


NRHA Introduces 2 New Podcast Series

What are you listening to when you're stuck in traffic or doing chores around your house? For many people, podcasts fill their time in a productive and fun way. Whether it's true crime stories or business tips, podcasts can be a great tool to multitask and learn something new.

In April, *Hardware Retailing* will launch two new podcast series. If you haven't ever listened to a podcast, think of it like a radio talk show you can listen to anywhere. They are delivered in episodes that can be downloaded to your computer or smartphone. So what are these two new podcasts going to be about?

"Taking Care of Business" is hosted by Dan Tratensek, publisher of *Hardware Retailing* magazine. In each episode, Tratensek will interview a variety of guests, including high-profile retailers, industry experts and wholesaler executives. This series will give you a seat at the table with some of the industry's leading members.

"Tell Me More" is hosted by Renee Changnon, NRHA's retail outreach coordinator. Changnon will share interesting stories from retailers throughout the U.S. and Canada. Whether a retailer has odd tales from the aisles or had a unique journey into retail, this podcast will highlight retailers who bring new perspectives to the industry.

Subscribe today at TheRedT.com/pod to be ready to listen to "Taking Care of Business" and "Tell Me More" next month. If you've got a great idea for a podcast, send your episode suggestions to Renee Changnon at rchangnon@nrha.org. 

3 Ways to Use Podcasts

- **Learn something new.**

Podcasts offer a unique way to learn new information. Find a topic you've always wanted to know more about or a series that can help you grow your business and listen while you review the books or unload a shipment.



- **Use as a unique training tool.**

Encourage staff members to take an hour a month to listen to a podcast that will help them in their roles. Recap what they learned at your next team meeting or employee review.



- **Take some personal time.**

Listening to podcasts on your drive in or while you go for a jog can give you that extra time you've been looking for to expand your knowledge.



In *Hardware Retailing*'s new podcast, "Tell Me More," host Renee Changnon learns more about Cody Goepfner (right) of Bleyhl Co-Op.

NRHA Training: A Success Story

When a customer walks through the doors of HomCo Lumber & Hardware in Flagstaff, Arizona, they know they won't be passed from person to person to get an answer to their question. But this wasn't always the case.

Over the last year, leaders of the operation made a point to invest in store associates' success by providing a training program that combines salesfloor lessons with North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA) training resources. All new hires are enrolled in the 8- to 12-week program, which is called The University of HomCo.

To learn more about how HomCo Lumber & Hardware's training program has helped educate, empower and retain its hardworking associates, *Hardware Retailing* spoke with the store's training coordinator, Cathleen Goff.

Hardware Retailing (HR): What's your goal as training coordinator at HomCo Lumber & Hardware?

Cathleen Goff (CG): I've been with HomCo for three years now. When our former training coordinator left the company, I was approached to take over training by our chief operating officer, who thought my skills and personality would work well in this position. From my time working on the floor and listening to our associates talk over our radio system, I had some ideas that I wanted to implement to make training even better.

For example, we used to hire and train employees for specific departments, like paint or plumbing. This meant we had experts in these departments, but in a retail environment, those experts aren't always in the store every shift, which makes it difficult for employees to be able to help customers in every area of the business.

When I stepped in as the training coordinator, I wanted to create a plan that would ensure all employees were able to help customers no matter the department. In my opinion, offering a comprehensive training program shows our employees our commitment to their success, which in turn leads to better employees who are more engaged, feel valued and want to stay on board for the long haul.

HR: How did you develop this training program?

CG: Last year, as part of a management training retreat, we toured the Zappos headquarters. I was inspired by the investment Zappos makes in each employee. The results were astounding—long-term retention, high employee engagement and an overall sense of belonging.

I decided that in order for the program to really succeed and cover the entire store, it should last eight to 12 weeks. In addition, hiring and training sales associates for the entire store instead of a specific department just made more sense.

First, I watched and listened. I created the training schedule around the needs of the store. For example, the most assistance requests came from the service counter, so that's the first stop for all new hires.



HomCo Lumber & Hardware employees celebrate associates who complete a training passport as part of the company's program.

I often heard requests for key-cutting and screen orders, so the second stop is the cut counter. More challenging departments to learn, like plumbing, electrical, paint and building materials, are slated for the final weeks of training.

To show employees their progress and keep them motivated, we use a passport system. I stamp their passport after they complete online and in-person training for each department. If they complete their passport, we celebrate in the store with confetti and hang their certificate on the wall.

Our retention rate for new employees who have completed this program is over 90 percent since its inception last summer.

HR: How does NRHA Training fit into this program?

CG: I assign specific times during shifts for NRHA online training, and then they use what they learned on the salesfloor. We provide headphones and space for them to learn online.

By scheduling time for them to train online, I know they're processing and retaining the information. By the end of the week, they need to complete and pass the test for that department to move on to the next area of the store. ➡

For more about an NRHA Training Membership, visit nrha.org/training. To learn more about HomCo's training process, visit TheRedT.com/homco.

Fall 2018 Retail Management Certification Program Finishes Strong

After six months of hard work, students from the North American Retail Hardware Association's (NRHA) Fall 2018 Retail Management Certification Program came to NRHA headquarters in Indianapolis for their final visit. It culminated with the students presenting their coursework—business improvement projects to enrich their operations.

On the first day of the visit, students attended a variety of sessions, which covered topics like employee engagement, mutual accountability, a look at the leader's role in sustainable excellence and a workshop on budgeting and financial application.

The next day, students attended more educational sessions, including a case study on how to delegate effectively and a discussion on conversational intelligence. The rest of the day, students presented their business improvement projects in two groups. The top four projects overall were presented to the main group.

The top four projects selected were from Jonathan South of Teghtmeyer Ace Hardware in Columbia City, Indiana; Kattie Blanchard of Bleyhl Co-Op in Grandview, Washington; Ginette MacKinnon of Meteghan Home Hardware in Meteghan, Nova Scotia; and Katie Stuen of Wilco in Oregon.

At the end of the third visit, NRHA hosted a dinner bringing together all of the students, their sponsors and RMCP educators to celebrate the achievements of every student in the course.

During the dinner event, the class chose Jonathan South as the winner of the business improvement project. For his project, South developed an employee training program.

For all attendees, RMCP not only helps their business grow, but it also helps individual students learn and develop as well. If you have a manager or leader in your company who would benefit from this college-level course, contact Tom Marcum at tmarcum@nrha.org or 317-440-9782. ➡



Students in the Fall 2018 NRHA Retail Management Certification Program selected **Jonathan South**, store manager at **Teghtmeyer Ace Hardware** in Columbia City, Indiana, as the winner of the best business improvement project for the term.