

# DAVID SOBEY RETAILING CENTRE

# Executive Education Programs

**2027 Program Catalogue**

Sobey School of Business
Saint Mary's University

# A Message From **the Director**

Dear Retail Leader,

Retail is being reshaped by artificial intelligence, changing customer expectations, tighter margins and a fast evolving workforce. Leading through this environment takes more than experience. It takes leaders equipped with current thinking, sharpened skills and the confidence to act.

At the David Sobey Retailing Centre, our vision is to shape the future of retail through research, innovation and executive education. For ten years, we have been the only executive education provider in Canada built specifically for retailers. Every program we offer reflects a deep understanding of the retail sector and the pressures unique to it, from omnichannel complexity to workforce capability to the disciplined use of data and AI.

Our client list includes many of Canada's largest national retailers, along with a growing number of retail organizations in the United States, spanning grocery, general merchandise, specialty and big box retail. That breadth of experience continually sharpens the relevance of everything we teach.

Organizations that invest in our programs see the return in stronger decision making, more capable leaders and initiatives that move from idea to impact. I invite you to explore the programs in this catalog and to reach out so we can discuss how the David Sobey Retailing Centre can support your leadership development priorities.

Sincerely,



**Ramesh Venkat, PhD**
Director, David Sobey Retailing Centre
Sobey School of Business,
Saint Mary's University





DAVID SOBEY RETAILING CENTRE

# Our Approach to Executive Education

*Academic Rigor. Retail Relevance. Real Results.*

Executive education only creates value when it changes what leaders do on Monday morning. Every program at the David Sobey Retailing Centre is designed around that principle. We combine the rigor of academic research with the practical judgment of experienced retail executives, so participants leave with tools they can put to work immediately, not just new ideas to file away.

## Applied and Interactive Learning

Our sessions are built around cases, simulations and breakout exercises drawn from real retail situations rather than abstract theory. Participants debate, decide and defend their thinking alongside peers who face similar challenges. Many programs also include capstone work, giving participants the opportunity to apply what they have learned directly to a live initiative from their own organization.

## Designed and Delivered by Academics and Industry Experts, Together

Every program is co-created by leading academic faculty and seasoned retail executives. This partnership keeps our content grounded in sound theory while remaining sharply relevant to the day to day realities of running a retail business. As a Centre dedicated exclusively to retail, we stay in constant contact with industry leaders, which gives us an ongoing, current view into the issues retailers are actually facing.

## Learning That Sticks

Optional post-program coaching sessions help participants carry what they learned into their daily routines. These follow up conversations reinforce accountability, address real implementation challenges and help ensure the value created in the room keeps compounding long after the program ends.

## Flexible Delivery, Built Around Your Organization

We offer in person, hybrid and live online formats, and we regularly build custom programs tailored to a single organization's needs. Whatever the format, our focus stays the same, delivering a strong return on your investment in leadership development.



DAVID SOBEY RETAILING CENTRE EXECUTIVE PROGRAM

# Category Management Program

*Turning Data Into Decisions That Drive the Bottom Line*

## Why this program

Category Managers are under growing pressure to do more with data while staying close to the customer. This certificate program gives Category Managers a disciplined, end to end approach to the role, from aligning category strategy with the retailer's business strategy to building a customer centric approach to assortment, pricing and promotion.

Across eight engaging sessions, participants gain practical models and expert guidance for succeeding in a data driven, omnichannel retail world, covering everything from banner positioning and pricing strategy to supplier partnerships and category analysis.

## What you will gain

- Build a fully integrated Category Management practice that delivers stronger results for your company
- Bring greater discipline and structure to your approach to Category Management
- Identify which data actually drives better decision making
- Design merchandising activities that translate into results at store level
- Optimize assortment planning and management across online and in store channels
- Apply a more customer centric approach to managing your category

## Who should attend

Category Managers, and those supporting the category management function, who want to build best practices for the new era of data and customer centricity.

## Program topics

The certificate is built around eight sessions that follow the category management process from strategy through execution.

- Introduction to Category Management
- Consumer Behaviour and Consumer Insights
- Banner Positioning, Category Roles, Product Prioritization and Pricing Strategy
- Assortment Planning and Management
- Flyer and Promotions
- Merchandising Planning and Analysis
- Leveraging Supplier Partnerships
- Category Analysis, Reviews and Strategies

### FORMAT

Online program, eight live 3-hour sessions delivered over eight weeks

### DATES

January 26 - March 16, 2027 *(Tuesdays)*

### INVESTMENT

Early Bird - $2,750 *(Register by October 26)*
Regular Price - $3,450

*Group discounts available*




DAVID SOBEY RETAILING CENTRE EXECUTIVE PROGRAM

# AI in Retail

*Driving Growth, Productivity and Better Decisions*

## Why this program

Artificial intelligence is redefining the future of retail. McKinsey estimates that generative AI could create 240 to 390 billion US dollars in annual value for the retail sector, yet KPMG reports that while 64 percent of retail executives rank AI as a top investment priority, many have not yet realized its benefits. The barriers are rarely technological. They are rooted in leadership, governance, organizational capability, data quality and change management.

AI in Retail is designed to close that gap. Rather than focusing on how AI works, the program equips retail leaders with practical frameworks to identify high value opportunities, make better AI enabled decisions, govern AI responsibly and build the organizational capability needed to turn AI investment into lasting business value.

## Program topics

The program is organized around three executive capabilities, Choose Wisely, Use Wisely and Lead Wisely, delivered across nine modules.

- Understanding AI in Retail
- Identifying High Value AI Opportunities
- Building the Business Case
- AI Enabled Decision Making
- Using Generative AI Effectively
- Agentic AI and Intelligent Retail Operations
- AI Governance and Responsible AI
- Leading AI Adoption and Organizational Change
- Building an AI Ready Organization

## What you will gain

- **Identify and prioritize high value AI opportunities across merchandising, pricing, customer experience, supply chain and operations**
- **Build a defensible business case for an AI initiative, including organizational readiness, risk and expected return**
- **Determine when a decision should remain human led, become AI assisted or be automated, with clear accountability**
- **Apply generative AI and AI agents to improve analysis, communication and workflow design**
- **Design governance practices that keep AI deployment responsible, secure and ethical**
- **Build a personalized Executive AI Leadership Playbook and present it to an executive panel**

## Who should attend

Vice Presidents, Senior Directors, Directors, General Managers, and Regional and District Leaders across all retail functions who are responsible for evaluating AI investments and leading their adoption. No technical or programming background is required.

### FORMAT

Online program, eight live 3-hour sessions delivered over eight weeks

### DATES

March 10 - April 28, 2027 *(Wednesdays)*

### INVESTMENT

Early Bird - $3,450 *(Register by December 10)*
Regular Price - $4,250

*Group discounts available*



DAVID SOBEY RETAILING CENTRE EXECUTIVE PROGRAM

# Leading Change in Retail

*From Good Idea to Fulfilled Promise*

## Why this program

Retail leaders rarely lack good ideas for change. What they lack is a reliable way to carry an idea through to results. Too many strong concepts stall between the boardroom and the store floor, launched before the plan is ready or introduced without the organization ever being brought along. In an industry defined by thin margins, complex supplier networks, shifting customer behaviour and constant technological change, a stalled change effort is costly.

Leading Change in Retail gives participants a single, practical model for moving a change from early idea through to fulfilled results. Rather than a collection of disconnected theories, the program builds one shared framework, while exposing participants to contrasting perspectives at the points where genuine debate exists. Throughout the program, participants apply each session directly to a real change situation from their own organization, building a working plan piece by piece.

## Program topics

Each session builds on the last, moving participants through the full arc of a change effort from early concept to sustained results.

- Diagnosing the case for change and building genuine urgency
- Engaging the right stakeholders and testing the change before launch
- Sequencing and planning implementation
- Communicating through resistance and building real ownership
- Embedding the change so it becomes business as usual
- Measuring results and sustaining momentum

## What you will gain

- Navigate a practical model for leading change from early concept through to fulfilled results, covering both the business steps and the people steps at each stage
- Diagnose the true urgency of a change and build a compelling, honest case for why it matters
- Know when and how many stakeholders to involve, and how to test a change before it launches
- Read and respond to the range of reactions any significant change produces, and build genuine ownership
- Implement a change until it becomes business as usual, with the discipline to measure whether results were achieved
- Leave with a real, retail specific change plan for your own organization

## Who should attend

Vice Presidents, Senior Directors and Directors responsible for implementing strategic initiatives, leading organizational change, or building capabilities that support transformation.

### FORMAT

Online program, six live 3-hour sessions delivered over six weeks

### DATES

March 23 - April 27, 2027 *(Tuesdays)*

### INVESTMENT

Early Bird - $2,750 *(Register by December 23)*
Regular Price - $3,450

*Group discounts available*



DAVID SOBEY RETAILING CENTRE EXECUTIVE PROGRAM

# Omnichannel Retail Excellence

*Integrating Channels. Streamlining Operations. Delighting Customers.*

## Why this program

Customers no longer think in channels. They simply expect a seamless shopping experience wherever and however they choose to engage. Many retailers have invested heavily in digital capabilities, yet the real challenge lies in execution, consistently delivering an integrated customer experience across stores, e-commerce, mobile, fulfillment, customer service and supply chain operations.

Omnichannel Retail Excellence gives retail leaders practical frameworks, operating models and performance metrics to align people, processes, technology and data across the retail value chain. Through retail case studies, interactive exercises and discussions of emerging AI applications, participants learn to identify operational friction, improve cross functional coordination and build the capabilities required for execution excellence.

## What you will gain

- Diagnose friction across the end to end customer journey, and the systems and cross functional dependencies behind it
- Evaluate and improve omnichannel operating and fulfillment models by balancing speed, service, inventory and cost to serve
- Identify and close execution gaps across stores, digital commerce, merchandising, supply chain, fulfillment and customer service
- Build a focused omnichannel performance scorecard connecting customer experience, digital, operational and financial metrics
- Identify and prioritize high value AI opportunities that strengthen omnichannel execution
- Develop a practical improvement roadmap identifying priority initiatives and quick wins for your organization

## Who should attend

Retail executives responsible for omnichannel strategy and execution, along with directors and senior leaders in operations, supply chain, customer experience, digital and e-commerce, merchandising, and regional or district operations.

## Program topics

The program moves through six modules that tell a single, coherent story, understand the customer, design the operating model, execute consistently, measure performance, leverage AI and lead transformation.

- The Omnichannel Customer, From Channels to Customer Journeys
- Building the Omnichannel Operating Model
- Execution Excellence Across the Retail Value Chain
- Measuring Omnichannel Performance
- AI for Omnichannel Execution
- Leading Omnichannel Transformation

### FORMAT

Online program, six live 3-hour sessions delivered over six weeks

### DATES

February 25 - April 1, 2027 *(Thursdays)*

### INVESTMENT

Early Bird - $2,750 *(Register by November 25)*
Regular Price - $3,450

*Group discounts available*



DAVID SOBEY RETAILING CENTRE EXECUTIVE PROGRAM

# Strategic Leadership for Retail Executives

*Leading People. Driving Performance. Shaping the Future.*

## Why this program

Retail executives are leading through one of the most disruptive periods in the industry's history. Artificial intelligence, changing customer expectations, labour shortages, omnichannel complexity, supply chain volatility and rising expectations for profitable growth all require leaders who can build people capability, execute today and transform for tomorrow at the same time.

This six week executive program is built around a practical leadership model, Lead Self, Lead Teams and Lead the Business. Participants strengthen their leadership character, develop high performing teams, influence across functions, create strategic direction and lead enterprise transformation. Every concept is reinforced through retail specific cases, executive discussions and applied exercises.

## What you will gain

- Lead with integrity, courage, resilience and authenticity
- Build, coach and develop high performing retail teams
- Influence across functions to improve collaboration
- Create strategic direction and make better business decisions
- Lead transformation while driving execution and accountability
- Build executive presence and communicate with confidence at senior and board levels

## Who should attend

Vice Presidents, Senior Directors, Directors, Regional and District Leaders, and high potential retail leaders preparing for enterprise leadership roles.

## Program topics

Participants begin with a personal leadership assessment, then progress week by week from leading self to leading the enterprise.

- Pre-Program Leadership Assessment
- Leadership Character
- People Leadership
- Relationship Leadership
- Strategic Leadership
- Transformation and Execution Leadership
- Executive Leadership Simulation

### FORMAT

Online program, six live 3-hour sessions delivered over six weeks

### DATES

February 3 - March 10, 2027 *(Wednesdays)*

### INVESTMENT

Early Bird - $2,750 *(Register by November 3)*
Regular Price - $3,450

*Group discounts available*



DAVID SOBEY RETAILING CENTRE EXECUTIVE PROGRAM

# RISE, Retail Innovation, Strategy and Excellence

*An Immersive Week for Retail's Next Generation of Leaders*

## Why this program

Retail has entered a new era of opportunity and disruption. Consumers are shopping in stores while demanding seamless omnichannel experiences. Advances in AI and data are transforming how retailers make decisions about pricing, assortment and marketing, while inflation, supply chain volatility, labour shortages and rising expectations from employees and society add further pressure.

RISE is an intensive, five day, in-person program that equips retail leaders with the frameworks, insights and practical tools needed to drive performance today while building the capabilities required to compete in a rapidly evolving retail landscape. Participants also work on an Applied Retail Transformation Project, translating the week's frameworks into a concrete initiative for their own organization, supported by an optional coaching session and a follow up implementation forum after the program.

## Program topics

The week moves from customer and strategy, through AI and execution, to leading transformation, closing with participants presenting their own initiative.

- Creating Customer Value in Modern Retail
- Retail Strategy and Strategic Optionality
- AI and Decision Intelligence in Retail
- Retail Execution Excellence
- Scaling Retail Transformation

## What you will gain

- Create customer and firm value by understanding the drivers of modern retail demand
- Leverage data, analytics and AI to improve critical retail decisions and identify high impact opportunities
- Achieve execution excellence through stronger commercial discipline, operational effectiveness and workforce capability
- Lead transformation and organizational change to scale new capabilities and sustain performance
- Develop and present a practical Applied Retail Transformation Project relevant to your organization
- Build a network of peer leaders, with access to an optional advisory session and a 60-day implementation forum after the program

## Who should attend

Directors, Senior Directors and Vice Presidents in larger retail organizations, as well as senior executives, founders and owners of growing retail businesses. High potential leaders preparing for expanded strategic and operational responsibilities will also benefit.

### FORMAT

In-person, five-day intensive program at Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

### DATES

May 10-14, 2027

### INVESTMENT

Early Bird - $8,450 *(Register by February 10)*
Regular Price - $9,450

*Group discounts available*

DAVID SOBEY RETAILING CENTRE

# Contact and Registration

*Let's Build Your Team's Next Chapter Together*

To register for a program, build a custom program for your organization, or learn more about the David Sobey Retailing Centre, please reach out to our team.


## Email

davidsobeycentre@smu.ca

## Phone

902-496-8272

## Website

Davidsobeycentre.ca

## Mailing Address

Saint Mary's University
923 Robie Street
Halifax, NS
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Group discounts are available for organizations registering three or more participants in the same program. We also welcome the opportunity to design a custom program built entirely around your organization's goals.

We look forward to partnering with you and your organization.



Sobey School of Business

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davidsobeycentre.ca