

# Should You Hire a Store Manager?

Handing over control of your store has *risks* as well as *rewards*.

**R**UNNING A SHOP ON YOUR OWN can be fun. Chatting with customers ... designing displays ... dreaming up promotions. What a great way to make a living!

Sooner or later, though, business grows to the point where you're stretched too thin. Then it seems there aren't enough hours in the day to get everything done. You start asking yourself: "Should I get someone to help me run the store?"

You've reached a turning point common to most retailers. "It's time to hire your first store manager when your schedule gets out of hand and things begin to fall through the cracks," says Fred Martels, president of People Solution Strategies, Chesterfield, Mo.

The symptoms of overwork are many. Maybe you delay returning phone calls or you make promises to customers that you later excuse yourself from keeping. Perhaps important improvement projects are pushed off or never done. The result of all this: Staff discontent grows, and employee turnover rises.

"In many cases, the owner becomes a bottleneck holding back the business," says Ian Jacobsen, president of Jacobsen Consulting Group, Sunnyvale, Calif.

"That's a key time to think of hiring a store manager."

There are other causes for transition as well. Maybe you are becoming bored with the same routine and you need to stretch your own career by assuming a more aggressive marketing role.

The fact is, it can often be smart business to give another person some management duties. Hiring a new per-

**Step 1: Decide what your store manager's duties will be.**

What will your store manager do, anyway? "Typically, the store manager handles operational duties," says Jacobsen. "That involves hiring, training, disciplining (in the best sense of the word), scheduling, motivating and evaluating the staff, the display of merchandise, inventory management, store maintenance and, of course, customer service."

Such duties are common to many store managers, but not to all. Indeed, it's a mistake to define a manager without considering the individual needs of a store. A manager at one store may do a set of tasks far different from that of another. Possible areas of responsibility include buying, displays, inventory control and computer operations.

So, how do you decide what tasks your own store manager should do? We posed this question to Mel Kleiman, managing partner of the Houston-based consultancy Hire Tough Group, ([www.hiretough.com](http://www.hiretough.com)), which helps companies design and implement hiring systems.

"Before hiring that other person, ask yourself this question: 'What do I do best?' Many times, that is the job on which you should be spending most of your own



son can give your store an extra shot of adrenaline and free up your own time to pursue new growth opportunities.

If you're considering hiring a manager for your store, you may wonder how to go about it. This four-step plan will allow you to design a blueprint to follow.