

The Great Retail Reshuffle

How to Retain Frontline Workers by Empowering them with Digital Technology





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Into the fire.
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Out of the frying pan. Into the fire.

Just as retailers thought they'd weathered the storm of the COVID-19 pandemic, they were suddenly faced with yet another challenge—an unexpected global labor shortage. Thrilled to reopen their doors to a public who were excited to get out and start shopping again, retailers have now been scrambling to staff up to meet customer demands. Few predicted that one of the pandemic's side effects would be people opting not to return to work because they realized they could look for better opportunities regarding where they work, why they work, how they work, and if they really feel satisfied with their current employer. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that there are 10.4 million job openings as of August 2021, with the highest records of quit rates—4.3 million—since December 2000.¹

Often referred to as the Great Resignation, retail is one of the industries that has been hit the hardest, with resignation up a whopping 43% since February 2020.² With the COVID-19 pandemic initially leaving people either out of work or working from home, this allowed workers to rethink their careers, work conditions, and long-term goals. Many frontline workers started rethinking not just how they work, but why, looking for opportunities that best match their needs—whether that's greater flexibility, long-term career opportunities, or deeper fulfillment.

Microsoft believes that this is more of a Great Reshuffle than a Great Resignation.

There's evidence to suggest that retail companies can entice and retain workers by demonstrating that they are respected and valued—75% of retail frontline workers feel their company puts the needs of customers over the needs of employees, while 58% say leadership does not prioritize building workplace culture.³ At the core of it all is the beginning of a new, more dynamic relationship between employers and employees. People will return to work, just with new expectations. They want their employers to respect their time, energy, and talents and invest in them. They want better work-life balance, recognition for their efforts, and a clear support structure. Ultimately, they want what makes office jobs so appealing.

Just as Microsoft has been so pivotal in transforming office work, our platforms empower retail companies with modern work solutions that provide frontline workers with what they want and need to succeed and enjoy their job.

1. [Job Openings and Labor Turnover Summary](#), US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021
2. [September 2021 JOLTS Report](#), Indeed Hiring Lab, 2021
3. [2021 Work Trend Index: Annual Report](#), Microsoft, 2021



10.4 M
job openings

43%
increased
resignations

Get to know them better

Not all retail workers are the same, because they're not doing the same type of work. The strategic approach for appealing to, and retaining, each retail team needs to be accounted for when investing in solutions.

Store associates

Want to feel more recognition and part of a work culture

Want more ownership over their schedule and time

Need better tools to deliver good customer service

Want more opportunities to learn new skills

Store managers

Want better tools for scheduling and team oversight

Need easier methods to manage tasks

Need streamlined communications

Want more of a voice with the company

Store fulfillment

Need easier ways to coordinate order pickup

Want access to company information easily

Want to feel more included with the team and recognition for work

Need streamlined tools to see back of house inventory status

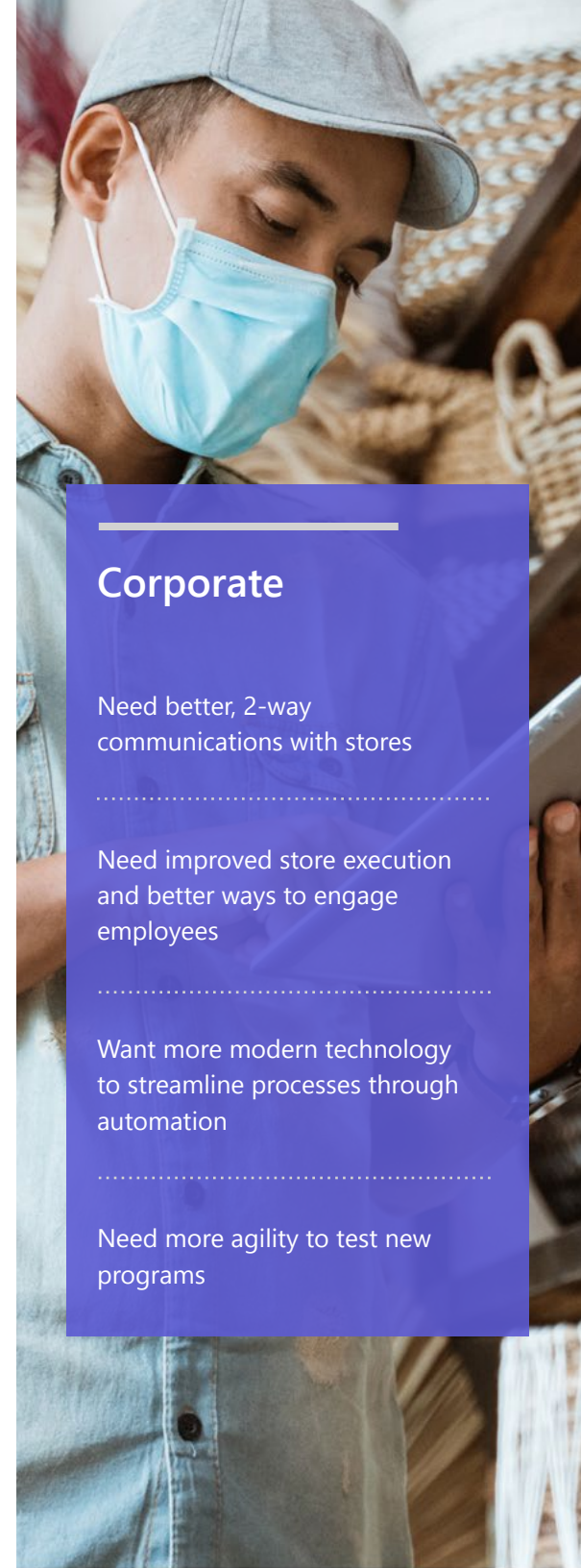
Corporate

Need better, 2-way communications with stores

Need improved store execution and better ways to engage employees

Want more modern technology to streamline processes through automation

Need more agility to test new programs





Enable real-time store communications and collaboration

The first step in empowering store teams through technology is to give store associates the modern communication tools they need to feel more connected to their company, their co-workers, and customers. Store associates are the first point of contact for shoppers, so they make invaluable brand ambassadors. Yet for all the value they bring,

they're often the last that technology reaches. Implementing modern communication tools not only enriches store teams, but also streamlines store operations and adapts to changing customer needs.

4. [2021 Work Trend Index: Annual Report](#), Microsoft, 2021

1/3
of frontline workers
say they do not
have the right tech
to do their job
effectively.⁴

Here are a few ways Microsoft's modern work solutions for retailers enable real-time store communications and collaboration:



Streamline access to key information all in one app



Bring attention to urgent information and offer praise



Speed up customer service in-store, back of house, and curbside with instant voice communication



Leverage shared, personal, or premium first-party devices with secure, single sign on



Reach every frontline worker with the ability to segment audiences



Maintain an engaged and inclusive workplace

2



Streamline scheduling and task management

One of the biggest reasons cited for dissatisfaction in the retail workforce is scheduling, and the lack of control both employees and managers have over it. This is understandable, because after all, frontline workers aren't robots. They're people who need control to plan around the circumstances of their lives as much as anyone else does.

Retail businesses who want to demonstrate that they value their employees will go a long way in retaining them if they enhance workforce management by giving managers the ability to digitize scheduling and task execution while letting associates have the flexibility to own their schedules.

Here are a few ways Microsoft's modern work solutions for retailers can streamline scheduling and task management:



Manage shifts seamlessly with a simple and secure mobile staffing tool



Simplify task dissemination from the corporate level to stores



Easily connect to your existing workforce management system



Help store managers and associates complete tasks more easily

3



“For the first time, retail employees and headquarters employees can easily chat about shared interests.”

Joey Northcott,
Divisional Vice President
of Technology Services, REI

Reimagine retail through automation and intelligence

The COVID-19 pandemic changed retail forever. There's no disputing that. With long-term structural changes in place, there's no choice but to press forward, forging new paths into the future of retail. Businesses who laid their digital tracks early were those best able to pivot to the needs of the customer. The silver lining is that the world got a front-row seat to see just how powerful and pivotal technology can be when relied upon.

Retail businesses looking to stay competitive need to aggressively implement digital transformation technology into stores and enable frontline to serve shoppers in new ways, grow new skills, and adapt to changing customer needs.

Here are a few ways Microsoft's modern work solutions can help businesses reimagine retail through automation and intelligence:



Utilize an easily customizable and extensible platform to empower workers with everything they need in one place



Reduce the burden on your frontline by leveraging automation so employees can focus more on customers



Quickly implement new use cases with ease



Facilitate employee growth and development

Everything is better with data

Empowering frontline workforce and giving them the tools they need to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively by implementing transformative technology into the retail environment has another massive benefit to retailers: data.

All of the actions and interactions happening in real time across the retail floor from stocking to customer interactions become part of the digital fabric and provide valuable data points that can be harnessed into actionable insights. Microsoft Cloud for Retail has individual features specific to retail that enable every retailer to do more.



1

Enable frontline workers with new tools and greater connectivity

2

Gain greater awareness of underutilized data across the entire workplace

3

Microsoft Industry Cloud



Microsoft Cloud for Retail

Looking good as the new you

Change can be scary. However, if the COVID-19 pandemic taught us anything, it's that we have the collective power to rise up to seemingly insurmountable challenges and overcome them. The labor shortage is another challenge that if approached the right way, can be a great positive for retailers. Frontline workers need better

solutions to support the unique ways they work, feel connected to their organization, and the right knowledge to execute on-the-ground decisions. All of these transitions not only provide better value to workers, but also to customers. After all, when your workers perform better, your whole business gets a lift.

To learn more about how Microsoft's modern work solutions can empower your organization, check out [Microsoft Cloud for Retail](#) or [Microsoft Teams for Frontline Workers](#).

