

Training & motivating retail employees.

Empower your workforce, increase
productivity, and drive sales.



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Introduction

Who you have in your store is practically as important as **what** you have in it. Your staff has a direct effect on sales, customer satisfaction, and the overall success of your business. That's why it's essential to not only invest in finding and hiring the right people, but also put in the effort to keep them well-trained, happy and motivated.

To help you accomplish this, this guide will walk you through how you can improve employee education and boost morale to drive performance. Divided into two main parts, we'll tackle best practices on staff training, and then move on to how you can make your sales associates feel more loved and appreciated.

Let's get started...

01

Staff training and education.

In this section, we'll talk about training tips and techniques to help you better educate your staff. Go through them below and see if they can be worked into your existing training programs.

Hire for attitude, train for skill.

The success of your training program doesn't just rely on your teaching methods, it also hinges on the inherent attitudes and values of your staff. As Bruce Nordstrom puts it, "We can hire nice people and teach them to sell, but we can't hire salespeople and teach them to be nice."

That's why it pays to put attitude over aptitude when hiring new people. Yes, it would be nice to have someone who has both, but if you had to choose between attitude vs. aptitude, always go with the former. It'll be much easier

to train a positive person who's open to learning and who shares your values than it is to modify someone's default attitude and disposition.

In the book [The Nordstrom Way](#), authors Robert Spector & Patrick McCarthy talk about how the department store puts the attitude over aptitude concept into practice. "The company hires nice people and teaches them to sell rather than trying to retrain salespeople taught other methods. Nordstrom believes the best people have been trained by their parents while growing up."

Another notable example is JetBlue. [According to the Disney Institute](#), the airline believes that you can train for skill, but not for attitude, and it "has embedded this conviction in its front-line hiring process."

To find individuals who have a natural service inclination, JetBlue conducts group interviews and observes how candidates interact with one another. This allows them to assess applicants' communication and people skills in a way that can't be done during a one-on-one interview.

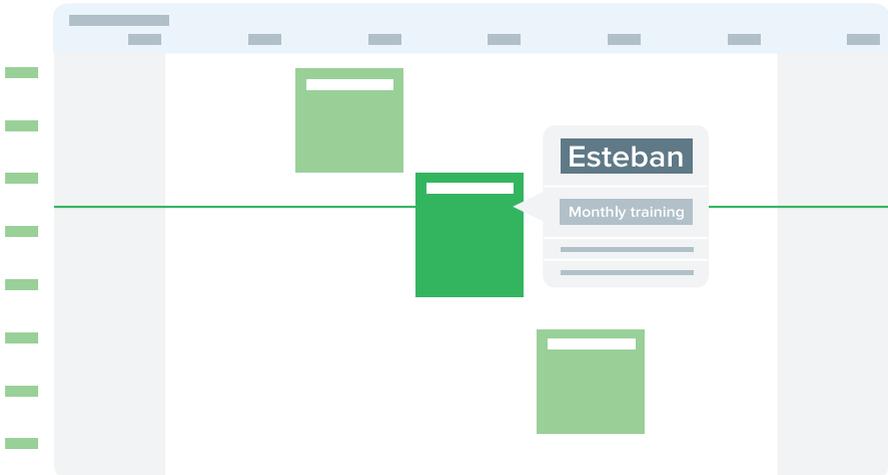
So the next time you're on the lookout for new employees, be sure to look at their nature and disposition first, before evaluating their knowledge and skills. Implement ways to assess their natural inclinations through personality quizzes or, like JetBlue, by conducting group interviews.

Another great way to find applicants who would naturally fit well in your business is to turn to your customer base.

That's what Vend customer [Good Guy Vapes](#) does. According to founder Shoab Iqbal, when they decided to expand their business and hire employees, they ended up hiring one of their most passionate customers.

"Our first employee was a customer and we've continued that tradition ever since," says Shoab. "We mostly hire enthusiastic customers."

Consider doing the same thing in your business. If you're looking for great new people for your stores, why not see if your existing customers are open to the opportunity? Bring up the topic when you're chatting up your patrons, include a "We're hiring" announcement in your next newsletter, or post an announcement on social media.



Implement modular training.

Once you have the right people on board, it's time to ensure that their training goes well. Naturally, you want to train people in a way that ensures they pick up and retain the most information possible.

One way to accomplish this is by implementing modular training, which means offering short and flexible training segments instead of long and winding sessions.

"Because of scheduling, and the cost of including staff not scheduled when the training occurs, it may be helpful to have training that is modular and can fit into 1-hour segments, as opposed to having training that requires long periods of time," says Hank Boyer, President & CEO [Boyer Management Group](#).

"Modular training enables staff to be brought in prior to store opening, or stay after store closing, if it cannot be accommodated any other way," he adds.

Use a mix of learning tools and methods.

The best way to make learning “stick” is through the use of varied training materials and methods. As Maxim Fishman, Dean of [Vend U](#) (Vend’s training initiative) says, “One format may not be enough to answer the needs of diverse learners.”

To ensure that your employees can internalize what’s being taught, utilize two or more learning methods to train them. For example, you can verbally teach your staff about company policies, and reinforce the information through handouts or videos so employees can refresh their memories when they need to.

If you’re training your staff with software, such as your POS or inventory system, it’s best to demonstrate the programs in person and then refer them to how-to videos that they can come back to.

TIP: HAVE A VEND ACCOUNT?

If you’ve got a Starter, Advanced, or Multi-Outlet plan, you’ll be able to access various courses on how to use Vend, including store set-up, reporting, and ecommerce. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Role play with your employees regularly.

Role playing can be quite effective, especially when it comes to sales training. As the team at Graff Retail notes, role playing “can be your #1 key ingredient to help bring your sales training to life and it will be the very thing that makes your staff finally just ‘get it!’”

According to [Graff Retail](#), there are several ways to eliminate the awkwardness of role playing and make it fun.

Here are some of their suggestions:

Role playing doesn’t have to be formal. Start by observing your staff out on the sales floor. In between customers, spend some time re-enacting sales conversations that didn’t net out in a sale. Keep it casual.

Role playing doesn’t have to be in front of the entire sales team. Warm your staff up to the idea by using role playing in your one-on-one coaching sessions. Just you and your staff member; no judgement.

Role play the good and the bad. You’ll be so surprised how quickly your staff grasps a selling concept when you act out “what not to do!” Not only will it cause uproarious laughter which relaxes the team, it will clearly reveal where things went sideways in the sale process.

Once your staff is comfortable with role playing, integrate one scenario into every Shift Starter Meeting. This is a great way to kick-off each shift during the day. It immediately gets everyone thinking about sales and allows managers to select one selling skill a day to focus on.

During larger staff meetings, allow time to role play as a group. Put a bunch of “What Would You Do?” scenarios in a hat and give everyone a chance to get up and act out the perfect sale.

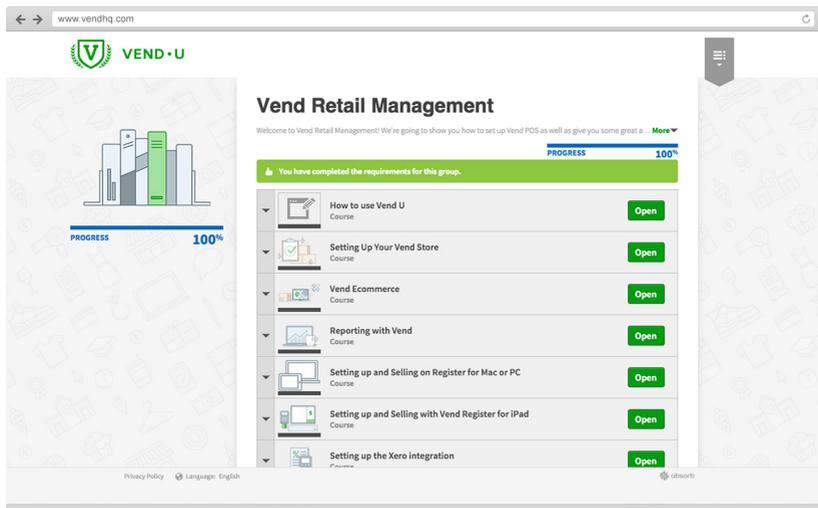
*Read Graff Retail’s full article on role playing [here](#) or [watch a sample training video](#) from their *Get Selling!* Program.

Get help if necessary.

Recognize that you don't have to implement your training program on your own. **If teaching isn't your specialty, see if you can delegate the task to an experienced manager or even an external professional.**

There are plenty of trainers out there who specialize in retail and can create tailored programs for your business.

When it comes to hardware and software in your business, see if you can get training from your vendors. Most solution providers prepare training materials for clients to help them get the most out of the program, while some even have partners and resellers who can train clients on the solution.



The screenshot shows the Vend Retail Management training dashboard. At the top, the URL is www.vendhq.com. The Vend logo is on the left. The main heading is "Vend Retail Management". Below the heading, there is a welcome message and a progress bar showing 100% completion. A green banner states "You have completed the requirements for this group." Below this, there is a list of training courses, each with an "Open" button:

- How to use Vend U Course [Open]
- Setting Up Your Vend Store Course [Open]
- Vend Ecommerce Course [Open]
- Reporting with Vend Course [Open]
- Setting up and Selling on Register for Mac or PC Course [Open]
- Setting up and Selling with Vend Register for iPad Course [Open]
- Setting up the Xero integration Course [Open]

At the bottom, there are links for Privacy Policy, Language: English, and a logo for phosorb.

Vend, for example, has both. There's [Vend U](#), our retail resource center which contains guides and on-demand training on using the software and on becoming a better retailer; and we've also teamed up with [Vend Experts and resellers](#) who can set up and teach merchants how to use the software to its full potential.

02

Motivating your workforce.

Employee retention is critical to retail success. You've invested a lot in training your staff, so you want to make sure they stick around for the long term. Here are some ways to help you accomplish that:

Regularly recognize people for a job well done.

Matt Heller, author of [The Myth of Employee Burnout](#), says that recognition is one of the best ways to stimulate your employees to take the actions you want them to take.

If staff members are making a positive impact on your business, be sure to tell them how awesome they are. "The more people hear how they are having a positive impact on others, the more they will want to do it again and again," adds Heller.

Also note that recognizing employees shouldn't be something that you only do every once in a while. The key to truly motivating people is recognizing the good that they're doing on a regular basis.

“Too often company initiatives are talked about in an orientation program only to be never mentioned again. This can actually be very demotivating, because people start to wonder why they are doing what they are doing,” he says.

“On the other hand, if you regularly communicate how an employee's behavior is impacting others, they will start to understand how they support the bigger picture and company goals.”

To illustrate how a store owner could motivate the staff, Heller offers the following scenario: Let's say you have an employee, Josh, who is very good at resetting the store and displays after large crowds have come through. Recognition that ties his behaviors back to the company goals might sound like this:

“Josh, I noticed how quickly you get out on the floor to reset the displays after a big rush of guests. I really appreciate this! It helps the guests find what they need and ultimately creates a more pleasant shopping experience for everyone.”

Now Josh knows that what he does has a direct impact on the guest experience and the performance of the store, and is much more likely to be motivated to take that action again.

Keep this example in mind whenever you see your employees doing their job well. Verbalize how much you value their work and make sure they know that what they're doing directly affects your business.

Encourage peer-to-peer recognition.

Rachel Cooper, a marketing specialist at incentive program platform provider [Perks.com](#), re-affirms the importance of employee recognition but adds that companies must also encourage their staff to recognize their fellow employees.

Promote a positive work environment by encouraging your workers to support and build each other up. One effective way of implementing this is by sharing “recognition stories.”

In an article on [Forbes](#), Josh Bersin of HR research and advisory firm Bersin & Associates writes that they identified storytelling as one of the most powerful practices in employee recognition.

“When someone does something great and is recognized by their peers, tell people about it,” he writes. “These stories create employee engagement and learning.”



“Not only is it important that managers recognize employees for a job well done, it is equally important that there is some sort of peer-to-peer recognition going on at work. Think about it. People you work with have a large impact on your self-esteem and ability to succeed. These are people you are seeing on a day-to-day basis. Even if you don’t want to admit it, their opinions matter.”

RACHEL COOPER

So next time you have a meeting or even a social gathering with your staff, be sure to brag about their successes by telling feel-good recognition stories.

On top of motivating employees to perform better, having a “recognition-rich-culture” can also lower turnover rates. According to a [study](#) by Bersin & Associates, companies that do a great job at fostering recognition and engagement “have 31 percent lower voluntary turnover than their peers with ineffective recognition programs.”

Pay and train your employees well.

Money may not be the only thing driving your staff, but you have to admit that it does play a significant role when it comes to employees — especially in retail.

Multiple studies have shown that retailers with well-paid, well-trained employees outperform competitors that didn’t invest enough in their staff.

In a [New Yorker.com piece about retail staffing](#), James Surowiecki cites a Wharton School study which found that “every dollar in additional payroll led to somewhere between four and twenty-eight dollars in new sales.”

Retailing’s virtuous cycle



Similarly, MIT professor Zeynep Ton [conducted an in-depth study on the operations of various retailers](#) and discovered that companies such as Trader Joe's, Costco, QuikTrip, and Mercadona, which invest significantly more in their employees, "have high profits, low prices for their industry, excellent operational metrics, and a reputation for great customer service."

"These retailers deliver great value to their customers, employees, and investors all at the same time," she adds.

It may be tempting to cut labor costs when you're trying to increase profits or reduce expenses, but Ton warns that doing this can cause your operations to suffer. Remember that properly stocking shelves and serving customers requires significant effort and judgment; not paying your staff well could discourage them from exerting themselves fully.

Retailing's vicious cycle



As Ton aptly puts it:

It's the low-paid employee, not the inventory-management software, who notices that a shelf looks messy or that some of the products are in the wrong place. It's the low-paid employee who notices that some of the lettuce has gone bad or that there are still signs up for last week's promotion. It's the low-paid cashier who can tell the difference between

serrano peppers and jalapeno peppers during checkout. It's the low-paid employee who notices that there are too many customers waiting in the checkout and offers to open an additional cash register. When retailers don't invest in human capital, operational execution suffers and the company pays with lower sales and lower profits than it could have had.

It's best to view labor as a sales driver rather than a cost driver. Realize that paying and training your employees well leads to better output and, in turn, higher sales and customer satisfaction.

Empower them with better tools.

Invest in up-to-date and well-functioning tools and equipment. This not only empowers your staff but also increases productivity and helps them do their jobs better.

Let's consider the case for upgrading your point of sale system. Having your employees use an outdated cash register with limited functionality slows them down, whereas having a cloud-based POS makes their job faster, easier, and can enable them to get more done. (Plus, using a sleek POS system feels much better than a clunky cash register).

The call to give workers more modern tools has been echoed by companies such as Intel. In a [study](#) on the effects of mobile technology on employee productivity, Intel found that employees who were given a wireless notebook to work with gained nearly 100 hours of additional productivity per year.

See whether you can put this tip to work in your store. Look around for tools or equipment that are due for an upgrade and consider replacing them with something better.

TIP: LOOKING TO UPGRADE YOUR POINT OF SALE SYSTEM?

Give [Vend's free POS software](#) a try. Your staff will love it!

Know when to enforce rules and when to give employees room to be creative.

Pay attention to the rules and guidelines that you're enforcing. While rules are necessary to keep employees in line and ensure consistency in procedures, there may be some areas in your business that don't require rigid rules. In some cases, it may actually be more beneficial to empower employees to use their judgment and be creative.

For example, while it's certainly best to have step-by-step instructions when training people on how to operate store equipment and software, you can probably give employees more freedom when it comes to serving and delighting customers.

Nordstrom is famous for its staff empowerment practices. Take its store returns policies, for instance. According to the retail giant, when it comes to items bought in their stores, their return policy is... to *not* have one.

“We don't actually have a return policy for purchases made at Nordstrom stores or at Nordstrom.com,” [they state on their website](#). “We handle returns on a case-by-case basis with the ultimate objective of satisfying the customer. We stand behind our goods and services and want customers to be satisfied with them. We'll always do our best to take care of customers — our philosophy is to deal with them fairly and reasonably; we hope they will be fair and reasonable with us as well.”

In other words, Nordstrom leaves each situation up to the employee, and encourages them to use their judgment and focus on satisfying the customer.

Of course, this doesn't mean you should chuck your store policies out the window. Some retailers can't afford not to have return and refund policies. What you can do however, is look at the different areas of your business and determine which ones need strict rules and which ones don't, then train your employees accordingly.

03

Conclusion

You can pour more money into sourcing products, getting the latest technology, or upgrading your store, but all that effort will fall short if you don't have happy and educated store employees.

Don't forget that these people are at the front lines of your business, and they have a direct impact on sales and customer satisfaction. That's why it's essential and that you train — and treat — them well. Hopefully, this guide brings you closer to doing just that.

Good luck!

About Vend

Vend is a cloud-based retail software platform that enables retailers to accept payments, manage their inventories, reward customer loyalty and garner insights into their business in real time. Vend is simple to set up, works with a wide range of point of sale devices and operates on any web-capable device with a browser.

Whether it's simplifying the inventory process, cutting 30 minutes from their end-of-day bookkeeping or making it simpler for them to sell their products on multiple channels, Vend's mission is to make retailers' lives easier.

With Vend, retailers are able to focus less on transaction and inventory concerns and more on creating that relationship with their customers. Vend aims to empower merchants by putting the right data and tools into retailers' hands and enabling them to do things themselves – and succeed.



Run the worlds best retail

www.vendhq.com