The retail industry sector employs approximately 286,100 workers, making up 19.2% of all jobs in San Diego County. In addition to its considerable impact on local jobs, sales tax revenue and quality of life in San Diego County, retail also plays a critical role in developing essential skills in the region’s workforce and introducing young people to the world of work. For the purpose of this report, retail is defined as an industry sector comprised of companies that sell goods directly to consumers (i.e., business to consumer or B2C). Due to the industry sector’s economic and workforce importance in the region, this study analyzes the retail labor market and its opportunities for career advancement.

More than 80% of retail firms in San Diego County are small businesses, employing fewer than 25 workers at their locations.

San Diego Retail Businesses by Employment Size

- 0-25 employees: 83%
- 25-99 employees: 13%
- 100+ employees: 4%

Overall, retail employers projected to grow approximately 6.7% in employment over the next 12 months. This is more than double the actual average annual growth rate of 3.3% between 2011 and 2016. Of the 324 employers surveyed for this study, 40.7% expect to have more employees at their Southern California locations in the next 12 months.

Retail Firms Expectations of Employment Growth in the Next 12 Months

- More, 40.7%
- Same number, 48.8%
- Fewer, 3.7%
- Don’t know or N/A, 6.8%

To better understand the workforce expectations of retail employers, this labor market analysis categorizes retail occupations into four general clusters:

1. **Customer-facing positions** (e.g., retail salespersons, cashiers, customer service representatives)
2. **Back-office support workers** (e.g., stock clerks and order fillers, packers and packagers, office clerks)
3. **Front-line supervisors** (e.g., front-line supervisors of retail salespersons)
4. **Managers** (e.g., general and operations managers, sales managers)

Depending on the position type, employers reported having different expectations of workers within the occupational clusters.

### Part-time vs. Full-time Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Don’t know or N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer-facing positions</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back-office support workers</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front-line supervisors</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Typical Experience Expectations of Retail Employers by Occupational Cluster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Customer-facing positions</th>
<th>Back-office support workers</th>
<th>Front-line supervisors</th>
<th>Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 2 years in that specific position</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 2 years in that specific position</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 2 years in a related position</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months to 2 years in a related position</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No formal work experience required</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know or N/A</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In analyzing the opportunities for career advancement, 67 former and current retail employees were surveyed for this study. Current employees were more likely to rate retail industry work experience as “very valuable” compared to former employees (64% vs. 43%).

The top five skills that current and former employees reported learning from retail that contributed the most to helping them succeed in their career include:

- Customer service: 31%
- Working as part of a team: 25%
- Adaptability: 16%
- Patience: 16%
- Other: 8%

The top five factors that current and former retail employees reported to have the most importance in their successful career navigation (or ability to successfully advance to new jobs with increased pay and responsibilities) include:

- Previous work experience: 52%
- Self-guided learning and experimenting: 51%
- Family/friends support and guidance: 39%
- On-the-job training at current employer: 39%
- In-person networking: 30%

When asked to rate the importance of the following activities for their career advancement, both current and former retail employees overwhelmingly indicated relationship management as the most important activity in advancing their careers.

- Relationship management: 82%
- Networking: 75%
- Organizational reading: 71%
- Self-awareness: 64%
- Mentorship: 32%

**Recommendations**

- Workforce development programs that support retail career advancement should focus on relationship management (maintaining personal connections, taking notes on contacts, demonstrating value in professional conversations, and being a good listener), customer services skills development, and emphasis on work ethics.
- Employers who want to retain current workers and promote from within would benefit from developing internal training programs that provide relevant work experience and allow existing workers to advance to higher positions.
- Current and prospective retail workers would benefit from improving their self-awareness (taking formal assessments, evaluating their own career pathway, and determining own strengths and desires), which is reported to be the second most important activity in advancing their careers, yet 59% of current workers spend fewer than 4 hours on this activity.
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Join the conversation: #ReimagineRetail
For more information, please visit corporate.walmart.com/opportunity.

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