



HOW HANNAFORD CREATED A WINNING EMPLOYEE AND CUSTOMER RETENTION STRATEGY

Hannaford Supermarkets started in 1883 as a fresh produce vendor in Portland, Maine, and has since grown to a food retail chain with 180 stores across New England. Despite this growth, Hannaford is still a family-run company in many ways. However, to attract and retain top talent, Hannaford recently developed an innovative program to engage employees throughout its store locations.

Here's how these engagement efforts helped Hannaford boost its employee and customer retention levels.

CHANGING DEMANDS OF THE MODERN WORKFORCE

Many shoppers will try a new store or brand if it offers a unique experience. However, the standard for customer service is still high, and shoppers who have a bad experience aren't likely to return. In an industry with such intense competition as grocery, there is even more to lose if customers experience poor service.

What's more, as technology continues to change the food retailing industry, customers are seeking elevated in-store experiences. Curbside pickup, for instance, is a great way to enhance their experience, and engaged employees are critical to the success of these types of initiatives.

To ensure employees are delivering on the company's mission and values, it's essential to offer a quality workplace experience, but many employers struggle to refine this experience. Some of the most common challenges include:

- *Training employees properly for the job*
- *Responding to and documenting inquiries*
- *Rewarding and retaining top talent*
- *Hiring the right people for each job*
- *Ensuring employees, business partners and suppliers have a unified customer view*
- *Aligning employee goals and rewards to the company's strategic goals*

Employees value consistency. They want alignment of workplace processes, self-service capabilities that are digitally accessible, seamless collaboration with other employees, systems that allow them to make suggestions or recommendations and involvement across communication channels.

Grocers can set themselves apart by implementing optimized workforce management technology, offering competitive pay and benefits, and establishing a more collaborative environment.

HANNAFORD'S WINNING STRATEGY FOR EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Not only is the grocery industry highly competitive, but it also can be more difficult to attract and retain top employees in the modern workplace. Workers have higher demands and expect employers

to offer technological solutions that streamline their work life and productivity.

Because Hannaford has been in business for 135 years, and since it's grown a great deal in that time, the company has had to adapt. Hannaford's approach to employee engagement has been multifaceted, but at its core, the company strives to foster an environment where employees feel enthusiastic, confident, empowered and inspired. These four key emotions drive strong levels of engagement: Hannaford has found that 95% of their associates feel at least three of these positive emotions at any given time.

In addition to these key values, Hannaford encourages integrity, humor, courage, teamwork and care. Hannaford has worked hard to offer a diverse and inclusive workplace and has a perfect score from the Human Rights Campaign as an LGBTQ-friendly employer. Mutual respect is highly valued, which enables employees to feel more empowered at work—one of the four key emotions that drives engagement. The organization sees these values as integral to success.

Hannaford puts these practices into action with a variety of initiatives, including ongoing training, encouraging internal promotions and career development and supporting community involvement—for example, one of the company's programs involves selling recyclable shopping bags. A portion of the sale of each bag goes to the charity of each store's choosing, which allows each location to take an active role in the community. Stores have weekly huddle sessions with employees to keep everyone engaged and focused.

This attention on strong employee engagement has proven highly effective. For instance, associates were previously banned from having their cell phones on the store floor with them. But when Hannaford rolled out a mobile app for customers, the company reassessed the phone policy and decided it made more sense for associates to have their phones with them so they could explain the app to customers.



AN INNOVATIVE SCHEDULING SYSTEM IS ESSENTIAL FOR ENGAGEMENT

Hannaford would not be able to offer such a competitive employee engagement strategy without a modern, streamlined scheduling system that removes stress and hassles for associates. The organization works to be accommodating to employees by offering an exceptional work-life balance, flexible schedules and benefits packages to meet their employees' needs.

Utilizing an online scheduling suite allows employees to easily indicate when they aren't available, virtually eliminating the worry of having to find another employee to cover a shift. Hannaford also uses the scheduling program to set a minimum number of hours between shifts, limits on consecutive scheduled days and minimum shift lengths so employees in rural areas aren't commuting for a short shift. The workforce suite allows managers to easily approve time off requests and enables employees to swap shifts. Hannaford views this functionality as a bare minimum necessity for employee engagement.

Engagement isn't just about employees being satisfied and happy with their work; engaged associates have a deep commitment to the organization and its goals. Hannaford shows its employees that they are valued in a number of ways, including using a program that allows employees to pitch ideas that would help the company run more smoothly, streamline standard practices, save money and improve culture.

To learn more about how to engage employees and keep them satisfied, as well as how that can help with customer retention, click here to view the on-demand webinar, "Engaged Employees, Happy Customers: How Hannaford Created an Employee & Customer Retention Differentiator," sponsored by Kronos and Winsight Grocery Business.

