

## My retail life: Katharine Poulter, Commercial director, Dobbies Garden Centres

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Katharine Poulter, Commercial director at Dobbies Garden Centres, tells Retail Week about her life working in retail.

### **What was your first job in retailing?**

Playing shops at the age of three. By 16, I was a Saturday girl at Ratners. I was the top sales performer every week.

### **Which retail company do you admire most and why?**

Ikea. It is brave, bold and a trailblazer for its time.

### **What is the trait you least like in yourself and why?**

I'm intolerant of negativity. Although I've honed ways to give people confidence, I still get secretly frustrated.

### **Which retailer have you learnt the most from?**

Marks & Spencer. I joined the graduate training programme in the merchandising team. I believe its learning programme is one of the best in the world.

### **What advice would you give someone starting out in retail?**

Know your own mind, and you need emotional intelligence. Know your customer, know your brand, know your strategy and be fearless in your decisions.

**What keeps you awake at night?**

We've got ambitious growth plans for Dobbies, and that creates so many amazing opportunities. I love the buzz of our growing business – it just happens that my brain buzzes with ideas at 3am.

**What's the most satisfying part of your job?**

Working with so many passionate and positive people. I love it when people 'get it' and jump on board.

**What's your proudest achievement?**

I'm glad to say that I go to work and it makes me happy.

**What job would you have done if you hadn't become a retailer?**

I've always been a retailer. I used to sell ingredients from our cupboard to my mother so she could bake a cake. But, at age 14, maybe a fighter pilot or psychiatrist.

**What's your favourite shop and why?**

Anthropologie. It's the zeitgeist of retail right now.

**What was your last purchase?**

I am guilty of a clothing spree at Harvey Nichols in Edinburgh.