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Top Five Trends Reshaping Retail

RETAIL JOBS SHIFTING AWAY FROM SALES FLOOR

CHICAGO, October 13, 2015 -- While holiday hiring is expected to remain virtually unchanged from a year ago, where that hiring occurs is going through a dramatic change, according to the employment experts at global outplacement and business coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc.

“It used to be that the bulk of holiday hires would be in customer-facing positions on the sales floor and behind the cash register. These extra workers would also help pick up the slack in the backroom, helping to receive and stock increased deliveries. Now, as more and more shopping is completed online, the holiday hiring is shifting away from stores and into the warehouses,” said John A. Challenger, chief executive officer of Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

It is not just online shopping that is altering the retail hiring landscape, according to Challenger. Mobile technology, easy access to information, and concerns about cyber-security are also leading to job growth.

“Technology is indeed the driving factor, but there is more to it than simply a shift to online shopping. There are several trends that are behind the evolving employment picture in retail, not just around the holidays, but throughout the year,” said Challenger.

“It would be wrong to assume that the new technology is destroying jobs. The fact is retail employment has continued to increase since the end of the recession. We are now back to the record-high employment levels achieved prior to the economic meltdown of 2008. What has changed is where the jobs in retail are being created,” said Challenger.

Challenger offered a list of the top retail trends impacting hiring in the sector:

TOP FIVE TRENDS RESHAPING RETAIL

Mobile

The internet really started to shake up the retail industry about a decade ago. But, now the biggest influence is mobile technology. Retailers that do mobile right can connect and facilitate sales with remote consumers, as well as those who are in a store. To optimize the mobile experience, retailers of all sizes are investing in developing mobile apps and marketing programs. This is creating jobs for app designers, as well as marketing experts who are adept at reaching connected consumers.

Speedy Delivery

Both Google and Amazon are experimenting with one-hour delivery in certain markets. This will further erode one of brick-and-mortar store's few remaining advantages over online shopping. Many shoppers were willing to pay a few dollars more for something in the store because they could have it instantly. Now, with the ability to have a product within an hour or two, the advantage of instant gratification fades. In order to keep their speedy delivery promises, both Google and Amazon will have to hire armies of delivery personnel. There could be additional job opportunities among independent delivery services that spring up as a way for brick-and-mortar stores to compete. These would be like the GrubHub for retailers.

Warehouses, not malls

As more and more shopping is done online and through mobile apps, demand for workers in stores is giving way to demand for warehouse workers. It is not just Amazon that will need to add workers. Traditional retailers are adding more and more warehouse workers to handle the increased business done over the internet. For example, in addition to the 69,000 seasonal workers to work in Kohl's 1,166 department stores, about 9,500 will be hired for the retailer's fulfillment and distribution centers. That is up from last year, when the store added 9,300 workers to its warehouse workforce.

Roving Checkout/Self-Checkout

Anyone who has entered an Apple Store within the last year or so, is already familiar with the concept of roving sales clerks who can ring up your purchase with an iPhone or iPad. It may not be long before other retailers adopt this revolutionary way to speed up the checkout process, prevent bottlenecks around cash registers and keep sales people on the floor where they interact with customers. While Apple is still the leader in the use of mobile point-of-sale, it appears that we are nearing a tipping point, based on the number of companies developing systems, technology and apps to assist retailers in adopting this approach to checkout.

Big Data/Security

Last winter's security breach at Target serves as a reminder that retailers need to devote more time, energy and resources to cybersecurity. More and more are making the protection of consumer information a top priority, which should result in more back-office jobs in retail information technology. But, retailers aren't just interested in protecting information; they want to harness all of that data to be more efficient and better able to target consumers for future sales. Knowing when, where, and how consumers make purchases is invaluable in trying to influence future purchases. Job seekers with skills in data processing, analytics, Big Data, etc. should find open arms among the nation's retailers.

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