



**A CAREER
AS A
SUPERMARKET
MANAGER**

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A CAREER AS A

SUPERMARKET MANAGER

EXCELLENT EARNINGS, FAST PROMOTIONS, HUGE GROWING INDUSTRY

YOU CAN START YOUR CAREER NOW WHILE IN SCHOOL!

IF YOU LIKE WORKING WITH PEOPLE, SOLVING PROBLEMS, WORKING WITH FOOD AND being creative, supermarket management may very well be the career for you. A college degree is not required. Most managers worked their way up from an entry-level position and gained experience along the way.

Groceries and household products carried in supermarkets will always be in demand. Everyone has to eat to survive.

Because humans will always need food, the supermarket business is dynamic. Whether the store is made of bricks and mortar or whether it can only be seen on the Internet, someone manages the employees, oversees the distribution of goods, and assists the customers. A supermarket manager makes sure the store operates smoothly and that it makes a profit.

Supermarkets can be one-person owned operations, part of a chain, warehouse-type stores or online grocery stores. These stores may be fairly small or they may have numerous departments and as many as 200 employees.

Examples of departments in a supermarket might include: a bakery, a deli, dairy products, produce, meat, fish, gourmet foods, frozen foods and health and beauty merchandise. Larger stores may have video rental departments, garden centers, photo processing and books and magazines. These departments all have managers, called category managers.

Category managers exist in the online grocery stores, as well. The introduction of the Internet into our lives has changed the way many people do business. To save time and hassle, some customers turn on their computers and order groceries at an online store. They don't have to get dressed, drive to the corner market and try to find the items on their shopping lists. They don't have to wait in a checkout line, pack the groceries out to their car and then unload the car at home. The online grocery stores deliver to the consumers' homes.

A supermarket manager listens to the consumers that patronize the store. Listening to customer complaints and comments and acting on them can make the difference between a profitable store and one that doesn't show a profit. Without customers a supermarket wouldn't be able to sell any of its goods. Managers must like people and value their opinions.

Not all management positions have the same responsibilities. Some may focus on goods and distribution, others direct operations, and still others concentrate on customers.

Here is a list of some of the possible management careers:

- District or Regional Manager
- Director of Store Operations
- Store Manager
- Customer Service Manager
- Front End Manager
- Category or Department Manager
- Assistant Manager
- Service Desk Manager
- Receiving Manager

This report will show you what it's like to be a supermarket manager. You'll find out what the duties and responsibilities are, the working conditions, how much you can earn, what education and training you will need, and what skills are required. Opportunities and advice about how to get started will be offered in these pages, plus you will find out how several managers got into the business and how they feel about their work.

EXPLORING THIS CAREER

NO DOUBT YOU'VE BEEN TO A SUPERMARKET; MAYBE EVEN DONE SOME OF THE grocery shopping for your family. Perhaps you've taken a Home Economics or Family Living class that required you to grocery shop. Next time you enter a store, observe different managers working. Their name tags indicate whether or not they are managers. What tasks are they performing? How are they dealing with customers? If you ask, a store manager may even let you tag along during a typical day.

You may have friends or relatives who are employed in food retailing. Ask them about their work.

This report will give you a general idea of what supermarket managers do and whether or not you want to be one. This is the time to think about developing the skills needed to make a good manager and to learn more about the grocery business and business in general.

One of the best ways to learn more about this career is to become involved in your school's DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America) program. DECA will help you develop foundation skills like communication, human relations and mathematics skills. You will learn how to communicate more effectively with customers, employees and supervisors, what it takes to please the customers and what common problems you might run into. DECA provides competitions in actual supermarket situations to see how well you have developed these skills.

If you are in the market for a part-time job to supplement your income, apply for employment at your local stores. Then you will get a taste of what a permanent supermarket management career feels like.

HISTORY OF FOOD RETAILING

FOOD TRADING FIRST OCCURRED IN AMERICA AT TRADING POSTS BEGINNING IN THE 1600s. Traders bartered with the Native Americans and each other for goods they needed. Chicago, Detroit and St. Louis were all originally trading posts before they became cities.

About one hundred years later trading posts evolved into general stores. Whatever people couldn't grow or make themselves was stocked in these stores. Lard, soap and flour could be found in the general store, but these stores stocked less than one hundred items and the store owner filled the customers' orders individually.

You wouldn't find five different brands of flour or 25 kinds of soap in a general store in those days. The one hundred items stocked were all different items.

Then in the 1860s, the Industrial Revolution created more and more factories. This depleted much of the farm land and people couldn't grow their own food to the extent they had in the past. Many migrated to the cities where land was scarce. Many of the people worked in the factories so they didn't have the time to produce their own food.

Origins of Chain Stores

With the advent of canals, cars, roads, and railroads, more goods could be moved from place to place and even imported from other countries. Specialty food retailers seized this opportunity and opened bakeries, meat markets, and fish markets. A wide variety within each category of merchandise wasn't available and that limited the opportunities for expansion and profit.

The logical and most cost efficient solution appeared to be carrying more than one type of product. So the butcher began carrying some grocery items as did the baker. Partnerships were formed. Some of the more adventurous business people opened complete stores. Others opened additional locations of their butcher shops or bakeries. These tactics gave birth to the chain store concept. Now a chain store is considered to be one in a group of 11 or more stores with centralized management. At least half the stores in the United States today are chain stores.

In earlier times, independent retailers opposed this chain store expansion. To lessen its impact, local governments levied a special per-store tax on these stores in hopes of making them unprofitable. Just like today, shoppers continued to shop where they wanted and where their needs were met. The more organized and efficient store owners survived this taxation and the opposition declined.

Many of these per-store taxes have been removed and chain stores have a strong presence in retailing today. Albertson's, Kroger's, Piggly Wiggly, Safeway, and Winn-Dixie are just a few of the supermarket chains we now have.

How the Self-Service Concept Started In 1916 a man named Clarence Saunders developed the self-service concept for grocery shopping. This allowed the shoppers to select their own groceries instead of having the employees fill each individual's orders. Saunder's store was located in Memphis, Tennessee. The store opened accompanied by

predictions of failure. The concept was unheard of – open shelves, shopping baskets and no clerks to select the merchandise. This was the first Piggly Wiggly store. The Piggly Wiggly chain continues to thrive today with approximately 650 locations in 18 states and a replica of that first store is now displayed in a Memphis museum.

This self-service concept grew to a greater magnitude during the Depression of the 1930s. Crude shelves were placed in garages and warehouses. Opened cases of food items were stacked on these shelves to make it easier for people to pick out their own groceries.

Supermarkets Arrive on the Grocery Scene The supermarket concept was officially introduced into the United States in 1930. At that time grocery stores only offered food items. The overseer of the food retailing industry FMI (Food Marketing Institute) declared 1930 as the actual birth year of the supermarket and awarded that honor to a King Kullen store that opened that year in Westbury, New York.

Today, if a store carrying food items makes more than \$2 million a year in sales, it is considered a supermarket.

In the 1930s and the 1940s supermarket owners began opening stores in outlying areas, not just in the center of town. After the supermarket was introduced into the area, other retailers followed and the shopping center came into existence. Now almost every major trading area possesses at least one shopping center.

During this time in history, supermarkets began offering more non-food items. Non-food items reaped better profits and consumers liked finding all they needed in one store. This led to the development of one-stop shopping stores like Fred Meyer. Meyer built a full-line department store around a large supermarket. Although this hypermarket concept originated with Fred Meyer it has also made its way into Europe and South America.

Since World War II, several changes have taken place in the supermarket arena. Closing smaller and less profitable stores, expanding hours of operation (in the past stores weren't open on Sundays, now many are open 24 hours), and creating more sales promotions represent a few of these changes. Now it's not uncommon to find a bank, florist, pharmacy, photo finishing shop, and espresso café inside a supermarket. Some even offer babysitting services so Mom can shop without her children.

In the United States more than 120,000 grocery stores and 30,000 supermarkets exist and they employ a total of 3.5 million people. The

typical supermarket carries an average of 12,000 items, ranging from greeting cards to pantyhose, from batteries to garden furniture.

WHERE YOU WILL WORK

THE FOOD RETAILING BUSINESS EXISTS IN EVERY TOWN AND CITY IN THE WORLD.

Stores are located in the central core area of a town, in strip malls, neighborhood locations, in suburban shopping centers, and of course, on the Internet.

The larger the population, the more stores a city has to service that population. Each of the supermarkets nationwide has a manager and often an assistant manager and department or category managers. More slots are developing for supermarket management positions in the online grocery business, and this area is expected to flourish in the coming decades.

Online grocers, independent stores, and chain stores all need managers. Chain stores hire regional managers to supervise a number of supermarkets. Individual stores employ customer service and front-end managers to assist the customers and the checkers.

Beginning a management career as a department manager makes sense and adds to the learning experience. Departments available may include:

-  Bakery
-  Deli
-  Food Court
-  Grocery
-  Seafood
-  Meat
-  Produce
-  Pharmacy
-  Receiving and stocking

DIFFERENT TYPES OF STORES

STORE FORMATS TODAY INCLUDE THE SUPERCENTERS WHICH CARRY A LARGE VARIETY of food and nonfood items. These stores average 150,000 square feet and usually devote 40% of their space to grocery items. These supercenters might also be dubbed warehouse or club membership stores like Costco or Price Chopper. These stores provide limited services in order to charge lower prices. You won't find frills at the warehouse stores.

The combination store or hyperstore combines a superstore and a drug store and provides them with common check-out counters. The drug store usually represents at least 25 percent of the selling area and at least 15 percent of the sales. Fred Meyer and Wal-Mart SuperCenters exemplify the hyperstore concept and stock more than 225,000 items.

Supermarkets are defined as self-service retail markets selling food and household goods. A typical supermarket stocks between 10,000 and 20,000 items.

Specialty stores or food emporiums focus on a variety of fresh products and selected grocery items, but they don't have as extensive a selection of non-food items. These stores may be called gourmet stores and may carry a great deal of health food items.

Although convenience stores have high prices and a limited selection, consumers do some of their shopping there.

The tasks of the manager of the future will probably be very close to what he or she is doing now only with more automation and more technology. No matter how advanced the mechanical equipment, how interesting the architecture or how attractive the food package, supermarkets will always need managers, assistant managers, department managers and all the other staff who run the daily operations.

THE WORK YOU WILL DO

THE PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY STORE MANAGER OR STORE DIRECTOR IS TO make sure the store runs efficiently and that it makes a profit. In order to accomplish these objectives the manager must perform customer-related duties, employee-related duties, goal-setting duties, merchandise related activities, administrative functions and community-related activities.

Customer-Related Duties Customers expect and look for short checkout lines, fast friendly service, customer-focused service, helpful employees and available baggers. A good manager empowers the employees to be able to help the customers with their needs. Listening to customers' problems and answering their inquiries fall under the manager's responsibilities. Resolving customer complaints becomes a regular part of a manager's day. If customers want items not normally carried in the store, then they expect the manager to order them. A satisfied customer means continued profits.

Controlling the checkstand operation to give the customer greatest satisfaction and maximum efficiency will be high on a manager's list of priorities.

The manager makes sure that all customers receive courteous and helpful attention. Employees need to know the answers to the questions shoppers ask or be able to get those answers quickly. Moving merchandise from one place to another often brings complaints from many customers. Customers want to be able to find what they're looking for, so supermarket staff should know where items are located.

Employee-Related Duties Managers' duties vary depending on the size and type of store they run. Responsibilities include recruiting, interviewing, hiring and training new employees, planning and scheduling employees' work shifts, maintaining personnel records and assigning employees specific tasks.

A manager makes sure orientations are scheduled for new employees. New hires tour the store and are introduced to the rest of the staff immediately. They are told what is expected of them and how their job fits into the overall picture. This orientation process develops a long-term loyalty with new employees.

New employees receive clear instructions on how to perform their jobs. In the beginning, the person performs the tasks required while a supervisor observes. Managers make sure that new employees understand

the purpose of the tasks they do and how their work affects the rest of the store. This helps them to see the value of their job.

Managers make sure that employees follow established procedures regarding customer relations, safety and security. They regularly evaluate their staff's performance. In assigning tasks, they attempt to make the best use of each individual's skills, which helps develop good morale.

The store manager or the department manager ensures employees follow established procedures and if they do not, gives them corrective training. Being tactful goes a long way toward building rapport between a manager and the store staff. Correcting an employee without creating anger or resentment is important. Employees should never be corrected or criticized in front of other employees or customers. In discipline situations managers have an obligation to listen to the employee's point of view, as well.

Adequate staffing runs high on a managers' priority list. More employees may need to be called in for special sales, promotions and the day before holidays.

Ensuring the safety and security of both the store's employees and its customers falls into the manager's hands. Seeing that liquid spills are cleaned up immediately and potential hazards removed so injuries are avoided also are management's responsibilities.

Managers periodically check the exterior of their store and survey the parking lot for any unusual happenings. Aggressive panhandlers may be stopping some shoppers from coming into the store, the sidewalk might be icy or any number of problems might exist but might not be evident to managers who never leave the interior of the building.

The maintenance of time locks, safe combinations and burglar alarms needs to be handled. This includes locking and securing the store when it's closed and controlling who has the combination to the safe. Monitoring hidden video cameras falls under management duties.

Goal-Setting Duties Managers make plans for the future called projections. They look at sales figures, expenses, labor costs, price changes and what the competition is doing. They decide the best way to make a profit and what goals to attain. Their exact sales goal may be set by the corporate office or a central administration.

Things change quickly. Goals need to be set and strategies on how to meet these goals need to be determined. This planning may be long term or short term but both needs have to be met.

Managers set short-term goals at the beginning of a shift. What items currently in stock need to be displayed? What parts of the interior or exterior need to be cleaned? What is displayed now that should be removed? What items have reached their expiration date and need to be pulled from the shelves? What should be put on sale?

A good manager needs to be organized. A manager should make a list each morning of the tasks that need to be completed that day. Attention should be given to the most important duties first.

Long range planning might include how to reduce the cost of supplies by three percent or how to reduce overtime hours by five percent. Either managers or the corporate office sets sales goals for each department. If you've ever worked in a store, you've witnessed department managers looking at reports to see if they have met their sales goals. These reports impact their duties. If sales are low, new strategies must be tried.

These goals and planning affect employees so it's a good idea for the manager to conduct employee meetings and seek input. Employees involved in the planning process are likely to have good ideas that a manager may not have thought of. Besides generating ideas, asking employees for input is a form of recognition. It feels good when someone asks, "What is your opinion?"

Once these goals have been set, people and resources must be organized so that the plan can be implemented. The manager first decides if the tasks required to achieve the goals can be delegated. Even though the manager runs the store, this careerist shouldn't do everything. Do the tasks need to be done by employees with the manager's assistance? Can only the manager perform these tasks? Would a combination of management and other staff be the best mix?

Merchandise-Related Activities Supermarket managers either order merchandise and supplies from vendors or supervise that task. Storing and stocking of these goods also are under the manager's authority. Managers arrange for the receiving, delivery and storage of products. They monitor inventories by looking at electronic databases.

Establishing pricing policies according to the company's guidelines for the best store profit, supervising ordering, and replenishment of merchandise on hand are all tasks performed by management. Prices must be changed according to an established procedure.

Coordinating sales promotions, by following the guidelines from either the central office or the owner, consists of many tasks. Reviewing advertising copy, publicity, window and store displays, holiday decorations

and special events all fall under this promotional heading. Merchandise needs to be displayed in the location that will get the best results. Cans of cranberries should be easy to find at Thanksgiving, for example.

Managers develop methods to minimize shrinkage, which is the loss of products.

Shrinkage comes from theft, shoplifting, a freezer not working or something not being sold before its pull date. Shoplifting accounts for a great loss in store income, which worries both store managers and staff. Many chain stores also have internal security to monitor employee theft.

Administrative Functions These also might be called the clerical functions of the manager. The person in charge of store operations reviews the daily checker reports, supervises the banking and cash handling, maintains a vacation schedule and either approves or disapproves an employee's vacation requests. Managers supervise their staff's payroll records, which includes providing payroll information to the corporate office.

Vendors' invoices for goods received must be approved by management before they are submitted to a central office for payment.

Managers advise their staff on price changes and on changes in what merchandise is being stocked. Reports need to be sent to accounting, personnel and other departments at the central office. If a policy or procedure changes, the manager advises the staff about it.

These careerists also keep their eye on store operating expenses. They regulate the use of lights and the telephone, and they control the purchase of office supplies. Managers request necessary repairs of equipment whether it be a cash register or the heating system. Temperature controls and labor costs drastically affect the operation of a supermarket and in turn, its profitability.

Community-Related Activities Taking part in community activities makes a manager more popular with local customers. Whether it's allowing the bloodmobile to park in the store parking lot or bringing in nurses to give flu shots or arranging for donations to charities, a manager is often involved in the surrounding neighborhood activities.

Belonging to the local chamber of commerce and other organizations like the Lions Club and the Rotary Club gives the manager a more prominent position in the community.



Supermarket managers must decide how to arrange food items on shelves to attract the eye and interest of shoppers.

MANAGERS TELL YOU ABOUT THEIR CAREERS

I Started out as a Bagger in a Supermarket When I was 16 Years Old

"I progressed to a checker and after that to a stocker. By the time I was 18, I was a night manager. I was given my own store to manage when I was 24.

I chose the supermarket industry for my first job because it was either that or pick beans and berries in this agricultural community. I didn't want to do that. To this day, I believe I made the right choice. I love my work.

My rapid advancement came about because I worked hard and demonstrated how much I liked people. If you don't like people, this is not the business for you. I constantly interact with customers whether they are voicing a complaint, asking that a certain product be stocked or just want to chat.

When I am looking for an employee to promote, I look for someone who hustles all the time, has a great attitude, is personable and works well independently. I want someone who is a self motivator and doesn't have to be told what to do. Someone who finds the tasks that need to be done and starts working on them.

My advice to students interested in a supermarket management career is to get started while you're young. Apply for a job as a bagger or courtesy clerk at the local store. Take business and math classes in school. Most managers in the supermarket business don't have college degrees, but you definitely need to graduate from high school.

The supermarket is a great place to work. This is where I met my spouse. I am satisfied being the store manager and I don't want to advance any further."

**I'm a Washington State Native and I
Started Working in Supermarkets
When I Was 16**

"My first job was called a courtesy clerk. I bagged groceries for customers and retrieved shopping carts from the parking lot. Sometimes I performed light cleaning duties. From there I became a helper clerk and then the produce manager. The promotions kept coming and now I am the perishable manager which is like an assistant manager, and I'm waiting for a promotion to store manager. Now that I am in my mid-thirties, I really want my own store. The smallest number of people telling me what to do, the better.

I love talking to the customers and trying to make them happy. If you don't enjoy that type of interaction, you might try another career. The supermarkets are filled with people all day and many of them will need your personal attention. I feel I am sincere, and follow through on my promises, and those are qualities a manager should possess. No one person knows everything, but I do try to help the customers and the staff to the best of my ability.

Getting some experience in the food retailing field as early as possible is a good way to see if you want to make it a career. Apply for that job as a courtesy clerk or a helper clerk and do the best you can.

You need to finish high school and take some business classes and lots of math. Pay attention to what the teacher says in math class. Math comes in handy because you end up making lots of calculations plus you read and interpret sales figures, goals, etc.

I continually challenge myself. Like right now, I'm comfortable in this store. Everyone who shops here knows me and it's easy for me. So I've asked to be transferred to a new store that we have opening in another town. It'll make a longer commute for me, but I know it will be worth it in the end."

A Grocery Store was Located Across from My High School

"I played sports and had other after school activities, so I needed some flexibility in a work schedule. I thought the grocery store would be ideal because it was so close to my school. I began my career as a courtesy clerk and I have been in the supermarket business ever since.

I probably worked in stores six years before I started looking at management as a potential career. I moved up to checker, then night crew and later I supervised the night crew. I slowly climbed the ladder from fourth person in charge, to third, then to second and after 15 years I became a store manager. I have three and a half years of college, but I don't have a college degree.

I recommend that high school students take business classes and go on to college. I think a college degree is more important now than it was when I was in school. You also need to get your foot in the door by becoming a courtesy clerk or helper clerk. A helper clerk performs many of the same duties as a courtesy clerk and also keeps the shelves stocked. It's a great introduction to the retail food industry. One of the best ways to impress the manager is to make yourself available. Limited availability tells me a person doesn't really want a job.

My favorite part of the job is dealing with customers and the interaction we have. If you're not a people person, you don't want this career."

I Was an Army Brat and Most of My Childhood Was Spent in Okinawa, Japan

"When my family returned to the states, I started working as a courtesy clerk when I was 16. I spent a year doing that, and then over the next two years I advanced to helper clerk, cashier, and within two years I became a manager. I did leave the supermarket business for a year and a half to sell insurance, but I came back – that wasn't for me. Now I'm 30 years old, and I am the third person in charge of this store which has both a grocery division and a department store.

Students interested in a grocery career need to do well in school and should master the basic skills you will need in a store.

Take typing or keyboarding, whatever they call it now, so you can use a computer. Starting out as a courtesy clerk these days is one of the higher paying jobs a kid can get because in most stores, it is a union job and you get union benefits.

I earn a good living and like to take care of people's needs. Being able to offer assistance makes me feel good."

My First Job Was at a Popular Fast Food Restaurant – the One With the Golden Arches

"I loved it there, but I went into the army for four years. I returned to fast food after my army stint, became a floor supervisor, but then I had a disagreement with my manager over some principles. My friend worked as a manager of a grocery store and hired me as that store's seafood manager. Two people in the seafood department felt that was unfair because I had no grocery experience whatsoever. Those two people took their grievance to the union, and I was asked to step down from the management position. I said that was fair as long as I could retain the salary I had been getting. It was agreed and now six years later I am a store manager. In six more years I have set my sights on District Director. That position oversees from six to eight stores.

High school students should take math classes and any courses having to do with customer service or working with people. Debate is a good extracurricular activity to engage in. That teaches you how to present yourself in a professional manner and not get taken advantage of, because that can happen to you in this business. Junior Achievement and DECA clubs give students good grocery business exposure.

I like being able to set my own schedule and I enjoy the people I work with. I do love my job. Making the store productive and a pleasant place for my employees satisfies me. The money is not that important."

I Grew up Mostly in California, but I Spent Some Time in Seattle

"My mother always told me the best jobs for teenagers were in restaurants (because of the tipping) and grocery stores (because you can climb the ladder reasonably fast while still in school.) Before I'd entered the workforce, I'd decided on a grocery store job since I didn't have the desire or the temperament for a restaurant job. I started working at a regular supermarket, and after a year went to work in a specialty food store. I sensed I would have a better chance of moving up there.

This store likes to promote from within. I didn't intend to become management; this was just my after-school job in high school that turned into my college job. Right after I started my senior year in college I became ill and had to put off school for a few months. When I returned to classes I couldn't get into the daily grind of 16 to 20 credits a quarter. My friends all got degrees and some couldn't find jobs they liked. This made me realize I was sitting on a good opportunity in my store job. The pay was good and I really liked the job. I decided I wanted to go full time, which at this specialty store means you're a shift manager. These managers open and close the store, but don't necessarily make the really big decisions.

I had worked part time for close to five years by this time, and the stocking and checking routine was starting to get old. I was ready for something different. It has worked out well.

I recommend that students interested in this career gain people skills. The mechanics of running a store can be taught. Learning to order, setting up displays, merchandising, scheduling and all the other duties you learn as you go along. Leading, managing, and communicating with people are important skills to pick up now. If possible, get a part-time job where you'd like to work. The more you know heading in, the better off you are.

The best part of my job is relating with my co-workers. I enjoy what I do, but the mere act of stocking shelves doesn't bring me gratification. It's the relationships. If you enjoy working with the people around you, accomplishing through them and developing them, this is the career for you. It's definitely a job for people who like to work with people."

PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS

WORKING IN THE GROCERY INDUSTRY MEANS WORKING WITH PEOPLE. IN ORDER TO work well with people, you must like them. Everyone shops, so you come in contact with a wide variety of people each day.

Supermarket managers develop excellent customer service and problem solving skills. Listening to the customer is the key to superior customer service. One manager said sometimes they don't want anything, they just want someone to listen to them and hear how they feel. Perhaps they feel frustrated because the store keeps moving products to different locations, or they don't have time to wait in line or they don't understand why they can't cash a check for more than \$10 over the amount of their grocery bill. An explanation or an exception made to a rule, or even just some sympathy with their complaint may be all they need to be satisfied. They don't really want to leave and shop in a different store.

Listening to employees plays an important role in the manager's day, as well. One manager said their store encourages suggestions from employees and recognizes that they have the best understanding of what to do to increase efficiency.

A manager must be committed to continued improvement. In line with this is a desire to keep learning. The grocery business is forever changing. Now there are online grocers, and it looks like trends are going back to having someone select the customer's groceries and either have them ready for pickup or have them delivered. Much like the general store concept of early America, but this time it's an answer to our busy schedules.

Food retailers need a sense of humor to survive. Sometimes customers have strange complaints, sometimes the water pipe breaks in the bookkeeping office and sometimes the shoplifters get away. Sometimes no one knows where the key is to lock the doors on Christmas because the store is open every other day. A sense of humor helps the manager and the store staff get through those kinds of days.

Because of all the duties and responsibilities, supermarket management employees must be organized. They need to know where the sales report is when the corporate office calls, they have to keep a calendar of appointments and meetings and it really helps if they make a list of what needs to be done every day.

Many tasks have to be completed each day, so the manager should be good at delegating responsibilities and authority. A manager needs good,

competent people on the staff and these people are capable of performing many of the routine daily tasks. Empowering employees with the ability to make adjustments and decisions in favor of the customers goes a long way in keeping those customers and employees happy.

Managers must have leadership ability. Leadership can be defined as influencing and directing people so that they will do what they are told with enthusiasm. They perform the task with confidence and respect and realize it is a means to accomplishing the goals of the organization. The right kind of leadership produces high employee morale, which in turn produces high job performance. Excellent customer relations and a good operating profit follow.

Technical skills are a virtue in almost every occupation these days, and supermarket managers need them, too. They deal with all kinds of technical equipment, scanners, cash registers, computers, timed locks and more. Spreadsheet skills and calculator skills come in very handy at the management level. Being able to adapt quickly to new software or other technology will make this work much easier to accomplish.

Conceptual skills run a close second to technical skills. A manager who can see farther and visualize the overall picture of the company rather than just the one store can function better. This will make for a greater understanding of what has to be done and when it has to be done.

Being friendly, smart, and courteous can help when pursuing a career in supermarket management.

Modern supermarkets cover quite a few square feet so it really helps to be in good physical shape, because you will be very active. Good physical conditioning helps overcome the stress, as well.

ATTRACTIVE FEATURES OF THIS CAREER

FOOD RETAILERS HIRE MANY LEVELS OF MANAGEMENT FROM DEPARTMENT managers to store managers, from regional managers to managers at the distribution level. Those people with outgoing personalities will find this work challenging, yet rewarding on many fronts.

On a daily basis managers meet and interact with a large number of people. These can be vendors, customers and other staff. Managers talk about how fulfilling it is to help people and get them what they want. A satisfied customer is a customer who will come back again and that means more profits for the store and possibly a bonus check for the manager.

Managers have a natural path to get involved with the community. Schools will ask for donations of money or food items or to take tours of the store. An organization may want to park the blood donation mobile unit in your parking lot, maybe someone will approach you about giving flu shots at your store and inevitably, the girls and boys will want to sell candy bars outside the store.

Salaries for management employees in the grocery arena are considered good. Add on the opportunities to earn bonuses, incentives or other monetary compensation when the store makes or exceeds its sales goals, and the paycheck can be very good.

Other personal benefits make this an attractive career. The opportunity to obtain further schooling is an option, and often the store or corporation will pay for that training as long as it is related to your position. Managers are often called on to teach in the food industry, providing an opportunity to mentor younger employees by showing them how to move up the.

Supermarkets account for 75 percent of the food sales in the United States. They employ upwards of 3.5 million people. Managers work everywhere in the United States, Canada or even in other countries. People of every nationality need to eat, making this a secure industry worldwide. People are always going to need groceries. This means the grocery business will always need management, as well.

Flexibility is a very attractive feature of this career. Some upper management people can write their own schedules. They still have to work more than the traditional 40 hours a week, but they can select the days off they want. They do need to be present during the peak traffic hours in the store, but after that they are given leeway.

Promotions and advancement come easily. You don't have to wait many years to go to the next step if you are doing a good job where you are. One store chain even has a policy where employees who want to become an assistant store manager may nominate themselves for that position. They are then given a test and if they pass the test they are placed on a waiting list to become an assistant store manager when the next vacancy occurs.

The grocery business is never dull. With so many people passing through the doors you never know what might happen. The food products change frequently, the weather turns, and everyday is an adventure. You can start this career while still in high school, because a college degree is not required.

UNATTRACTIVE FEATURES OF THIS CAREER

SOME PEOPLE WILL CONSIDER THE LONG HOURS A MANAGER HAS TO WORK AS A negative in this career. Traditionally, management employees work 50 to 60 hours per week. That can have an effect on their family and social life, and in some cases employees prefer not to advance to the store management level because of the time commitment.

Along with the long work hours comes the holiday, weekend and evening work. It is an inevitable part of retailing. That's when customers shop, so that's when management needs to be available.

The reason management needs to be present is to deal with and solve customer complaints. Sometimes this isn't as easy as it sounds. What the customer wants may not agree with what the store's policy requires. The customer may be totally unreasonable, but the manager has to make arrangements that satisfy everyone without deviating too far from company policy.

The company may ask managers to relocate and take over management of a store in another city or state.

If a customer is caught shoplifting, the manager is faced with another unpleasant task. Shoplifting happens and needs to be dealt with. Oftentimes the store manager will be asked to press charges. Managers need to know company policy to make this determination. Losses also may be caused by dishonest vendors or store personnel. The success the store manager demonstrates in controlling theft will directly affect the operating profit of the store.

Other unpleasant tasks a manager might encounter include natural disasters and maintenance emergencies. Fire, floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, power outages, and whatever Mother Nature has in mind can all have a bearing on the day-to-day operations of the grocery store.

Stores are expected to show a profit. Pressure to produce profits run high. Sometimes it's hard to concentrate on the long-term vision of what the store should be doing, when the boss is hammering away at you to show a profit immediately.

A manager is always managing and can never let up. Bowling with frozen turkeys down the grocery aisles late at night might be enticing and look like fun, but managers have to put a stop to these pranks and never participate in them.

Online grocers face another whole set of problems when looking at the unattractive features of their jobs. Unless their facility allows customers to pick up their orders, managers never see their customers. That takes away from knowing who your customers are, how they think, and what they want.

These managers have the added problems of controlling the quality of perishables that are delivered to customers. Do products have to be delivered in refrigerated trucks? How will that affect the quality of the food items? What percentage of the products won't arrive in good condition? Will the customer let you know when that happens or just quit shopping online? How will returns be handled?

Deliveries must be scheduled and what is the most cost efficient way to do that?

Will shoppers feel that the time it takes shopping online is worth it? Is being a manager of an online store as secure a position as a brick and mortar store manager? Many CEOs (Chief Executive Officers) and presidents of online grocery markets have more computer experience than grocery experience. Will they become proficient at operating the physical side of the store in time to see profits?

Is online grocery shopping going to really ignite or is it too expensive for the average shopper? And what about those people who don't have computers and have no intention of buying one? Some of the larger online stores claim they get 1,000 new customers a day. Others have difficulty finding customers. Will the larger cyberstores be able to keep up with the rapid growth?

The most tenuous feature of online supermarket management is that it totally relies on technology. The Internet fails occasionally, computer hard drives crash and the grocery Web site could go down. Relying totally on technology in order to conduct business is definitely a downside to this career.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING YOU WILL NEED

THE GOOD NEWS IS YOU CAN START YOUR SUPERMARKET CAREER WHILE YOU ARE still in high school, but you need to graduate from high school in order to get on the management track.

Employers hire high school students for the entry-level positions such as courtesy clerks and helper clerks. Courtesy clerks bag groceries, run errands like checking prices, return food products to their proper places on the shelves and in general, help in any way they can. Helper clerks can perform all these duties plus they stock shelves. Managers watch these positions for enthusiastic, reliable workers whom they can promote to the next level or place in their training program.

The larger supermarket chains have a more structured training program. It can combine classroom sessions with actual work experience. Speakers instruct their students about company policy, goals, store organization, and management. Other subjects might include buying procedures and basic merchandising.

Trainees are assigned to jobs where they can learn the business. They may work in the deli, then go to the bakery, then the office and possibly customer service. Acquiring firsthand knowledge of how the store operates is the essential goal.

While still in high school you can begin preparing yourself for a supermarket management career by taking classes that will directly apply to the job. Math, computer, keyboarding, business, English, and psychology courses supply a good background for the job responsibilities you'll face. Getting good grades and applying what you learn to the job is a must.

Having the stamina required for the physical activity that takes place in a grocery store is important. Stores may cover more than 55,000 square feet and employees run all over to check prices or to show customers where an item is located. Staff members lift heavy loads, too. Physical demands run high for supermarket employees. Working out regularly may be more crucial than you would think.

High schools offer other activities and curriculum that assist with the transition from the classroom to the workplace. If your high school offers Junior Achievement, DECA (Distributive Education Clubs of America), or FBLA (Future Business Leaders of America) signing up for one or all of these will give you an advantage in the employment world. The experience offered by these groups has proved invaluable to others.

Junior Achievement (JA) assists students in making well-informed choices about their future. JA teaches and encourages skills that will be highly valuable in the business world. Groups discuss the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in school, careers and in the community. JA offers workplace internships and education about business and economics.

DECA, which is part of the classroom instructional program and not an extracurricular activity, teaches leadership, what is needed for marketing and management careers, social and business etiquette, ethical behavior in both business and personal relationships, economics and the understanding and importance of civic responsibility. This is done through actual job experience, projects and competitive events.

A beginning project in the food marketing area might be visiting a neighborhood store and evaluating the parking, cleanliness, temperature control, assortment of merchandise, convenience of the store layout and the friendliness and efficiency of the checkers.

A more advanced DECA project might be pretending you are the store manager and are responsible for the hiring of new employees: "You need a new meat department manager. List the five personal qualities you think this person should have."

FBLA teaches young people about economics, marketing, business, impromptu and public speaking, and job interviews. Competitions give students the skills they need for successful business careers. They measure a member's potential for success in their chosen field. FBLA also offers scholarships.

Much like DECA, only concentrating more on the business aspect of a career, FBLA offers on-the-job training, information about a variety of careers, helps the student set occupational goals, provides personal experience with business people in the community and teaches money management. Professional activity projects might include inviting local business people to be guest speakers, visits to nearby businesses and preparation for competitions.

Attending college and majoring in food distribution, retailing, marketing or business gives you a good background for a position in management. College courses relating to buying, merchandising, promotion, management, operations, finance and computers give you a good solid background for performing the job. Although most of the managers interviewed for this report don't have college degrees, now more chains require them. Going to college will certainly increase your chances of getting into management.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT TO EARN

FOOD RETAILING MANAGERS' SALARIES VARY GREATLY DEPENDING ON THE SIZE AND type of store, their position, their years of experience, and whether they are located in a metropolitan or a rural area.

Couple those salaries with the bonuses, incentives and other monetary awards often given for increasing store profits and you have a very respectable wage. Those managers with the most experience, the most education, and the most responsibility in the store will receive the highest pay.

As in most careers, selecting this one just because the pay is good isn't the right motivation. You also need to have an interest in helping others, because that will be one of your daily tasks.

Category managers represent the first level of management in the grocery industry. The annual salary for a meat or seafood manager ranges from \$40,000 to \$90,000 depending on experience and length of service with the company. A produce manager will earn between \$35,000 and \$85,000. The bakery, deli, floral and other department heads make from \$40,000 to \$75,000. The upper end of the pay range in all the positions mentioned is reserved for those with many years of experience.

Annual salaries for training and personnel managers run between \$35,000 and \$75,000.

It stands to reason that the more responsibility the management position holds, the higher the salary. The store manager or store director, as they are sometimes called, earns between \$45,000 and \$100,000 plus bonuses. Those bonuses can take a store manager's salary into six figures.

A district or regional manager might make as much as \$135,000. One of the specialty stores claims their managers earn in the top 5% of household incomes in the United States.

Other top positions outside the actual supermarket building itself include: Chief Executive Officer, Sales Manager, Vice President of Perishables, Vice President of Operations, Procurement Director, among many others. Management positions exist with distributors, merchandising companies, in chain store corporate offices and in many other fields associated with the grocery industry.

The online grocers have created a new category of employees. Information technology jobs keep these cybergrocers in business. Pay for

these technology positions is competitive with every other industry employing the same positions.

Whether you work in management in an independent market, a chain store, a warehouse or a club member store, you are likely to realize benefits along with the paychecks. Standard benefits include sick leave, paid vacation, medical, dental and vision insurance, life insurance, a retirement program and possibly stock options.

Stores trying to allure potential employees in the current market have come up with some additional benefits. Some actually offer a discount on groceries and dry goods. One store offers a savings account that pays 10% interest. Profit sharing or a stock purchase program may be among the available benefits.

Most supermarket chains promote from within and that is definitely a benefit. That means a courtesy clerk who hustles has a good chance to move up to checker and from there to management. Many stores offer management training programs which may include educational assistance to encourage self-development or to improve on the job performance.

Other benefits may include a retirement program that the supermarket company matches, assistance with relocation costs if you are asked to move, credit union membership and scholarships for children of associates.

Supermarkets compete with one another for the best employees, so they don't skimp on the benefits.

OUTLOOK FOR THIS PROFESSION

PROJECTIONS FOR SUPERMARKET MANAGEMENT POSITIONS ARE GOOD. AS LONG AS people shop, there will be supermarkets, but the form they take may not be the traditional brick and mortar building most of us are used to. The food industry has reached an important crossroads with the introduction of the Internet and other technology tools. Managers' responsibilities are changing to keep up with these innovations.

Shopping for groceries on the Internet has opened up a new category of jobs in the food retailing industry. These managers need technology skills, and the employment outlook for any position utilizing technology is superior. The three fastest growing occupations continue to be in computer-related fields and information systems managers are one of

those fast growing occupations. Cybergrocers employ information systems managers.

Store managers of the future will have virtually the same job description they do now. The difference will be their duties will be coupled with more technology and automation. New departments and new stores will be developed especially for e-commerce.

Grocery shopping

concepts on the World Wide Web already vary. In some locations you can order food items from your corner grocer (a brick and mortar store) through the Internet and either have them delivered, or you can pick them up. More than two-thirds of the current supermarket retailers have plans to offer their food items on the Internet in the near future.

In the cyberstore, you can only view the groceries on a computer screen – there is no retail store open to the public. These stores usually provide a delivery service, and sometimes charge a fee for that service. In some cases, the online grocers allow you to pick up your orders at a central warehouse. A fairly new concept has recently emerged where you bid on the groceries you want, somewhat like you would do at an auction.

Online grocers are too new to have compiled any statistics on their potential impact on grocery customers although they claim grocery sales over the Internet are expected to exceed \$10 billion by the year 2003. Just like nobody knew how successful catalog shopping or color television would be, no one, except the online grocers themselves, is predicting how many people will flock to their computers to do their weekly grocery shopping.

Companies will always need managers to control store operations. As the grocery industry constantly changes to meet expanding consumer needs more services are offered at the stores. Busy people want one-stop shopping. With the increase in services like meals-to-go, delis, bakeries, floral departments, espresso cafés, banks, pharmacies, photo processing, and sushi bars, the need for managers in these areas increases.

Category or department managers are in great demand. Complete responsibility for their staff and for every product in their assigned category goes to these people.

It is often difficult to recruit good people into management because of the long hours and evening and weekend shifts. So the competition in the supermarket field is not as keen as it may be in other fields.

Chain store expansions, which appear to be on the rise, create more management positions. Providing the customers with more and more services increases the need for managers, too.

Food retailing is exhilarating, fast-paced and always adjusting to keep up with the ever changing needs of the customer. Forecasters predict that personalized service will become the norm. Just as department store employees call shoppers to tell them a particular clothing item has arrived in the store, meat department managers will call their customers to let them know a certain cut of meat is available.

GET STARTED TODAY!

MANY RESOURCES EXIST TO HELP YOU DECIDE IF SUPERMARKET MANAGEMENT IS the best career for you. Ask your librarian or career center representative for information on supermarket trade magazines or grocery store associations.

Internet searches can reveal a lot of information. Try searching for terms like “grocery jobs,” “supermarkets” and “retail food management.” Look at Web sites for the major grocery chains in your hometown. Read their philosophies and current job listings. Search for the supermarket trade associations. Don’t forget to look at the large online grocers like Peapod.com, Webvan.com, and HomeGrocer.com.

Food Marketing Institute (FMI) is considered the best resource for information on the supermarket industry. Their address is: www.fmi.org and it will link you to other informational sites.

Once you’ve read up on the industry, getting firsthand experience is the next step. Apply for an entry-level job at a supermarket, independent or specialty store. This is the best way to find out if you are suited to this career or not. Practice your people skills, be enthusiastic, work independently and you will be a success.

ASSOCIATIONS

The food marketing trade associations and organizations can give you more particulars about a career in supermarket management. Write or e-mail them and ask for information. Consult a directory of associations at your library for the most up-to-date addresses and telephone numbers.

■ **Association of Food Industries**

■ **Association of Sales and Marketing Companies**

www.asmc.org

■ **Food Marketing Institute**

www.fmi.org

■ **Food Marketing Specialists**

www.fmsokc.com

■ **Grocery Manufacturers of America**

www.gmabrands.com

■ **IdeaBeat**

www.idealbeat.com

■ **National Association of the Specialty Food Trade**

■ **National Grocers Association**

www.nationalgrocers.org

■ **National Retail Foundation**

www.nrf.com

■ **Produce Marketing Association**

www.pma.com

■ **United States Department of Agriculture**

www.fda.org

■ **Western Association of Food Chains** *www.wafc.com*

PERIODICALS

The addresses and phone numbers of these magazines and trade journals can be found at the library. Call or write and ask if they will send you a sample copy. Some of the larger and more popular periodicals will have copies in the larger public libraries or university libraries. Some of the periodicals on this list can only be found on the World Wide Web. These magazines and journals will give you a feel for what goes on in the food retailing world.

- ***Chain Store Age***
www.chainstoreage.com
- ***Food People***
www.foodpeople.com
- ***Grocer***
- ***GroceryShopping.net***
- ***Marketing***
- ***Progressive Grocer***
- ***Stores Magazine***
- ***Supermarket Business***
- ***Supermarket News***
www.supermarketnews.com
- ***Supermarketing***
- ***Supermarket World***
www.supermarketworld.com
- ***VstoreNews***
www.vstorenews.com