

The Educator

Is there a science to selling? Count on Kyle Murray and his research team to find out. BY LINDA WOOD EDWARDS

Retailers know that consumers struggle with the many choices they face in the marketplace, but do those same retailers also know this abundance of choice may result in a decrease in overall happiness and self-esteem? Much in the way that Apple generates a song list based on one preferred song, or an online bookseller generates a reading list based on one much-loved book, the University of Alberta's School of Retailing intends to develop tools to help consumers navigate myriad choices with less pressure, time, and effort, thereby increase purchasing satisfaction.

It's just one of the projects in which Kyle Murray, Director of the School of Retailing and Associate Professor of Marketing in the School of Business at the University of Alberta, is involved since returning to the school in July. Research may be Murray's first love, but because his research must be scheduled around teaching, writing, school administration, liaising with industry, and fundraising, he is surrounded by quality staff to help meet the sector's demand for good information.

Dr. Murray's research focus is consumer judgment and decision making. In the university's behavioural labs, groups undertake shopping and purchasing simulations, and share their feelings about the experience.

Murray knows that careers in retailing go far beyond the most visible jobs of cashier or clerk. The need for higher education in retailing depends on the employee's interests and the retail-



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er's needs. Cashiers and clerks approach the undergraduate program because they want to excel at what they already know. However, a clerk who gets promoted or a businessperson entering retail after another career is often ill-prepared for management. Here, retailers can upgrade their young, high-potential employees or enhance the skills of people from outside the company.

Murray's advice to people in retail or considering it as a career is to find something you're passionate about and go after it. With respect to retail, there is so much beyond what the public sees. Managing a store can be huge, especially if that store is, say, a Wal-Mart Supercentre; after all, how many other careers put you in charge of a \$150 million budget right after graduation? "Retailing offers a world of opportunity," says Murray, "and presents some of the more interesting careers available." ■