

## THE SENIOR LEADER'S ROLE in Training Reinforcement & ROI



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## Introduction

# When you send any retail leader or manager through training, it's an investment

of time, money, effort . . . not to mention the fact that they'll be away from their daily responsibilities.

It's also a down payment on the results and impact you expect to see when they return. They should be able to create results from day one.

**But the training itself is only the beginning of the development journey.** There's too much going on in retail to expect that new behaviors and skills will “stick” and new tools and strategies will be applied without ongoing support, reinforcement, and follow-up.



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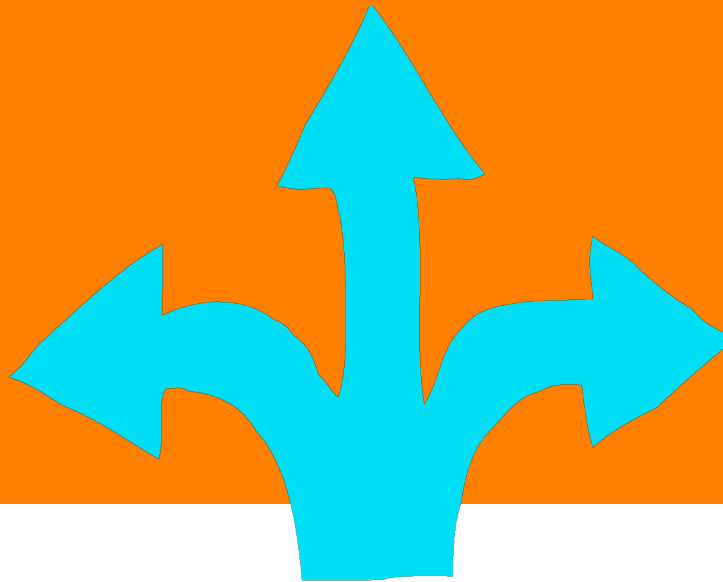
“Moving from single store leadership to leading a region or district group of stores is the single biggest career change a manager can make.”

National Retail Research on Effectively Leading Multiple Store Locations from a Distance, MOHR Retail



“The implications of having triple roles to play (*Do, Manage, Influence*) and play them well manifest in a support manager’s challenge of juggling all three competently.”

National Retail Research on Support Leadership Differences, MOHR Retail



# The Reality

Whether it's leading from a distance, like district, regional, and other multiunit managers, managing an individual store, or managing in a support center, retail leadership today is a complex, multi-faceted job.

It requires agility, adaptability, and many of the key qualities that define both **great management** and **great leadership**.



# The Reality

Multiunit managers have to leverage the potential of their store management teams *and* stay focused on the goals that are most important to the organization. But both time and distance are working against them as they pursue their goals around consistency and productivity. That's why the skills that may have served them so well in a store leadership function aren't enough to propel them to success in this role.



Store managers are expected to produce results every day, even though they often aren't able to influence operational policies or assortment of merchandise as much as they'd like. One area where they have the most control and the most impact is with their associates. But many store managers have only learned how to manage based on their experiences of "being managed"—whether those were positive, effective experiences or not.

# A Lot to Learn

Considering the advanced interpersonal behavioral skills required, training is an important developmental step, one that's often led by L&D, HR, or other talent management professionals in the organization.

And to be sure, **there's a lot to learn**. In our **Retail Multiunit Management** program, for example, participants learn and practice skills and strategies for developing their own leadership, communicating effectively with a variety of different people, motivating managers with below-standard performance, coaching coaches, maximizing store visits, and more.

It's quite a range—and for good reason: **That's what the job demands.**





# A Lot to Learn

So people leave training with a whole suite of **new skills and new confidence . . .**

**but also very full brains.**

And then they're expected to be fully proficient in all of these areas on Day 1 back on the job?



According to the forgetting curve, on average, people forget 70% of what was taught within 24 hours of a training experience.

Is that *really* realistic?

Probably not. The “forgetting curve” is one factor, but it’s only part of the story.

What does it *really* take to  
get good at something?

# Getting to Good

Think about your own experience learning a new skill—something that required some instruction and tools, like:

- *Cooking*
- *Knitting*
- *Skiing*
- *Tennis*
- \_\_\_\_\_



**After that initial instruction, were you good at it that very first time you did it on your own?**



# What did you do to get good at it?

Brainstorm a list.

# What it Takes to Get Good

Here's what you probably noticed as were brainstorming your list:

**It takes a lot to get good!**

(And remember: We're not even talking about being exceptional at that skill!)

You needed more than training, and so do your leaders and managers. The kinds of things on this list are what will ultimately determine whether the training investment was worth it.

What did you do to get good at that skill?

**Review the lessons again**

**Watch other people do it**

**Feedback**

**Coaching**

**Practice**

**Accountability**

# A Pivotal Role

In other words, to help the manager get to good, ownership of the development has to shift from L&D to senior leadership after the initial training.

## **Here's the other reason why that shift is so important:**

Retail managers often look to their supervisor's actions and behaviors to set their own priorities. If you don't make the time to follow up, and if you aren't consistently applying relevant concepts to your own role, then the message is clear—none of it really matters.

And so it's back to business as usual . . . that is, minus the time, money, and effort put into the training.

How much importance do you place on follow-up, modeling, and reinforcing the key skills and behaviors you expect of your managers?



It's the senior leader's job  
to make sure what was learned  
actually gets used.

# Planning the Follow-Up

Your follow-up and reinforcement plan should include some specific skills, steps, and strategies to help your managers:

- “ build personal accountability
- “ apply what they’ve learned in training
- “ continue to progress and grow in the role
- “ create results every day





# The effectiveness of your follow-up and reinforcement hinges on your communication skills.

There are four core communication skills—all of them critical and most effective when used together. One isn't more important than another. They each play a specific role in making your communication more powerful.

# Communicating to Strengthen

## Core Skill #1

### Describe Specific Actions and Impact

The more you can focus on what the manager did or said that affected the impact, the stronger your coaching will be.

## Core Skill #2

### Shape Performance with Reinforcement

Reinforcing what you want more of by making encouraging statements will increase the manager's willingness to use that behavior again. When you hear complaints or blaming behavior from the manager, you can shape performance by redirecting to focus on what matters most.



# Communicating to Strengthen

## Core Skill #3

### Listen to Learn

When you sense strong emotions about a store or district situation, use empathy to reflect what the manager might be feeling and why. Once you've signaled that you've heard them, you can bring more objective thinking into the discussion about how to proceed.

## Core Skill #4

### Ask for Input

The more you ask for managers' ideas and thoughts before adding your own the more you'll encourage them to think for themselves. You'll also pick up new insight into how they view the situation. Use open-ended questions that begin with *Who*, *What*, *Where*, *When*, or *How*.



# 7 Key Questions

What to think about as you prepare for the reinforcement discussion



# Checklist

**Consider the following as you prepare for the reinforcement discussion:**

- What will you say to discuss the importance of strengthening their skills and the impact on business results? *Consider the possible reactions.*
- How will you ask them to review their commitments?
- How will you ask them to share results created so far?
- How will you ask what additional support is needed from you?
- How will you ask them to summarize and come to agreement on what each of you will do to keep the new concepts, skills, and learnings a priority?
- What will you say to reinforce their willingness to grow and apply new learning
- When will you follow up?



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