye when talking to them. Greets customers with a smile.
- **Writing:** Uses standard business English to write messages to coworkers and supervisors.
- **Reading:** Able to read and comprehend written sentences in Standard English.
- **Speaking:** Able to effectively speak Standard Business English to be understood by customers and coworkers.

DRIVE FOR RESULTS

Competencies related to professionalism and orientation toward goals.

- **Professional Appearance:** Wears appropriate clothing for the job. Is clean and well groomed.
- **Dependability:** Comes to work on time. Does not cancel shifts at the last minute. Is honest. Others can count on them.
- **Health and Safety:** Follows all rules and guidelines related to safety and security.
- **Proactive:** Identifies and completes necessary tasks without being told.
- **Task Completion:** Perseveres in completing tasks until they are finished.

CUSTOMER SERVICES

Competencies related to worker-customer interactions.

- **Anticipates Needs:** Looks for ways to assist customers before they ask.
- **Shows Appreciation for Customers:** Gives customers full attention during transaction. Thanks them for purchase or visiting store.
- **Assist:** Actively looks for ways to help and serve others.
- **Problem Solving Questions:** Asks questions on details of a problem to reach a solution.
- **Customize the Customer Experience:** Provides personalized service to resolve the requests and concerns of customers.
- **Service Recovery:** Understands the issue and acts to return customer to a state of satisfaction.

ADAPTABILITY

Competencies related to a worker's ability to succeed in diverse and changing environments.

- **Accepting of Change:** Learns new policies, adapts actions, and asks for help during times of rapid change.
- **Continuous Learning:** Learns quickly when facing new problems; analyzes both successes and failures for clues to improvement.
- **Flexibility:** Effectively adapts to a variety of situations, individuals, and groups and considers various perspectives.
- **Teamwork:** Treats others with respect. Says positive things about others. Thinks about how actions will affect others.
- **Valuing Difference:** Respects and values diversity among coworkers.

ADVANCED RESPONSIBILITY

- **Presentation:** Can effectively present information in one-on-one and group settings; able to command attention and change tack on the fly.
- **Professional Presence:** Acts professional and polite. Does not talk about personal things or complain in front of customers.
- **Information Sharing:** Gives instructions or explanations that are easy to follow.
- **Influencing:** Able to persuade customers verbally.
- **On the Job Training/Development:** Able to share knowledge on the job that supports frontline worker learning.

- **Creativity:** Comes up with new and unique ideas. Adds original and valuable ideas.
- **Accountability for Others' Actions:** Assumes responsibility for both their own and other's performance and acts appropriately and efficiently to meet collective deadlines.
- **Collaboration:** Seeks opportunities to speak and collaborate with managers and coworkers.
- **Drive:** Consistently meets and exceeds set goals. Seeks to understand reasons for goals not being met.

- **Handle Difficult Customers and Situations:** Is cool under pressure and works to find a solution when customers elevate complaints; does not become defensive or show frustration.
- **Resolves Complex Customer Issues:** Answers complex customer questions or problems, such as with sales or returns. Stays cheerful and professional. Asks manager for help at the right times.
- **Customer Familiarity:** Knows store's major customer groups, shopping patterns, and habits.

- **Define Solutions and Offers:** Sees how to improve things and suggests the changes needed.
- **Embracing Change:** Is open to considering new ways of doing things. Embraces new approaches and discards approaches that are no longer working.
- **Deal with New Situations:** Adjusts quickly and easily to unexpected changes or new situations. Does not get upset.

MANAGER/LEADERSHIP

- **Communicating Vision:** Communicates a compelling and inspired vision or sense of core purpose.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Works toward resolving a dispute wherein each side is satisfied with the outcome.
- **Objective and Actionable Feedback:** Provides specific, constructive performance feedback, both positive and corrective.
- **Self Confidence:** Relishes leading and takes unpopular stands if necessary; encourages debate but is unafraid to compromise; takes the lead and is energized in crises.

- **Innovation:** Is good at bringing the ideas of others to market and has good judgement about success prospects.
- **Vision:** Sets organizational goals for future; can inspire and motivate entire units or organizations.
- **Manages Diversity:** Manages and supports equal and fair treatment and opportunity for all.
- **Organizational Agility:** Knowledgeable about the policies and procedures of the organization and utilizes formal and informal networks to results.
- **Performance Orientation:** Sets organizational performance goals. Communicates goals to staff, tracks progress, and assists others in achieving goals.

- **Elevated Situations Strategy:** Develops approach and roles for appropriate staff in the event of difficult situations with customers.
- **Resolve Systematic Customer Service Issues:** Identifies trends in customer service issues; create policies, procedures, or systems to remedy the problem and ensure they are implemented.

- **Executes Change Strategy:** Establishes effective structures and processes for planning and managing the orderly implementation of change
- **Creates Change Strategy:** Develops strategic goals for change, aligning changes with the organization's strategic direction, objectives, and customer expectations.

COMMON EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
IN **RETAIL** AND **BEYOND***

ENTRY

CRITICAL THINKING

Competencies related to problem identification and resolution and utilization of resources.

- **Locating Information:** Knows where to look for answers to questions. Asks the right people for help.
- **Problem Solving:** Answers simple customer questions and fixes problems. Asks more seasoned employee or manager for help.
- **Prioritization:** Knows which tasks are most urgent and gets those done first.
- **Task/Service Balance:** Keeps track of and makes progress on multiple tasks and customer service situations at the same time.

TECHNICAL/ OCCUPATIONAL

Competencies related to job-specific technical skills and knowledge.

- **Basic Product Knowledge:** Knows basic features of products or services.
- **Technical Knowledge:** Understands point-of-sale systems. Knows where to find information on company website.
- **Basic Math Skills:** Can make change and calculate discounts and markups. Understands taxes, shipping, and other fees.
- **Telecommunications:** Able to communicate with customers over the phone; uses professional language, answers phone and responds to questions with a positive attitude.

LEADS PEOPLE

Competencies related to talent development, strategy, and other responsibilities and character traits of organization leaders.

Not commonly developed through entry roles

ADVANCED RESPONSIBILITY

- **Decision Making:** Makes good choices without guidance. Shows good judgment.
- **Identify Trends and Patterns:** Uses available information to see if there are patterns that may be important to the organization's goals, such as customer behavior.
- **Finds Solutions:** Resolves problems with minimal help from manager.

- **Deep Product and Technical Knowledge:** Has interest in products/services. Explains and shows key product and service features. Knows where to find more information.
- **Proficient Use of Specialized Tools:** Has mastered using any specialized technology, tools, and equipment needed for sales or service functions.

- **Mentoring:** Teaches other employees new tasks and gives helpful feedback as needed.
- **Supporting and Cooperating:** Helps coworkers when needed to meet team, department, or store goals.
- **Compassion and Empathy:** Shows care and empathy for others. Seeks to understand how others feel.
- **Leads through Example:** Models selling and service behaviors.

MANAGER/LEADERSHIP

- **Uses Reports and Analytics for Decision Making:** Able to tackle a problem by using a logical, systematic, sequential approach, utilizing available information and data.
- **Understands and Responds to Trends and Patterns:** Able to analyze market and industry trends and how they affect customer relationships, strengths and weaknesses as compared to competitors.
- **Data Drives Long-term Decision-making:** Critically reviews, analyzes, synthesizes, compares, and interprets information before making a decision.

- **Advanced Product Knowledge:** Is excited about products and services. Recommends products or services that best meet customer needs. Knows which products or services go together well.
- **Financial Literacy:** Understands weekly, monthly, seasonal, and annual financial plans. Can identify key information in profit/loss statements and budgets.
- **Merchandising:** Identifies and communicates merchandising issues and selling opportunities.
- **Delegation:** Clearly delegates responsibility for both routine and important tasks to appropriate staff.
- **Helps Others Learn Business Fundamentals or Specialized Tools:** Helps new employees learn point-of-sale systems, sales, or credit processes, etc. Trains others in use of specialized technology, tools, or equipment.

- **Talent Identification:** Hires the best people available from inside or outside; assembles talented staffs.
- **Talent Development:** Helps employees improve their skills, learn new skills, and adapt to changes. Motivates others.

ADJACENT INDUSTRY PATHWAYS TO ADVANCEMENT: OCCUPATION

For workers with retail experience, these pathways show a high-level view of potential entry jobs and career growth in each industry. These pathways aren't a complete list of every job an employer might be hiring for, but they can be used as a starting point for further exploration into these industries and the jobs within them.
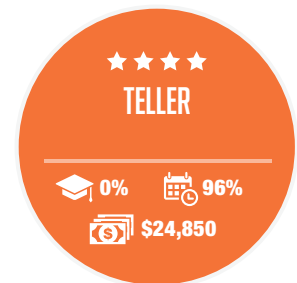
ENTRY

These positions are the best entry points into an industry for an individual with little experience or postsecondary education as they typically require only a HS diploma, a certification, or minimal vocational training and little to no prior related work experience.

MAP TO CAREERS IN…

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Retail occupations provide a great opportunity to develop some of the skills that are highly desirable in the financial services industry. The customer service, sales, and communications skills are particularly relevant to commercial banking jobs like customer service representative, teller, and financial sales representative. Advanced financial occupations in loan processing and insurance involve more specialized knowledge and would likely require additional training and education.
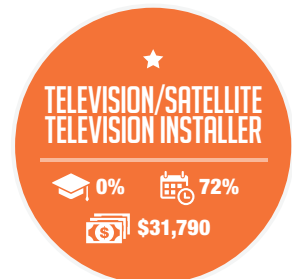
★ ★ ★ ★ ★
CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE
🎓 16%   📅 76%
💵 $29,080

★ ★ ★ ★
TELLER
🎓 0%   📅 96%
💵 $24,850

HEALTHCARE

Working directly with the public, customer service, and communications skills are as vital to the healthcare industry as they are in retail. Entry level retail jobs provide experience in the types of skills that are required for success in both administrative as well as patient-facing healthcare jobs. However, most healthcare positions will require industry training and credentials, certifications and vocational training in particular.

★ ★
MEDICAL RECORDS CLERK / TECHNICIAN
🎓 7%   📅 83%
💵 $28,970

★ ★ ★ ★
PATIENT SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE/REGISTRAR
🎓 6%   📅 82%
💵 $28,180

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Retail skills like customer service, communication, relationship building and teamwork are among the skill sets necessary for success in many positions in the Information Technology industry. Entry level support positions are one way to apply customer service skills in a new environment. Customer-facing IT jobs also involve soft skills like solving problems, analyzing information, and learning new things. Most mid- and advanced level IT jobs require technical skill sets as well as business skills.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
COMPUTER SUPPORT SPECIALIST
🎓 45%   📅 55%
💵 $46,500

★
TELEVISION/SATELLITE TELEVISION INSTALLER
🎓 0%   📅 72%
💵 $31,790

JOB AVAILABILITY:
National Job Posting Counts
Oct 15- Sep 16

★ 10,000 or Below
★★ 10,001-25,000
★★★ 25,001-75,000
★★★★ 75,001-150,000
★★★★★ Above 150,000

EDUCATION:
Proportion of Job Postings
Requiring a Bachelor's Degree

ENTRY LEVEL:
Proportion of Job Postings
Requiring 0-2 Years' Experience

SALARY:
Average Salary

MID-LEVEL

While these positions may pay more than those at the entry level, they also may require higher-level skills or significant relevant work experience. In some cases, postsecondary or industry credentials may be needed; this can range from a short term certification to an associate degree or even to a bachelor's degree.

ADVANCED

These positions are typically more advanced or management positions and may require significant education- typically a 4-year bachelor's degree- and extensive experience in the industry.

LOAN PROCESSOR ★★★★
19% | 58% | $36,750

FINANCIAL SERVICES SALES AGENT ★★★★
45% | 54% | $37,010

PERSONAL BANKER ★★★★
8% | 89% | $35,920

BANKING BRANCH MANAGER ★★★
47% | 36% | $49,020

BROKERAGE CLERK ★
56% | 51% | $41,040

INSURANCE SALES AGENT ★★★★★
28% | 53% | $53,890

MEDICAL BILLER ★★★
0% | 69% | $30,730

MEDICAL CODER ★★★
0% | 30% | $39,850

PATIENT ADVOCATE/NAVIGATOR ★
65% | 46% | $41,220

INSURANCE CLAIMS/ POLICY CLERK ★★★★
29% | 67% | $34,050

NETWORK/SYSTEMS SUPPORT SPECIALIST ★★★★
59% | 29% | $64,230

NETWORK /SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR ★★★★★
69% | 10% | $80,216

NETWORK ENGINEER / ARCHITECT ★★★★★
83% | 5% | $97,573

ADJACENT INDUSTRY PATHWAYS TO ADVANCEMENT: SKILLS

MAP TO CAREERS IN...

RETAIL CASHIER

Handles monetary transactions with customers. Takes customer payment for a product or service, provides change as needed and receipts for transactions. Provides accurate accounting of cash register funds, and provides customer service.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Retail occupations provide a great opportunity to develop some of the skills that are highly desirable in the financial services industry. The customer service, sales, and communications skills are particularly relevant to commercial banking jobs like customer service representative, teller, and financial sales representative. Advanced financial occupations in loan processing and insurance involve more specialized knowledge and would likely require additional training and education.

HAVE

- Communication
- Cash Handling
- Company & Product Knowledge
- Customer Service
- Relationship Building & Teamwork
- Working with the Public

NEED

- Sales
- Product Demonstration
- Billing & Invoicing
- Making Decisions & Solving Problems
- Planning & Prioritizing Work
- Negotiation & Conflict Resolution
- Supervisory & People Management
- Standards Compliance
- Cross Selling
- Administration & Support
- Analyzing Data or Information
- Computer & Database Skills
- General Accounting
- Getting & Processing Information

HEALTHCARE

Working directly with the public, customer service, and communications skills are as vital to the healthcare industry as they are in retail. Entry level retail jobs provide experience in the types of skills that are required for success in both administrative as well as patient-facing healthcare jobs. However, most healthcare positions will require industry training and credentials, certifications and vocational training in particular.

HAVE

- Communication
- Customer Service
- Handling & Moving Objects
- Relationship Building & Teamwork

NEED

- Making Decisions & Solving Problems
- Planning & Prioritizing Work
- Computer & Database Skills
- Computer Networking
- Computer Technical Support
- Getting & Processing Information
- Help Desk Support
- Operating Systems
- Programming
- System & Network Administration
- Updating & Using Relevant Knowledge

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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HAVE

- Company & Product Knowledge
- Customer Service
- Relationship Building & Teamwork
- Working with the Public

NEED

- Business Operations & Management
- Billing & Invoicing
- Planning & Prioritizing Work
- Negotiation & Conflict Resolution
- Supervisory & People Management
- Administration & Support
- Computer & Database Skills
- General Accounting
- Getting & Processing Information
- Supply Chain & Logistics

RETAIL ASSOCIATE

Sells merchandise or products in a retail store. Provides information about store merchandise, assists customers with finding items and encourages sales.

RETAIL SUPERVISOR

Supervises staff in a store that sells retail merchandise to customers. Oversees and provides training or coaching for sales staff or staff that stock shelves or goods in a store. May assist with managing inventory, purchasing or preparing sales reports.

RETAIL ASSOCIATE

HAVE
- Communication
- Cash Handling
- Company & Product Knowledge
- Customer Service
- Relationship Building & Teamwork
- Working with the Public
- Sales
- Product Demonstration

NEED
- Billing & Invoicing
- Making Decisions & Solving Problems
- Planning & Prioritizing Work
- Negotiation & Conflict Resolution
- Supervisory & People Management
- Standards Compliance
- Cross Selling
- Administration & Support
- Analyzing Data or Information
- Computer & Database Skills
- General Accounting
- Getting & Processing Information

HAVE
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- Customer Service
- Handling & Moving Objects
- Relationship Building & Teamwork

NEED
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- Computer Networking
- Computer Technical Support
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- Help Desk Support
- Operating Systems
- Programming
- System & Network Administration
- Updating & Using Relevant Knowledge

HAVE
- Company & Product Knowledge
- Customer Service
- Relationship Building & Teamwork
- Working with the Public

NEED
- Business Operations & Management
- Billing & Invoicing
- Planning & Prioritizing Work
- Negotiation & Conflict Resolution
- Supervisory & People Management
- Administration & Support
- Computer & Database Skills
- General Accounting
- Getting & Processing Information
- Supply Chain & Logistics

RETAIL SUPERVISOR

HAVE
- Communication
- Cash Handling
- Company & Product Knowledge
- Customer Service
- Relationship Building & Teamwork
- Working with the Public
- Sales
- Product Demonstration
- Billing & Invoicing
- Making Decisions & Solving Problems
- Planning & Prioritizing Work
- Negotiation & Conflict Resolution
- Supervisory & People Management

NEED
- Cash Management
- Standards Compliance
- Cross Selling
- Identifying Actions & Events
- Administration & Support
- Analyzing Data or Information
- Computer & Database Skills
- General Accounting
- Getting & Processing Information

HAVE
- Communication
- Customer Service
- Handling & Moving Objects
- Relationship Building & Teamwork
- Making Decisions & Solving Problems
- Planning & Prioritizing Work

NEED
- Computer & Database Skills
- Computer Networking
- Computer Technical Support
- Getting & Processing Information
- Help Desk Support
- Operating Systems
- Programming
- System & Network Administration
- Updating & Using Relevant Knowledge

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- Planning & Prioritizing Work
- Negotiation & Conflict Resolution
- Supervisory & People Management

NEED
- Administration & Support
- Computer & Database Skills
- General Accounting
- Getting & Processing Information
- Supply Chain & Logistics