

# Careers in the Marketing/Sales/Retail Industries

## Marketing Overview:

According to the American Marketing Association, marketing is defined as "an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders."

Marketing professionals can expect a diverse, dynamic work experience, with new challenges emerging each day. Very few marketers describe their work as "boring" or "routine". Marketers should also expect a fast-paced, often challenging environment, with numerous internal and external pressures. While there may be seasonal fluctuations in workload, e.g. during marketing plan development, workweeks typically range from 50-70 hours. Travel is a job requirement, whether to a field sales office, manufacturing facility, customer account, advertising agency or to supervise local market research. The level of travel varies, but expect a few days of travel a month.

*Marketing careers can be broken down into the following major categories:*

- Sales
- Advertising/Public Relations
- Market Research
- Product/Brand Management
- Retail

## Sales Overview:

Regardless of the type of products they sell, sales representatives' primary duties are to make customers interested in their merchandise and to arrange the sale of that merchandise. The process of promoting and selling a product can be extensive, at times taking up to several months. Whether in person or over the phone, sales representatives describe their products, conduct demonstrations, explain the benefits that their products convey, and answer any questions that their customers may have.

Sales representatives have several duties beyond selling products. They analyze sales statistics, prepare reports, and handle administrative duties such as filing expense accounts, scheduling appointments, and making travel plans. They also read about new and existing products and monitor the sales, prices, and products of their competitors. Sales representatives generally work in either inside sales, interacting with customers over the phone from an office location, or outside "field" sales, traveling to meet clients in person.

*Sales careers can be broken down into the following major categories:*

- Industrial
- Wholesale
- Direct Marketing
- Consumer Product
- Financial Services
- Services
- Advertising
- E-commerce

## Retail Overview:

Retail is one of the largest, most dynamic parts of the world economy. In good economic times, jobs in the retail sector are numerous, especially entry-level positions. Even during economic contractions, when some retailing sectors suffer, others--like groceries, drugstores, and discounters--continue to thrive.

Careers in retail are people-oriented, fast-paced, and have room for creativity. Retailing jobs are worth taking a good look at, particularly if you are looking for a service-oriented, entrepreneurial profession. The options are many including store management, buying, merchandising and central management. There's also the booming area of e-tailing (online retail). If you have an interest in technology, marketing and retail, these may be the retailing jobs for you.

*Retail careers can be broken down into the following major categories:*

- Buying/Purchasing  
(Product Development/Planning and Allocation)
- Sales
- Management/Administration
- Human Resources
- Small Business
- Visual Merchandising
- Non-store Retailing

## Careers in the Marketing/Sales/Retail Industries

### Key Skills:

*Initiative:* Ability to accomplish complex projects and tasks with minimal assistance.

*Leadership/Management:* Lead & motivate people from different departments, & provide visionary creative leadership.

*Analytical and Strategic-thinking:* Sort through and identify critical data, understand and correctly interpret it, and apply it effectively to drive business growth.

*Teamwork:* Work effectively in teams.

*Creativity/Innovation:* Approach a problem from a different angle, find a better way of doing things, and generate unique ideas.

*Communication:* Support or defend a position in a clear, concise, and persuasive manner.

*Organizational/Time Management:* Balance numerous projects and issues at one time, and properly prioritize projects.

*Additional Skills:* Interpersonal, Enthusiasm, Passion for consumers, Interest in Marketing

### Interview Process

Marketing, Sales and Retail interview questions typically fall into two broad categories:

- "Fit/Behavioral" questions assess your interest in marketing/sales/retail, how well you would fit at the company interviewing you and how well you have demonstrated the skills crucial for marketers. Before the interview, talk to people familiar with the company to identify what characteristics are specifically key to this position and how you have utilized those skills in your past experiences.
- "Case" questions assess your general knowledge of the industry, frameworks and your quick critical thinking abilities.

#### Fit/Behavioral Interview

With any fit or behavioral question, never miss the opportunity to relate your answers to a specific experience you have had. Sharing your ideas on leadership, motivation, or creativity is good, but sharing those ideas in the context of a professional experience makes your answer much more relevant to the interviewer.

*Examples of common fit/behavioral questions:*

1. Walk me through your resume/Tell me about yourself.
2. Why do you want to work for our company?
3. Describe a situation where your efforts really made a difference. (*Leadership/Management Type Question*)
4. What goals have you set for yourself and how will you reach them? (*Motivation Type Question*)
5. Give me an example of when your team had a conflict and how you resolved it. (*Teamwork Type Question*)
6. If you were a consumer product, what would you be and why? (*Creativity Type Question*)
7. Give me an example of when you had to use data during your last job. (*Analytical Type Question*)

#### Case Interview

When approaching a Marketing Case question it is important to consider the 3 C's: Clear, Concise, and Complete. This is an opportunity to show strategic thinking and your ability to work under pressure. Try to think outside of the box, as this is a perfect opportunity to display creativity. In most situations, the recruiter is not looking for the "right" answer. They are focusing on your thought process, how you approach a problem and your general marketing knowledge.

*Examples of common case questions:*

1. Assume you are the brand manager on Brand X. Sales have been declining recently. What kinds of things may be causing the decline? Given your hypotheses what would you do?
2. What is the best commercial that you have seen lately? Why was it a good commercial?
3. Market this paper clip (or any object).
4. Name an innovative new product and explain its success? How would you improve it?
5. How will you decide the pricing strategy of a new product your company is launching?

### Common Mistakes Made in the Job Search Process:

- Overestimate job availability
- Spend all time networking with 2 or 3 companies, Cast a wider net!
- Ignore company culture/fit
- Skip self-assessment/may not be the best fit for the industry
- Don't embrace past experience for leverage

#### Resources:

- Sales Jobs ([www.salesjobs.com](http://www.salesjobs.com))
- National Association of Sales Professionals ([www.nasp.com](http://www.nasp.com))
- American Marketing Association ([www.marketingpower.com](http://www.marketingpower.com))
- The Direct Marketing Association ([www.the-dma.org](http://www.the-dma.org))
- Public Relations Student Society of America ([www.prssa.org](http://www.prssa.org))
- American Advertising Federation ([www.aaf.org](http://www.aaf.org))
- Advertising and Marketing International Network ([www.aminworldwide.com](http://www.aminworldwide.com))
- International Public Relations Association ([www.ipra.org](http://www.ipra.org))

