

Shop Assistant, Sales Assistant ... Retail Store Seller?

Like other industries, Retail is going through very confusing and complex times. Therefore, some questions should be asked about the importance and meaning of words that identify a fundamental role: that of the Retail Store Seller. Who are we talking about?

In order to influence the interpretation of this role, it is important to make it consistent with its goals, starting from the name that defines it. This is a well-structured and - to some extent - even dangerous subject, because it entails exposing oneself to the risk of making a mistake, hence the need to be extremely accurate when defining it. For this reason, I will try to be careful.

**In this post, I will *limit myself* to argue the importance of words
In this post I will *focus* on the importance of words**

This is not a mistake. I wrote my objective twice to show how much two words can make the perception of the objective very different. I increasingly come across chiefs at different levels who do not pay much attention to the words they use. They do not realise how words can either negatively affect their collaborators' behaviours or generate Team Empowerment.

Saying to a collaborator:
Limit yourself to carrying out this activity
or saying
Focus on this activity

leads to very different behaviours.

The importance of words

The importance of words is a subject as old as time which is discussed within different contexts. Anyone who has watched the World Cup in Spain as an adult will remember this scene from *Palombella Rossa* a film by Nanni Moretti.

Others may have watched or heard about it on various occasions. I would like to use this example to impress this concept on readers, even though Moretti's reaction can be considered as excessive. Sometimes, you may have felt the need to shout **WORDS ARE IMPORTANT!!**

This is why I believe it is now strategically important to update Retail's terminology, starting from the role of those who are in closest contact with the Customer.

Originally, the word *Commesso* (*Shop Assistant*) was used in Italian to identify the role of the store staff. Unfortunately, this definition is still currently used - wrongly, in my opinion - in many Retail settings.

What is the origin of the word that describes such a strategic role?

The meaning of the Italian word "commissa" is an *order of merchandise or goods to be produced and the consequent value thereof*.

When Retail was born – as extensively argued in the post *The importance of water to be successful in retail* – there was a **D>O** situation. **O**ffer was struggling to meet a high **D**emand. Customers in shops were keen and eager to buy. The Shop Assistant's role, as the word suggested, was to move products from the storage room, or the shelf, to the Customer. He/she was a person whose work was more physical than relational (even though good manners were a must!!).

At some point, the ratio became **D>=O**, that is to say an overall balance between **D**emand and **O**ffer, which led to the need to find new ways to stand out in the eyes of the Customer, including the need to develop the Shop Assistant's role to one entailing greater contact and relationships with Customers. That's when the Shop Assistant became the SALES ASSISTANT. This English title was added also to the Italian one, partly because of the influence of globalisation. The primary role was still moving and managing goods but with a greater focus on the relationship with Customers.

Ongoing training and professional development have made it possible for this definition to still be used nowadays, with the English language also being used in titles such as Customer Advisor, Client Advisor, etc.

Nowadays, it is clear to everyone that the ratio is (for many businesses) **D<O**.

A very low **D**emand with a very high, extensive **O**ffer that, despite a strong visual and commercial impact, in some cases cannot achieve the expected results.

From Shop Assistant to Retail Store Seller

Given this commercial situation, therefore, all the store's stakeholders, starting from the Retail Manager, must feel as key players in what is really important: selling. As already argued in the post *Selling benefits for the customer*, to sell = to convince in order to build relationships and increase loyalty. The consequence of all of this is that the *Shop Assistant's* role, passing through the *Sales Assistant's* role, can be given the same dignity as the Retail Store Seller.

The Shop Assistant should be able to express his/her Leadership in the relationships with Customers, in order to produce the expected sales results and, consequently, determine the transfer of the product from the shelf to the Customer.

Clearly, all this is much more complex both for the organisation and for the chiefs. If the goal is really to improve a Store's sales results, its staff must necessarily consist of Store Managers and Retail Store Sellers.

Because something takes shape if there is a word to describe it!