



press clip

Are you being served?

Ben Pike

JESSICA Wiseheart is fast discovering that with her career, a job in retail is only the tip of a much bigger iceberg.

The 21-year-old, who is in the running for the coming 2011 National Retail Association Young Retailer of the Year Award, says there's more to retail than being a shop assistant.

The Jeanswest Macquarie Centre store manager went into the industry after finishing school, and three-and-a-half years later says she wouldn't want to work in any other sector.

"Originally I went into retail because I didn't want to go to university, and I had enjoyed the job while I was in my senior years at school," the former

Cheltenham Girls High School student says.

"I like the challenge and the satisfaction that you get with serving customers and helping them find the right jeans — which can be difficult. I like making the customer's day. There's always more things to learn and do and it's fast-paced."

Wiseheart started with Jeanswest as a shop assistant before assistant managerial roles at stores in Hornsby, Chatswood and Melbourne, then a manager's position at Macquarie Centre.

Qualities suited to customer-service roles in retail include personal grooming, people skills, a solid work ethic, the ability to work in a team environment, an understanding of retail aesthetics (what looks attractive to a customer) and persuasiveness.

The National Retail

Association's executive director, Gary Black, says: "Retail can take kids who have very little formal education and offer them a diverse range of career options — some of which eventually require some higher-level qualifications."

"There are so many stories of people who have started as trolley boys and progressed on through to senior management roles."

"The opportunities are much more diverse than if you worked in mining or manufacturing, where if you didn't have an engineering degree, it would be difficult to advance."

Many see retail as an interim job after school, with some leaving the cash register in their early 20s to pursue other careers.

But Black suggests looking at the career pathways available in the sector before moving into other industries.



how to be a ... Retail manager

Qualifications: It is not compulsory to have studied, however to progress it is advisable to obtain a diploma or degree in a retail-related area.

Courses: The Certificates III and IV in Retail Management (TAFE), a Diploma in Retail and the Masters course in Retail (University of Western Sydney and University of Wollongong) will help you climb faster up the ladder. Many companies sponsor staff who want to enrol in relevant courses.

From the inside: "My roles include training new staff, outlining sales targets for the team, serving customers, and working to a wage budget," says retail manager Jessica Wiseheart.

Career prospects: Retail managers can move into the upper reaches of company management, including area and regional operations management. Roles there include visual merchandising, loss prevention, logistics and sales and marketing.

Salary (adult): Entry-point \$35K-\$40K; average \$50-\$60K (store manager); top-end \$60K-\$100,000+ (senior managerial roles).

Jobs advertised this month in CareerOne.com.au: 370

More information:
tafensw.edu.au; uws.edu.au;
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Making customers' day: Jessica Wiseheart at work in Jeanswest
Picture: John Fotiadis