

## Jay Behari Ram: 35 years of purpose-driven leadership in retail

It's not often you meet someone who's dedicated over three decades to one company — and still has the same energy, humility, and care for the people around him every single day.

But Jay Behari Ram isn't just anyone. Since first stepping foot into Shoprite Chatsworth as a Trainee Manager in 1990, he's forged a career that prioritises people, community, and purpose - so it's no surprise he now leads the Shoprite KwaZulu-Natal division as Divisional Manager, overseeing more than 125 stores and nearly 13,000 employees.

Growing up in Sydenham and later Chatsworth, Ram's modest upbringing shaped a perspective that continues to guide his leadership and commitment to local communities, he explains.

His climb up the corporate ladder is one of consistent growth fuelled by curiosity: from Trainee Manager to Assistant Manager, then Branch Manager - a role he held for over 13 years. He later took on the role of Regional Manager followed by Deputy Divisional Manager before being appointed Divisional Manager in 2017. Along the way, he also gained international experience managing a Shoprite store in Mauritius.

Ram was drawn to retail for its fast pace and people-first focus. "It's also what keeps me passionate - the constant evolution and the privilege of working with diverse teams. There's always something new to learn and improve."

KwaZulu-Natal has been central to Ram's journey. Under his leadership, the expanding Shoprite footprint combined with a strong focus on local recruitment and skills development resulted in thousands of employment opportunities created in stores across the region. "It's rewarding to watch people grow - seeing trainees develop into strong leaders and knowing I played a part in their journey."

"That sense of purpose, combined with the energy of serving customers and driving business results, is what continues to fuel my passion today," he explains. "The company means more to me than just employment. It's a place of growth, purpose, and belonging, where I've been able to contribute to people's lives and communities in a meaningful way."

He has seen the retail landscape shift dramatically over the years. "Customers want more value, speed, and convenience - and competition extends far beyond traditional supermarkets," he says. In response, his team has adapted by embracing new channels, reshaping store formats, and driving efficiency while staying focused on price leadership and sustainability.

As he reflects on his tenure with the Shoprite Group, Ram - a repeat recipient of the internal Divisional Manager of the Year award - says his journey has always been driven by more than just business goals. "I believe the balance comes from recognizing that business success and community well-being are interconnected."

"Running a strong, profitable business gives us the means to invest in our people and communities," says Ram. "By supporting local employment and upliftment, we build the trust and loyalty that strengthens the business. Serving the community isn't separate from our business goals — it's essential to achieving them."

And he's not done yet. "I want my team to keep growing in confidence, take pride in their work, and find meaning in contributing to both the company and the communities we serve."

His advice for young people entering retail? "Start at the bottom. Learn every part of the business. Put people first - your customers and your team. Stay adaptable, and don't give up when it gets tough."

END

[Sign up](#) to receive the Shoprite Group's latest news or visit our [newsroom](#) where you also have access to [high-res media images](#) and [videos](#). In addition, you can find us on [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [TikTok](#) and [YouTube](#).