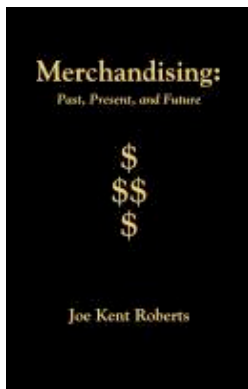


# Merchandising:

*Past, Present, and Future*



Joe Kent Roberts



*Thirty-nine Years experience in Variety Stores, Paint Stores, Discount Stores, Traveling Salesman and Manufacturers Representative. Discover how you can create a thriving retail business. Discover how you can dramatically increase your store's sales and profits. Discover how you can greatly reduce your shrinkage. Discover how you can build a team of highly motivated employees. Discover how you can greatly increase and improve your customer loyalty. Discover how you can get the maximum from your advertising dollars.*

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*Past, Present, and Future*

**Joe Kent Roberts**

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ISBN: 978-1-63490-636-4

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Bradenton, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

Booklocker.com, Inc.  
2015

First Edition

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## Dedication

Dedicated to all the brilliant men and women all over the world, who built magnificent retail stores serving the public with the goods they wanted, needed, and desired. These ladies and gentlemen truly believed in providing excellent customer service and customer satisfaction by employing, very courteous, motivated, well-trained, and well-paid employees who enjoyed serving their customers, while maintaining a tidy store... Many of these Icons of Merchandising created a vast amount of stores covering all of America and the World.

Neiman Marcus always believed in superior customer service and treating every customer equally, weather they were well dressed, or shabbily dressed. Customers are always treated cordially and gracefully. Neiman Marcus built their reputation on stocking unique, high quality products.

Macy's believed in always giving something back to the community, and began their annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in 1924. Their first parade attracted over 250,000 very excited and jubilant people. Then in 1932, during the Great Depression, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade attracted over one million people! NBC began a nationally televised broadcast of the parade in 1952.

J. C. Penney opened his very first store in the tiny town of Kemmerer, Wyoming, population 2,656 in 2010 census. I have personally visited this very small two story location, and the store is on the ground floor. J.C. Penney and his wife lived upstairs.

In 1902 J.C. Penney sold clothing and accessories to the local coal miners in his downtown location. J.C. Penney built a vast empire of J.C. Penney stores all across America reviewing each and every aspect of his stores, while insisting upon the very best service, and products for his customers. Years later he would arrive in his corporate office at 6a.m. each morning. He slowed down a bit when he reached 93 years of age, and would arrive at 6:30 a.m. every morning. I remember shopping at J.C. Penney's for my back to school clothes for several years. J.C. Penny was always a nice shopping experience.

*Joe Kent Roberts*

No matter how successful we become, we should never become complacent about our success, or accomplishments. We must always remember the “basics” of merchandising, and our customer’s complete satisfaction... All the founders of these nationally known retail stores knew their employees were their most valuable assets, and provided for their well-being, present, and future happiness, with great training, along with very good wages.

----- Notes-----



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## Introduction

At one time, every small community in America enjoyed a local “general store.” These unique stores stocked the basic staples for everyday living, and they would also “special order” any products you requested. The prices in the general store were normally very high, because of high shipping charges for being located in remote areas far away from the manufacturers. Many of these general stores would allow the local farmers and ranchers run a “charge account” to be paid when they sold their livestock, or crops.

I can remember my Great grandfather, cranking up his Model A Ford pick-up truck, to head into town to buy flour and salt. Hondo was 8 miles away, thru hill and dale, and he would return late in the afternoon. My Great grandma would give him instructions to buy two 25 pound bags of flour, with matching floral designs, whenever she wanted to sew a new dress, or she would tell him to buy two bags of flour with different designs if he wanted her to sew him some shirts. Many times grandpa would barter his purchases with a few piglets. Perhaps this could also be called a “cashless society.”

When I was in High School, we lived in Clear Spring, Texas (population 10), and I greatly enjoyed shopping at the most wonderful general store I've ever visited. This store had two gas pumps outside, plus a wide, and varied selection of merchandise inside this very unique store. They had everything from horse collars to Fritos. It was great fun to sit down at their beautiful mahogany bar and enjoy an ice cold 7-up, while wondering how one of their “pickled eggs” would taste from their big two gallon glass jar. I finally built up the nerve to try a “pickled egg” one day. Yuck! I suppose when you are drunk and hungry just about anything will taste good.

This amazing general store always made me happy, and through the opened side door, they also had a nice dance hall with a band stand, beyond the last curve of the mahogany bar. Folks would come from miles around every Friday and Saturday night. They loved to dance and have a good time. I feel assured they didn't come into town for a “pickled egg,” or two.

In 1872, Arron Montgomery Ward, a former traveling salesman, mailed out a single sheet of paper containing 163 items with ordering instructions for delivery to the nearest train station.

In 1888, Richard Sears, mailed out a printed sheet listing his watches. In 1894 the very first 132 page Sears and Roebuck catalog was mailed... In 1907 Sears and Roebuck boasted about having the lowest prices on everything with over 100,000 items in a 40 acre warehouse. Sears and Roebuck claimed the largest mercantile warehouse in the world. If you were not completely satisfied with your purchase, you could return the items, and Sears and Roebuck would pay the freight charges both ways!

On June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1889, F.W. Woolworth opened his 5 and 10 cent variety store in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. This store was open from 8a.m. until 5:30p.m., and featured a “lunch counter.” Five and Ten cent stores began to spring up all across America.

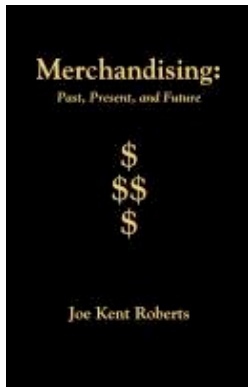
After World War 2, Discount Stores began to appear in the largest cities in America, offering much lower prices on all types of everyday merchandise.

In 1962 Kmart, Target, and Walmart opened their first discount stores.

In the 1980's “membership warehouses” began to appear, offering rock bottom prices on bulk purchases. They operated on a gross margin of 17% versus a 5 and 10's 46%, while most discount stores average a 36 - 38% gross profit margin.

Retail stores come and go. Those that become enchanted with higher and higher gross profit margins, while forgetting about their employees “well-being,” and providing excellent customer satisfaction bite the dust. Those stores remembering the basic principles of their founders continue to thrive and flourish.

“We cannot afford to lose a customer!” quote: Richard Sears (1907) Customer’s satisfaction is our most important goal! We can achieve this goal by employing happy, well-trained, well-paid, motivated employees who enjoy serving customers while providing for all their merchandise needs.



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