

Beyond Retail Product Training: How Relevant, Engaging, and Timely Brand Content Drives Sell-Through

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In today's fast-paced landscape of [retail](#), effective retail product training is key to [increase retail sales](#) and deliver memorable customer experiences. In Rallyware's latest [webinar](#), Heather Fencik, Education Manager at major running shoe outfitter Fleet Feet, recently chatted with Richard Smith, Rallyware's VP of Sales. The two discussed how retailers can collaborate with their brand partners to create, distribute, and ensure the uptake of effective training content.

"The stakes have been raised in terms of product content," Richard started out by noting. To appeal to a range of audiences and learning styles, and to capture sales associates' attention, engaging and informative training content is critical. So, what makes for a good piece of training content?

1 Heather's Tips for Impactful Retail Product Training

2 Variety (in content) is the spice of training

2.1 Be short, be consistent and be present

2.2 Communicate, communicate, communicate

Heather's Tips for Impactful Retail Product Training

"Training is critical in our role as a specialty retailer," Heather said. "People walk into our brick-and-mortar stores to be able to speak to an expert, get advice and be fit for a proper running shoe and all of the products associated with it."

"Our team members (at Fleet Feet, they are known as 'Outfitters') need to be well-educated on everything that we have in the store," she emphasized. "It is about sitting down and engaging with the customer...we really put such an emphasis on training and making sure our Outfitters throughout their career at Fleet Feet are consistently having development opportunities and staying on top of what's new in our industry."

As continuous learning is crucial, Rallyware orients learning towards business results, providing personalized product knowledge and training for each associate. Empowering them with little tidbits of knowledge when they need it, whether on the sales floor interacting with customers, or on a break during a shift.



Check out the customer story to read more about Fleet Feet's training journey with Rallyware!

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Variety (in content) is the spice of training

Heather explained that her team shares new hire training content that is meant to be a sidekick for in-store managers to use as a reference when they are training new hires. Once associates have graduated from this first step, expert Outfitter training is available. This includes modules such as soft skills for the sales floor, as well as a course on biomechanics. There is also leadership training, offered via video or in-person.

The training landscape has undergone a transformation from its traditional state. Where in-person, hands-on training was once abundant with sales reps out and about in the field, 2020 was a year that brought about a significant shift.

“The expectation was that we were going to go back to more in-person training, and we learned that training at scale reaches more people,” Heather noted. “We have taken our content and tried to be intentional about giving what we can from the digital side, but leaving space for the manager to personalize it for the new Outfitter they are working with.” (Check out our post about why diversity in [workforce development training](#) matters)!

The concept of training at scale is an important one for the retailer, as Fleet Feet has 269 stores across the United States! Scalability and flexibility in retail operations are important for handling peak times and events such as holidays or special events when demand spikes, or accommodating changes in inventory.

Be short, be consistent and be present

As Fleet Feet’s Education Manager responsible for both live and video training content, Heather favors content that is short, sweet and digestible. For internal content, their rule of thumb is to not produce anything longer than three minutes.

“In a lot of cases, Outfitters don’t have a lot of time to devote to product training, so if they have a few minutes of downtime to watch a quick video, get some new knowledge and take it back with them onto the sales floor, that’s huge,” she explained.



**Heather
Fencik**

Education Manager,
Fleet Feet

FLEET FEET

“Outfitters love it when the field reps are really involved. In my conversations with brands I try to emphasize personalization and having someone who is coming into the stores also show up in the videos... this is definitely the most engaging way to connect with our Outfitters.”

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Consistency is also key. “When Outfitters know that they are going to regularly hear from a brand, then they know they can trust what they’re going to get from the brand.” Heather tracks engagement for all content, and noticed that the brands that post frequently (at least once per month) are the brands that are getting the most engagement. Heather’s team, for instance, releases a weekly video.

Harnessing a software such as Rallyware’s, brands can consistently post content to be shared with audiences far and wide, ensuring that sales associates receive consistent, on-brand messaging.

Heather recently attended The Running Event, a large industry event. She asked vendor partners: what are the three things that an Outfitter should know in order to tell your brand story? She chatted with a sales rep from footwear company Altra to gather some fun facts, including that the brand’s origins are in a toaster oven (plus the video, which was shared during the webinar was just shy of three minutes)!

“We have the customer who has read all of the tech specs when they come into the store, but that’s not every customer,” Heather said. “We want to be able to speak to the brand, to speak to something else that’s important and

tell a story...when you can give someone who's already bought into the brand a little nugget of something they didn't know before or something that personalizes the brand for them, that's going to increase brand loyalty, and it's going to also make them want to return to the store to see what they can learn they next time they come to the store."

Communicate, communicate, communicate

In terms of any gaps in technology, Heather explained that anything that encourages more communication is welcomed. Connecting sales associates with each other, and with their organization at large. "We are a very large brand, and I think that any moment that we can make a large brand feel smaller for our Outfitters, to make them feel more connected, I think is something that we can accomplish with technology, to have more peer-to-peer touchpoints across the network," she said.

[See how](#) to amplify your retail product training for better sales associate and customer experiences!

Product training

Retail operations

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