



Sales Careers



Why would I want to work in Sales?

Sales people can be found working across virtually every industry sector imaginable. FMCG (fast moving consumer goods such as food, pharmaceuticals, consumer electronics, drinks, beauty products) and Services (such as financial, printing, telecommunications) to Industrial Supplies and Media sales.

There are a number of strong reasons why a career in the [sales](#) industry should be a serious career consideration. First, every company that has a product or provides a service needs sales people to take it to market and as long as companies strive to remain competitive, there will always be jobs available for good quality sales people.

Second, how much you can earn is determined by how good you are at selling. Salaries are typically made up of a basic rate of pay plus on-target earnings achieved by hitting targets on an individual or team basis, with some successful sales people able to earn double or more of their salary in bonuses. Starting salaries for new [sales representatives based in South Wales](#) are varied depending on your location and the product you are selling but, on average, £15,000-£20,000 is typical, rising to £25,000-£40,000 with experience.

And third, promotion is based on results and it is not uncommon for good sales executives to find themselves moving into management positions quicker than they would in another industry sector.

What are the common career paths in Sales?

It is said that sales people are born, not made. But nothing could be further from the truth. Individuals from all backgrounds and all education levels enter the sales industry and how far they progress in their sales career is a result of their personal drive, ambition and dogged determination to be the best at what they do.

Regardless of whether you are a recent university graduate or someone embarking upon a change of career as a sales person, pretty much everyone starts at the same level as a sales executive in an office or field based role. Thereafter, career progression is down to how well you perform in your job.

What qualifications are important in Sales?

Although the sales industry attracts people from all educational backgrounds, most recruiters look for a standard level of academic achievement – four GCSEs grades A-C or equivalent.

However, there has been a growing trend in recent years for employers to ask for graduates with a 2:1 or above, especially for technical sales roles. Technical sales people will usually have a degree or equivalent in a related subject, such as computing, engineering and IT.

Similarly, science graduates are hot property for pharmaceutical sales. Whilst those with a degree in languages are employed by companies who operate on an international level and need sales people to liaise with customers whose mother tongue is not English.

Once established in your sales career, there is the opportunity to study for professional qualifications in the form of Certificates and Diplomas accredited by the Chartered Institute of Marketing, the Institute of Sales & Marketing Management, or the Managing & Marketing Sales Association.

What makes a good Sales CV?

Selling and being successful at sales is all about how well you can match the features and benefits of a product or service to fulfil the needs of your client. The same is true when preparing your CV.

Focus on adding 'achievement statements' that *show* employers you can do what you claim you can do - regardless of whether you have worked in sales or not. For example:

Ability to hit targets: "Worked with a team of sales assistants to promote the store's customer loyalty card during a dedicated period of sales. This resulted in an uptake of 150 additional applications – 30% above target"

Presentation skills: "Whilst at university I regularly presented the findings of my research to group of fellow students and college lecturers ranging from 6 to 30 people"

Negotiation skills: "In my last role I negotiated a series of short term contracts with a number of new clients who renewed their orders and have developed into key accounts worth in excess of £150,000 for the organisation"

Strong communication skills: "As secretary for my university student union I ensured a clear channel of communication and effective working relationship between all parties, including students and the university management team"

Achievement statements need to provide an action verb (e.g. increased, launched, developed) that describes your responsibilities, and they need to be measurable in terms of money or percentages or value-added to dispel the *So what?* attitude on the part of the recruiter.

What should I expect during the job interview process?

Now the selling really begins! The interview will invariably take the shape of a two-stage process. The first will normally be run by the department head or line manager followed by a second interview which could involve two or more people.

Regardless of whether you are applying for a sales executive or manager position, your interviewer will be looking for a number of key skills and qualities that will have been highlighted in the job advert, such as 'self-motivated', 'outgoing personality', 'drive and determination', or 'flexible' – the interviewer is almost certain to ask you for examples of how these apply to you.

So prepare your answers in advance. For example, knowing that you strive to move into a management position within the next three years demonstrates your 'drive and determination'.

Similarly, anticipate the 'strengths and weaknesses' questions, and brush up on your industry and company knowledge because you will be tested on this and you don't want to fall short because you haven't done your background research.

Accepting the job offer

When you receive the job offer, make sure that what you are being offered is in line with your expectations and that the company is the kind of place that you will be happy working in. And if you feel that the financial package being offered is less than you deserve, don't accept it.

Employers will always try to get themselves a bargain when hiring new staff and if you are as good a sales person as you claim to be, then the employer will expect you to negotiate a better salary.

For details on the latest sales vacancies in South Wales, [click here](#).
