

Macy's calls on corporate workers to fill in-store shifts

Bhatarai, Abha . The Washington Post ; Washington, D.C. [Washington, D.C]. 18 Nov 2021: A.22.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Macy's is asking corporate employees to volunteer for shifts in its department stores on Black Friday and other busy holiday shopping days, during a time when the retail sector is struggling to fill more than 1 million job openings.

Internal emails and a corporate memo reviewed by The Washington Post show that Macy's is enlisting corporate workers to help fold clothes, clear dressing rooms and restock merchandise. The "Experience Elevation Elves" program calls on office workers to "lend a helping hand" at stores in the coming weeks.

"As a company, we understand that business continues to be different, and where we can, we want to influence our high traffic moments, finding ways to elevate the customer experience," Macy's said in an internal employee website outlining its "Holiday All Hands-On Deck" strategy.

The New York-based retailer has said it wanted to fill 76,000 positions at its Macy's, Bloomingdale's and Bluemercury stores, as well as call centers and warehouses, ahead of the holidays. Last week, it raised its starting hourly wage to \$15 and began offering free college tuition to attract applicants.

The holiday shopping season - which accounted for nearly 40 percent of Macy's 2020 sales - is critical to the struggling department store chain, which has been roiled by covid-related closures and steep drops in mall traffic. Year-over-year sales have fallen for nine of the past 11 quarters, and the company has yet to recover from a \$3.6 billion quarterly loss at the beginning of the pandemic.

The run-up to Christmas, executives said, could be a turning point. "During the holiday season, our stores see incredible spikes in traffic volume," they said in a Tuesday email to corporate employees. "With your support, our store colleagues will be able to stay focused on elevating the customer experience - helping them check every gift off their list, and maybe a few for themselves as well."

The email encouraged employees to volunteer for as many as three 9 a.m.-to-5 p.m. shifts and recommended they wear "comfortable, close-toed shoes and business casual dress."

Karina Frayter, a spokeswoman, said Macy's has a long tradition of encouraging and facilitating volunteer opportunities. Corporate workers, she said, have helped out at holiday events and in stores for many years. Many current and retired workers also volunteer at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, she said.

"Supporting our store colleagues is a great opportunity to build camaraderie with teammates and be a part of making the holiday shopping experience for our customers special," she said in a statement. "This also gives our corporate colleagues a valuable opportunity to interact and get direct feedback from customers."

The effort comes as the retail industry is in a scramble to hire; more than 2 million workers quit from July to September, according to Labor Department data.

"We're seeing a wider understanding that these were never good jobs and they were never livable jobs," Rebecca Givan, a professor of labor studies and employment relations at Rutgers University, told The Post in June.

"If anything, the pandemic has made retail jobs even less sustainable than they already were."

Macy's executives addressed the labor shortage in an August earnings call with analysts. Chief executive Jeff Gennette said the company was navigating the "intense competition for talent" by beefing up recruitment and offering incentives for hourly workers who referred potential hires.

The department store chain reported a \$345 million profit in the most recent quarter and is scheduled to report third-quarter financial results Thursday morning.

A number of major retailers, including Target, Costco and Kay Jewelers, have recently boosted starting pay to as much as \$17 an hour, citing a tight labor market. The federal hourly minimum wage, by comparison, has remained \$7.25 since 2009.

Fast food chain Raising Cane's Chicken Fingers last month began asking corporate employees to fill in as fry cooks and cashiers. The company, which is scrambling to hire 10,000 workers, said it would pay for employees to stay in hotels for up to two weeks while they worked at its 500 locations. "It's all-hands-on-deck," co-CEO and COO AJ Kumaran told CNN.

abha.bhattarai@washpost.com

DETAILS

Subject:	Shopping; Employees; Department stores; Pandemics
Business indexing term:	Subject: Employees Department stores
Company / organization:	Name: Macys Inc; NAICS: 445110, 452210
Publication title:	The Washington Post; Washington, D.C.
First page:	A.22
Publication year:	2021
Publication date:	Nov 18, 2021
Section:	A-Section
Publisher:	WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post
Place of publication:	Washington, D.C.
Country of publication:	United States, Washington, D.C.
Publication subject:	General Interest Periodicals--United States
ISSN:	01908286
Source type:	Newspaper
Language of publication:	English
Document type:	News
ProQuest document ID:	2598309028
Document URL:	https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/macys-calls-on-corporate-workers-fill-store/docview/2598309028/se-2?accountid=44910

Copyright: Copyright WP Company LLC d/b/a The Washington Post Nov 18, 2021

Last updated: 2021-11-18

Database: U.S. Major Dailies

Database copyright © 2021 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved.

[Terms and Conditions](#) [Contact ProQuest](#)