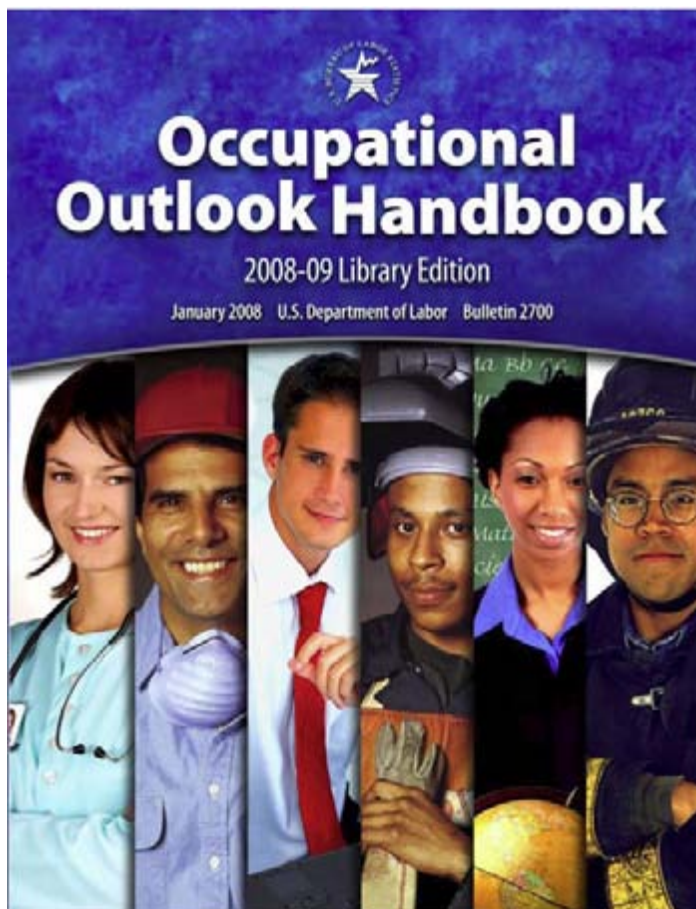


Sales Occupations



Reprinted from the
Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2008-09 Edition

U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics



Occupations Included in this Reprint

- Advertising sales agents
- Cashiers
- Counter and rental clerks
- Demonstrators, product promoters, and models
- Insurance sales agents
- Real estate brokers and sales agents
- Retail salespersons
- Sales engineers
- Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing
- Sales worker supervisors
- Securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents
- Travel agents

Advertising Sales Agents

(O*NET 41-3011.00)

Significant Points

- Overall earnings are higher than average but vary considerably because they usually are based on a salary plus performance-based commissions and bonuses.
- Pressure to meet monthly sales quotas can be stressful.

Nature of the Work

Advertising sales agents—often referred to as *account executives* or *advertising sales representatives*—sell or solicit advertising primarily for newspapers and periodicals, television and radio, websites, telephone directories, and direct mail and outdoor advertisers. Because such a large share of revenue for many of these media outlets is generated from advertising, advertising sales agents play an important role in their success.

More than half of all advertising sales agents work in the information sector, mostly for media firms including television and radio broadcasters, print and Internet publishers, and cable program distributors. Firms that are regionally based often need the help of two types of advertising sales agents, one to handle local clients and one to solicit advertising from national advertisers. Print publications and radio and television stations employ local sales agents who are responsible for sales in an immediate territory, while separate companies known as media representative firms sell advertising space or time for media owners at the national level with their own teams of advertising sales agents. Sales agents employed in media representation work exclusively through executives at advertising agencies, called media buyers, who purchase advertising space for their clients that want to initiate national advertising campaigns. When a local television broadcaster, radio station, print, or online publisher is working with a media representative firm, the media company normally employs a national sales manager to coordinate efforts with the media representative.

Local sales agents are often referred to as *outside sales agents* or *inside sales agents*. Outside sales agents call on clients and prospects at their places of business. They may have an appointment, or they may practice cold calling—arriving without an appointment. For these sales agents, obtaining new accounts is an important part of the job, and they may spend much of their time traveling to and visiting prospective advertisers and current clients. Inside sales agents work on their employer's premises and handle sales for customers who walk in or telephone the firm to inquire about advertising. Some may also make telephone sales calls—calling prospects, attempting to sell the media firm's advertising space or time, and arranging follow-up appointments between interested prospects and outside sales agents.

A critical part of building a relationship with a client is to find out as much as possible about the client. Before the first meeting with a client, sales agents gather background information on the client's products, current customers, prospec-

tive customers, and the geographic area of the target market. They then meet with the clients to explain how specific types of advertising will help promote the client's products or services most effectively. If a client wishes to proceed, the advertising sales agent prepares an advertising proposal to present to the client. This entails determining the advertising medium to be used, preparing sample advertisements, and providing clients with cost estimates for the proposal. Because consolidation among media industries has brought the sales of different types of advertising under one roof, advertising sales are increasingly in the form of integrated packages. This means that advertising sales agents may sell packages that include print and online ad space and time slots with a broadcast subsidiary.

After a contract has been established, advertising sales agents serve as the main contact between the advertiser or ad agency and the media firm. They handle communication between the parties and assist in developing sample artwork or radio and television spots, if needed. For radio and television advertisements, they may also arrange for commercial taping sessions and accompany clients to these sessions.

In addition to maintaining sales and overseeing clients' accounts, advertising sales agents' other duties include analyzing sales statistics and audience demographics, preparing reports on client's accounts, and scheduling and keeping their appointments and work hours. They read about new and existing products and monitor the sales, prices, and products of their competitors. In many firms, the advertising sales agent handles the drafting of contracts specifying the advertising work to be performed and its cost, and may undertake customer service responsibilities such as answering questions or addressing any problems the client may have with the proposal. Sales agents are also responsible for developing sales tools, promotional plans, and media kits, which they use to help make the sale.



Many advertising sales agents work long and irregular hours to meet sales goals.

Work environment. Selling can be stressful work because income and job security depend directly on the agent's ability to maintain and expand clientele. Companies generally set monthly sales quotas and place considerable pressure on advertising sales agents to meet those quotas. The added stress of rejection places more pressure on the agent.

Although agents work long and often irregular hours, most have the freedom to determine their own schedule. The Internet and other electronic tools allow agents to do more work from home or while on the road, enabling them to send messages and documents to clients and coworkers, keep up with industry news, and access databases that help them target potential customers. Advertising sales agents use e-mail to conduct much of the business with their clients.

Many advertising sales agents work more than 40 hours per week. This frequently involves irregular hours and may also include working on weekends and holidays. However, most advertising sales agents are able to set their own schedule. Eleven percent of advertising sales agents were employed part time in 2006.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

For sales positions that require meeting with clients, large employers prefer applicants with a college degree. Smaller companies generally are more willing to hire individuals with a high school degree. Successful sales experience and the ability to communicate effectively become more important than educational attainment once hired. Most training for advertising sales agents takes place informally on the job.

Education and training. Some employers, large companies in particular, prefer applicants with a college degree, particularly for sales positions that require meeting with clients. Courses in marketing, leadership, communication, business, and advertising are helpful. For those who sell over the telephone or who have a proven record of successfully selling other products, a high school degree may be sufficient. In 2006, the highest level of educational attainment for advertising sales agents was as follows.

	Percent
High school graduate or less	20
Some college, no degree	19
Associate's degree.....	10
Bachelor's degree or higher	52

Most training, however, takes place on the job, and can be formal or informal in nature. In most cases, an experienced sales manager instructs a newly hired advertising sales agent who lacks sales experience. In this one-on-one environment, supervisors typically coach new hires and observe as they make sales calls and contact clients. Supervisors then advise new hires on ways to improve their interaction with clients. Employers may bring in consultants to lead formal training sessions when agents sell to a specialized market segment. This practice is common when advertising sales agents sell space to automotive dealers and real estate professionals.

Other qualifications. Employers look for applicants who are honest and possess a pleasant personality and neat profes-

sional appearance. After gaining entry into the occupation, successful sales experience and the ability to communicate effectively become more important than educational attainment. In fact, when selling or soliciting ad space, personality traits are equally, if not more, important than academic background. In general, smaller companies are more willing to hire unproven individuals.

Because they represent their employers to the executives of client organizations, advertising sales agents must have excellent interpersonal and written communication skills. Being multi-lingual, particularly in English and Spanish, is another trait that will benefit prospective advertising agents as media increasingly seek to market to Hispanics and other foreign-born persons. Self-motivation, organization, persistence, independence, and the ability to multitask are required because advertising sales agents set their own schedules and perform their duties without much supervision.

Advancement. Advancement in the occupation means taking on bigger, more important clients. Agents with proven leadership ability and a strong sales record may advance to supervisory and managerial positions such as sales supervisor, sales manager, or vice president of sales. Frequent contact with managers of other departments and people in other firms provides sales agents with leads about job openings, enhancing advancement opportunities. In small firms, where the number of supervisory and management positions is limited, advancement may come slowly. Promotion may occur more quickly in larger media firms and in media representative firms.

Employment

Advertising sales agents held over 170,000 jobs in 2006. Workers were concentrated in three industries: More than 3 in 10 jobs were in newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers; 3 in 10 in advertising and related services; and nearly 2 in 10 in radio and television broadcasting. Media representative firms are in the advertising and related services industry. A relatively small number of jobs were found in specialized design services, including industrial and graphic designers; printing and related support activities; computer systems design and related services; business support services; and cable and other program distribution.

Employment is spread around the country, but jobs in radio and television stations and large, well-known publications are concentrated in big metropolitan areas. Media representative firms are also concentrated in large cities with many advertising agencies, such as New York City.

Job Outlook

Employment growth of advertising sales agents is expected to grow faster than average for all occupations for the 2006-2016 period. Because of growth in new media outlets, such as the Internet, advertising agents with an ability to sell, should see good job opportunities.

Employment change. Employment of advertising sales agents is expected to increase by 20 percent from 2006 to 2016, which is faster than the average for all occupations. Fast growth in the number of cable channels, online advertisers, and other advertising mediums will create many new opportunities for advertisers. These opportunities, along with increased efforts

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Advertising sales agents.....	41-3011	170,000	205,000	35,000	20

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

by media outlets to market to the growing Hispanic population, will lead to the growth of advertising sales agents.

The industries employing advertising sales agents, particularly the newspaper, periodical, radio, and television industries, have experienced considerable consolidation in recent years, which created efficiencies in the sale of advertising and reduced the need for more sales agents. While this trend is expected to continue over the next decade, it should do so at a slower pace and not affect employment of advertising sales agents significantly.

While advances in technology have made advertising sales agents more productive, allowing agents to take on additional duties and improve the quality of the services they provide, technological advances have not substantially decreased overall demand for these workers. Productivity gains have had the largest effect on miscellaneous services that workers provide, such as accounting, proposal creation, and customer service responsibilities, allowing them to provide faster, improved services to their clients. For example, the use of e-mail has considerably shortened the time it takes to negotiate a sale and place an ad. Sales agents may accomplish more in less time, but many work more hours than in the past, spending additional time on follow-up and service calls. Thus, while productivity gains will temper the growth of advertising sales agents, who can now manage more accounts, the increasing growth in advertising across all industries will ensure that new advertising sales agents will continue to be needed in the future.

Job prospects. Those interested in ad sales positions can expect good job opportunities. This is particularly true for sales people with experience and those with a college degree. For those with a proven sales record in advertising sales, opportunities should be excellent. In addition to the job openings generated by employment growth, openings will occur each year because of the need to replace sales representatives who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force. Each year, many advertising sales agents discover they are unable to earn enough money and leave the occupation.

Advertising revenues are sensitive to economic downturns, which cause the industries and companies that advertise to reduce both the frequency of campaigns and the overall level of spending on advertising. Advertising sales agents must work hard to get the most out of every dollar spent on advertising under these conditions. Therefore, the number of opportunities for advertising sales agents fluctuates with the business cycle. So while advertising sales candidates can expect good opportunities, applicants can expect keen competition for job openings during downturns in advertising spending.

Earnings

Including commissions, median annual earnings for all advertising sales agents were \$42,750 in May 2006. The middle 50

percent earned between \$29,450 and \$63,120 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$21,460, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$91,280 a year. Median annual earnings for sales agents in the industries in which they were concentrated were:

Motion picture and video industries	\$55,340
Cable and other subscription programming	50,260
Advertising and related services	47,640
Radio and television broadcasting	41,110
Newspaper, periodical, book, and directory publishers	36,880

Performance-based pay, including bonuses and commissions, can make up a large portion of advertising sales agents' earnings. Most employers pay some combination of salaries, commissions, and bonuses. Commissions are usually based on individual sales numbers, whereas bonuses may depend on individual performance, on the performance of all sales workers in a group or district, or on the performance of the entire company. For agents covering multiple areas or regions, commissions also may be based on the difficulty in making a sale in that particular area. Sales revenue is affected by the economic conditions and business expectations facing the industries that tend to advertise. Earnings from commissions are likely to be high when these industries are doing well and low when companies decide not to advertise as frequently.

In addition to their earnings, advertising sales agents are usually reimbursed for entertaining clients and for other business expenses such as transportation costs, meals, and hotel stays. They often receive benefits such as health and life insurance, pension plans, vacation and sick leave, personal use of a company car, and frequent flier mileage. Some companies offer incentives such as free vacation trips or gifts for outstanding sales workers.

Related Occupations

Advertising sales agents must have sales ability and knowledge of their clients' business and personal needs. Workers in other occupations requiring these skills include telemarketers; advertising, marketing, promotions, public relations, and sales managers; insurance sales agents; purchasing managers, buyers, and purchasing agents; real estate brokers and sales agents; sales engineers; sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing; and securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents.

Sources of Additional Information

To learn about opportunities for employment as an advertising sales agent, contact local broadcasters, radio stations, and publishers for advertising sales representative positions, or look for media representative firms in your area.

For information about advertising sales careers in newspaper publishing, contact:

➤ The Newspaper Association of America, 1921 Gallows Rd., Suite 600, Vienna, VA 22182. Internet: <http://www.naa.org>

Cashiers

(O*NET 41-2011.00, 41-2012.00)

Significant Points

- Cashiers need little or no work experience, and are trained on the job.
- Overall employment is projected to decline; however, job growth will be strong for gaming cashiers.
- Opportunities for full-time and part-time jobs are expected to be good because of the need to replace the large number of workers who leave cashier jobs.
- Many cashiers start at minimum wage.

Nature of the Work

Supermarkets, department stores, gasoline service stations, movie theaters, restaurants, and many other businesses employ cashiers to register the sale of their merchandise. Almost all cashiers total bills on a cash register, receive money, make change, fill out charge forms, and give receipts. A few still use pencil and paper or an adding machine.

Although specific job duties vary by employer, cashiers usually are assigned to a register at the beginning of their shifts and are given a drawer containing a specific amount of money with which to start—their “till.” They must count their till to ensure that it contains the correct amount of money and adequate supplies of change. Cashiers also handle returns and exchanges. They must ensure that returned merchandise is in good condition, and determine where and when it was purchased and what type of payment was used.

After entering charges for all items and subtracting the value of any coupons or special discounts, cashiers total the customer’s bill and take payment. Forms of payment include cash, personal checks, credit cards, and debit cards. Cashiers must know the store’s policies and procedures for each type of payment the store accepts. For checks and credit and debit card charges, they may request additional identification from the customer or call in for an authorization. They must verify the age of customers purchasing alcohol or tobacco. When the sale is complete, cashiers issue a receipt to the customer and return the appropriate change. They may also wrap or bag the purchase.

At the end of their shifts, cashiers once again count the drawers’ contents and compare the totals with sales data. An occasional shortage of small amounts may be overlooked but, in many establishments, repeated shortages are grounds for dismissal. In addition to counting the contents of their drawers at the end of their shifts, cashiers usually separate and total charge forms, return slips, coupons, and any other noncash items.

Most cashiers use scanners and computers, but some establishments still require price and product information to be

entered manually. In a store with scanners, a cashier passes a product’s Universal Product Code over the scanning device, which transmits the code number to a computer. The computer identifies the item and its price. In other establishments, cashiers manually enter codes into computers and then descriptions of the items and their prices appear on the screen.

Depending on the type of establishment, cashiers may have other duties as well. In many supermarkets, for example, cashiers weigh produce and bulk food, as well as return unwanted items to the shelves. In convenience stores, cashiers may be required to know how to use a variety of machines other than cash registers, and how to furnish money orders and sell lottery tickets. Operating ticket-dispensing machines and answering customers’ questions are common duties for cashiers who work at movie theaters and ticket agencies. In casinos, *gaming change persons* and *booth cashiers* exchange coins and tokens and may issue payoffs. They also may operate a booth in the slot-machine area and furnish change to people or count and audit money in drawers.

Work environment. Most cashiers work indoors, usually standing in booths or behind counters. Often, they are not allowed to leave their workstations without supervisory approval because they are responsible for large sums of money. The work of cashiers can be very repetitious, but improvements in workstation design in many stores are alleviating problems caused by repetitive motion. In addition, the work can sometimes be dangerous; the risk from robberies and homicides is much higher for cashiers than for other workers, although more safety precautions are being taken to help deter robbers.

Gaming change persons and booth cashiers can expect a safer work environment than cashiers in other industries. However, casinos are not without their hazards such as exposure to fumes from cigarettes, cigars, and pipes and noise from slot machines.

About 46 percent of all cashiers work part time. Hours of work often vary depending on the needs of the employer. Generally, cashiers are expected to work weekends, evenings, and holidays to accommodate customers’ needs. However, many employers offer flexible schedules. Because the holiday season is the busiest time for most retailers, many employers restrict



Cashiers total bills on a cash register, handle money, and interact with customers.

the use of vacation time from Thanksgiving through the beginning of January.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Cashier jobs usually are entry-level positions requiring little or no previous work experience. They require good customer service skills.

Education and training. Although there are no specific educational requirements, employers filling full-time jobs often prefer applicants with high school diplomas.

Nearly all cashiers are trained on the job. In small businesses, an experienced worker often trains beginners. The trainee spends the first day observing the operation and becoming familiar with the store's equipment, policies, and procedures. After this, trainees are assigned to a register—frequently under the supervision of an experienced worker. In larger businesses, trainees spend several days in classes before being placed at cash registers. Topics typically covered in class include a description of the industry and the company, store policies and procedures, equipment operation, and security.

Training for experienced workers is not common, except when new equipment is introduced or when procedures change. In these cases, the employer or a representative of the equipment manufacturer trains workers on the job.

Licensure. Gaming change persons and booth cashiers are required to obtain a license and background check from their State's gaming board and must meet an age requirement, usually set at 21 years old.

Other qualifications. People who want to become cashiers should be able to do repetitious work accurately. They also need basic mathematics skills and good manual dexterity. Because cashiers deal constantly with the public, they should be neat in appearance and able to deal tactfully and pleasantly with customers. In addition, some businesses prefer to hire workers who can operate specialized equipment or who have business experience, such as typing, selling, or handling money.

Advancement. Advancement opportunities for cashiers vary. For those working part time, promotion may be to a full-time position. Others advance to head cashier or cash-office clerk. In addition, this job offers a good opportunity to learn about an employer's business and can serve as a steppingstone to a more responsible position.

Employment

Cashiers held about 3.5 million jobs in 2006. Of these, 27,000 were employed as gaming change persons and booth cashiers. Although cashiers are employed in almost every industry, 26 percent of all jobs were in food and beverage stores. Gasoline

stations, department stores, other retail establishments, and restaurants also employed large numbers of these workers. Outside of retail establishments, many cashiers worked in amusement, gambling, and recreation industries, local government, and personal and laundry services.

Job Outlook

Overall cashier employment is expected to decline, but job growth will be strong for gaming cashiers. Opportunities for full-time and part-time jobs are expected to be good because of the need to replace the large number of workers who leave this occupation.

Employment change. Employment of cashiers is expected to decline 3 percent between 2006 and 2016. The rising popularity of purchasing goods online will negatively affect the employment growth of cashiers, although many customers still prefer the traditional method of purchasing goods at stores. Also, the growing use of self-service check-out systems in retail trade, especially at grocery stores, should have an adverse effect on employment of cashiers. These self-checkout systems may outnumber checkouts with cashiers in the future in many establishments. The impact on job growth for cashiers will largely depend on the public's acceptance of this self-service technology.

Job growth will be strong for gaming cashiers as more States legalize casinos and gaming becomes more popular. An increasing number of gaming venues will generate new jobs. However, many casinos are finding ways to use less cash in their operations, particularly the slot machines, which now generate tickets that can be accepted by other slot machines.

Job prospects. Opportunities for full-time and part-time cashier jobs should continue to be good because of the need to replace the large number of workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force. There is substantial movement into and out of the occupation because education and training requirements are minimal and the predominance of part-time jobs is attractive to people seeking a short-term source of income rather than a full-time career. Historically, workers under the age of 25 have filled many of the openings in this occupation. In 2006, almost half of all cashiers were 24 years of age or younger.

Because cashiers are needed in businesses and organizations of all types and sizes, job opportunities are found throughout the country. But job opportunities may vary from year to year because the strength of the economy affects demand for cashiers. Companies tend to hire more cashiers when the economy is strong. Seasonal demand for cashiers also causes fluctuations in employment.

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Cashiers	41-2010	3,527,000	3,411,000	-116,000	-3
Cashiers, except gaming	41-2011	3,500,000	3,382,000	-118,000	-3
Gaming change persons and booth cashiers	41-2012	27,000	29,000	1,800	7

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

Earnings

Many cashiers start at the Federal minimum wage, which was \$5.85 an hour in 2007. Some State laws set the minimum wage higher, and establishments must pay at least that amount. Wages tend to be higher in areas where there is intense competition for workers.

Median hourly earnings of cashiers, except gaming in May 2006 were \$8.08. The middle 50 percent earned between \$6.99 and \$9.44 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$6.18, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$11.64 an hour. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of cashiers in May 2006 were:

Grocery stores	\$8.20
Health and personal care stores.....	8.15
Department stores	8.10
Other general merchandise stores	8.09
Gasoline stations	7.82

Median hourly earnings for gaming cashiers in May 2006 were \$9.94. The middle 50 percent earned between \$8.16 and \$12.22 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$6.98, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$14.50 an hour. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of gaming cashiers in May 2006 were:

Casino hotels.....	\$11.64
Traveler accommodation.....	11.61
Local government	9.50
Gambling industries	9.45

Benefits for full-time cashiers tend to be better than those for cashiers working part time. In addition to typical benefits, those working in retail establishments often receive discounts on purchases, and cashiers in restaurants may receive free or low-cost meals. Some employers also offer employee stock option plans and education reimbursement plans.

Related Occupations

Cashiers accept payment for the purchase of goods and services. Other workers with similar duties include tellers, counter and rental clerks, food and beverage serving and related workers, gaming cage workers, Postal Service workers, and retail salespersons.

Sources of Additional Information

General information on careers in grocery stores is available from:

➤ Food Marketing Institute, 2345 Crystal Dr., Arlington, VA 22202. Internet: <http://www.fmi.org>

For information about employment opportunities as a cashier, contact:

➤ National Association of Convenience Stores, 1600 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314.

➤ United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, Education Office, 1775 K St.NW., Washington, DC 20006. Internet: <http://www.ufcw.org>

Counter and Rental Clerks

(O*NET 41-2021.00)

Significant Points

- Jobs usually require little or no experience or formal education.
- Employment is projected to grow much faster than average as businesses strive to improve customer service.
- Many full-time and part-time job opportunities should be available, primarily because of the need to replace workers who leave this occupation.

Nature of the Work

Counter and rental clerks take orders for rentals and services. Many rent cars or home improvement equipment, for example. Regardless of where they work, counter and rental clerks must be knowledgeable about the company's goods and services, policies, and procedures. Depending on the type of establishment, counter and rental clerks use their knowledge to give advice on a wide variety of products and



In video rental stores, counter clerks advise customers about the use of video and game players and the length of a rental, restock shelves, and handle money.

services, ranging from hydraulic tools to shoe repair. For example, in the car rental industry, these workers tell customers about the features of different types of automobiles and about daily and weekly rental costs. They also ensure that customers meet age and other requirements for renting cars, and they indicate when and in what condition the cars must be returned. Those in the equipment rental industry have similar duties but also must know how to operate and care for the machinery rented. In drycleaning establishments, counter clerks inform customers when items will be ready and about the effects, if any, of the chemicals used on certain garments. In video rental stores, counter clerks advise customers about the use of video and game players and the length of the rental period. They scan returned movies and games, restock shelves, handle money, and log daily reports.

When taking orders, counter and rental clerks use various types of equipment. In some establishments, they write out tickets and order forms, although most use computers or barcode scanners. Most of these computer systems are user friendly, require very little data entry, and are customized for each firm. Scanners read the product code and display a description of the item on a computer screen. However, clerks must ensure that the information on the screen matches the product.

Work environment. Firms employing counter and rental clerks usually operate nights and weekends for the convenience of their customers. As a result, many employers offer flexible schedules. Some counter and rental clerks work 40-hour weeks, but many are on part-time schedules—usually during rush periods, such as weekends, evenings, and holidays.

Working conditions usually are pleasant; most stores and service establishments are clean, well lighted, and temperature controlled. However, clerks are on their feet much of the time and may be confined behind a small counter area. Some may need to move, lift, or carry heavy machinery or other equipment. The job requires constant interaction with the public and can be stressful, especially during busy periods.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Most counter and rental clerk jobs are entry-level positions that require little or no experience and minimal formal education.

Education and training. Many employers prefer workers with at least a high school diploma. In most companies, counter and rental clerks are trained on the job, sometimes through the use of videos, brochures, and pamphlets.

Clerks usually learn the firm's policies and procedures and how to operate a firm's equipment from more experienced

workers. However, some employers have formal classroom training programs lasting between a few hours and a few weeks. Topics covered in this training include the nature of the industry, the company and its policies and procedures, operation of equipment, sales techniques, and customer service. Counter and rental clerks also must become familiar with the different products and services rented or provided by their company to give customers the best possible service.

Other qualifications. Counter and rental clerks should enjoy working with people and should be tactful and polite, even with difficult customers. They also should be able to handle several tasks at once, while continuing to provide friendly service. In addition, good oral and written communication skills are essential.

Advancement. Advancement opportunities depend on the size and type of company. Many establishments that employ counter or rental clerks tend to be small businesses, making advancement difficult. In larger establishments, however, jobs such as counter and rental clerks offer good opportunities for workers to learn about their company's products and business practices. That can lead to more responsible positions. Some counter and rental clerks are promoted to event planner, assistant manager, or salesperson. Some pursue related positions. A clerk that fixes rented equipment might become a mechanic, for example.

In certain industries, such as equipment repair, counter and rental jobs may be an additional or alternative source of income for workers with multiple jobs or for those who are semiretired. For example, retired mechanics could prove invaluable at tool rental centers because of their knowledge of, and familiarity with, tools.

Employment

Counter and rental clerks held about 477,000 jobs in 2006. About 22 percent of clerks worked in consumer goods rental, which includes video rental stores. Other large employers included drycleaning and laundry services; automotive equipment rental and leasing services; automobile dealers; amusement, gambling, and recreation industries; and grocery stores.

Counter and rental clerks are employed throughout the country but are concentrated in metropolitan areas, where personal services and renting and leasing services are in greater demand.

Job Outlook

Much faster than average employment growth coupled with the need to replace workers who leave this occupation should result in many full-time and part-time job opportunities.

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016		Change, 2006-16	
			2016	Number	Percent	
Counter and rental clerks	41-2021	477,000	586,000	109,000	23	

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

Employment change. Employment of counter and rental clerks is expected to increase by 23 percent during the 2006-16 decade, much faster than the average for all occupations. Because all types of businesses strive to improve customer service by hiring more clerks, fast employment growth is expected in most industries; growth in amusement and recreation industries is expected to be especially fast.

Job prospects. Many full-time and part-time job opportunities should be available, primarily because of the need to replace experienced workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force.

Earnings

Counter and rental clerks typically start at the minimum wage, which, in establishments covered by Federal law, was \$5.85 an hour in 2007. In some States, the law sets the minimum wage higher, and establishments must pay at least that amount. Wages also tend to be higher in areas where there is intense competition for workers. In addition to wages, some counter and rental clerks receive commissions based on the number of contracts they complete or services they sell.

Median hourly earnings of counter and rental clerks in May 2006 were \$9.41. The middle 50 percent earned between \$7.58 and \$13.05 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$6.56 an hour, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$18.17 an hour. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest number of counter and rental clerks in May 2006 were:

Automobile dealers	\$19.15
Automotive equipment rental and leasing	10.79
Lessors of real estate.....	10.31
Consumer goods rental.....	8.07
Drycleaning and laundry services	7.95

Full-time workers typically receive health and life insurance, paid vacation, and sick leave. Benefits for counter and rental clerks who work part time or work for independent stores tend to be significantly less than for those who work full time. Many companies offer discounts to full-time and part-time employees on the goods or services they provide.

Related Occupations

Counter and rental clerks take orders and receive payment for services rendered. Other workers with similar duties include tellers, cashiers, food and beverage serving and related workers, gaming cage workers, Postal Service workers, and retail salespersons.

Sources of Additional Information

For general information on employment in the equipment rental industry, contact:

➤ American Rental Association, 1900 19th St., Moline, IL 61265. Internet: <http://www.ararental.org>

For more information about the work of counter clerks in drycleaning and laundry establishments, contact:

➤ International Fabricare Institute, 14700 Sweitzer Ln., Laurel, MD 20707. Internet: <http://www.ifi.org>

Demonstrators, Product Promoters, and Models

(O*NET 41-9011.00, 41-9012.00)

Significant Points

- Job openings should be plentiful for demonstrators and product promoters, but keen competition is expected for modeling jobs.
- Most jobs are part time or have variable work schedules, and many jobs require frequent travel.
- Formal training is limited and education beyond high school usually is not required.

Nature of the Work

Demonstrators, product promoters, and models create public interest in buying products such as clothing, cosmetics, food, and housewares. The information they provide helps consumers make choices among the wide variety of products and services they can buy.

Demonstrators and *product promoters* encourage people and stores to buy a product by demonstrating it to prospective customers and answering their questions. They may sell the demonstrated merchandise or gather names of prospects to contact later or pass on to sales staff. Demonstrators promote sales of a product to consumers, while product promoters encourage sales to retail stores and help them market products effectively.

Demonstrators and product promoters generate sales of both sophisticated and simple products, ranging from computer software to mops. They attract an audience by offering samples, administering contests, distributing prizes and coupons, and using direct-mail advertising. They must greet and catch the attention of possible customers and quickly identify those who are interested and able to buy. They inform and educate customers about the features of products and demonstrate their use with apparent ease to inspire confidence in the product and its manufacturer. They also distribute information, such as brochures and order forms. Some demonstrations are intended to generate immediate sales through impulse buying, whereas others increase the likelihood of future sales by increasing brand awareness.

Demonstrations and product promotions are conducted in retail and grocery stores, shopping malls, trade shows, and outdoor fairs. Locations are selected based on the nature of the product and the type of audience. Demonstrations at large events may require teams of demonstrators to efficiently handle large crowds. Some demonstrators promote products on videotape or on television programs, such as “infomercials” or home shopping programs.

Demonstrators and product promoters may prepare the content of a presentation and alter it to target a specific audience or to keep it current. They may participate in the design of an exhibit or customize it for particular audiences. Results obtained by demonstrators and product promoters are analyzed, and presentations are adjusted to make them more effective.

Demonstrators and product promoters also may be involved in transporting, assembling, and disassembling materials used in demonstrations.

A demonstrator's presentation may include visuals, models, case studies, testimonials, test results, and surveys. The equipment used for a demonstration varies with the product being demonstrated. A food product demonstration might require the use of cooking utensils, while a software demonstration could require the use of a multimedia computer. Demonstrators must be familiar with the product to be able to relate detailed information to customers and to answer any questions that arise before, during, or after a demonstration. Therefore, they may research the product presented, the products of competitors, and the interests and concerns of the target audience before conducting a demonstration. Demonstrations of complex products often need practice.

Models pose for photos, paintings, or sculptures. They display clothing, such as dresses, coats, underclothing, swimwear, and suits, for a variety of audiences and in various types of media. They model accessories, such as handbags, shoes, and jewelry, and promote beauty products, including fragrances and cosmetics. The most successful models, called supermodels, hold celebrity status and often use their image to sell books, calendars, fitness videos, and other products. In addition to modeling, they may appear in movies and television shows.

Models appear in printed publications, live modeling events, and television to advertise and promote products and services. Most modeling jobs are for printed publications, and models usually do a combination of editorial, commercial, and catalog work. Editorial print modeling uses still photographs of models for fashion magazine covers and to accompany feature articles. Commercial print modeling includes work for advertisements in magazines, newspapers, and billboards. Catalog models appear in department store and mail order catalogs.

During a photo shoot, a model poses to demonstrate the features of clothing and products. Models make small changes in posture and facial expression to capture the look desired by the client. As they shoot film, photographers instruct models to pose in certain positions and to interact with their physical surroundings. Models work closely with photographers, hair and clothing stylists, makeup artists, and clients to produce the desired look and to finish the photo shoot on schedule. Stylists and makeup artists prepare the model for the photo shoot, provide touchups, and change the look of models throughout the day. If stylists are not provided, models must apply their own makeup and bring their own clothing. Because the client spends time and money planning for and preparing an advertising campaign, the client usually is present to ensure that the work is satisfactory.

Editorial printwork generally pays less than other types of modeling but provides exposure for a model and can lead to commercial modeling opportunities. Often, beginning fashion models work in foreign countries where fashion magazines are more plentiful.

Live modeling is done in a variety of locations. Live models stand, turn, and walk to demonstrate clothing to a variety of audiences. At fashion shows and in showrooms, garment buyers are the primary audience. Runway models display clothes that

either are intended for direct sale to consumers or are the artistic expressions of the designer. High fashion, or haute couture, runway models walk a runway before an audience of photographers, journalists, designers, and garment buyers. Live modeling also is done in apparel marts, department stores, and fitting rooms of clothing designers. In retail establishments, models display clothing directly for shoppers and may be required to describe the features and price of the clothing. Other models pose for sketch artists, painters, and sculptors.

Models may compete with actors and actresses for work in television and may even receive speaking parts. Television work includes commercials, cable television programs, and even game shows. However, competition for television work is intense because of the potential for high earnings and extensive exposure.

Because advertisers need to target very specific segments of the population, models may specialize in a certain area. Petite and plus-size fashions are modeled by women whose dress size is smaller or larger than that worn by the typical model. Models who are disabled may be used to model fashions or products for disabled consumers. "Parts" models have a body part, such as a hand or foot, which is particularly well-suited to model products such as fingernail polish or shoes.

Almost all models work through agents. Agents provide a link between models and clients. Clients pay models, while the agency receives a portion of the model's earnings for its services. Agents scout for new faces, advise and train new models, and promote them to clients. A typical modeling job lasts only 1 day, so modeling agencies differ from other employment agencies in that they maintain an ongoing relationship with the model. Agents find and nurture relationships with clients, arrange auditions called "go-sees," and book shoots if a model is hired. They also provide bookkeeping and billing services to models and may offer them financial planning services. Relatively short careers and variable incomes make financial planning an important issue for many models.

With the help of agents, models spend a considerable amount of time promoting and developing themselves. Models assemble and maintain portfolios, print composite cards, and travel to go-sees. A portfolio is a collection of a model's previous work that is carried to all go-sees and bookings. A composite card, contains the best photographs from a model's portfolio, along with his or her measurements. Increasingly, composite cards are being sent electronically to clients and printed portfolios are being replaced with digital portfolios.

Models must gather information before a job. From an agent, they learn the pay, date, time, and length of the shoot. Also, models need to ask if hair, makeup, and clothing stylists will be provided. It is helpful to know what product is being promoted and what image they should project. Some models research the client and the product being modeled to prepare for a shoot. Models use a document called a voucher to record the rate of pay and the actual duration of the job. The voucher is used for billing purposes after both the client and model sign it. Once a job is completed, models must check in with their agency and plan for the next appointment.

Work environment. More than half of all demonstrators, product promoters, and models work part time and about 1 in



Demonstrators and product promoters often provide customers with free samples to encourage them to buy a product.

4 have variable work schedules. Many positions last 6 months or less.

Demonstrators and product promoters may work long hours while standing or walking, with little opportunity to rest. Some of them travel frequently, and night and weekend work often is required. The atmosphere of a crowded trade show or State fair is often hectic, and demonstrators and product promoters may feel pressure to influence the greatest number of consumers possible in a very limited amount of time. However, many enjoy the opportunity to interact with a variety of people.

Models work under a variety of conditions, which can often be both difficult and glamorous. The coming season's fashions may be modeled in a comfortable, climate-controlled studio or in a cold, damp outdoor location. Schedules can be demanding, and models must keep in constant touch with an agent so that they do not miss an opportunity for work. Being away from friends and family, and needing to focus on the photographer's instructions despite constant interruption for touchups, clothing, and set changes can be stressful. Yet, successful models interact with a variety of people and enjoy frequent travel. They may meet potential clients at several go-sees in one day and often travel to work in distant cities, foreign countries, and exotic locations.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Postsecondary education, while helpful, usually is not required for demonstrators, product promoters, and models.

Education and training. Demonstrators and product promoters usually receive on-the-job training. Training is primarily product oriented because a demonstrator must be familiar with the product to demonstrate it properly. The length of training varies with the complexity of the product. Experience with the product or familiarity with similar products may be required for demonstration of complex products, such as computers. During the training process, demonstrators may be introduced to the manufacturer's corporate philosophy and preferred methods for dealing with customers.

Some aspiring models opt to attend modeling schools. Modeling schools provide training in posing, walking, makeup application, and other basic tasks, but attending such schools does not necessarily lead to job opportunities. In fact, many agents

prefer beginning models with little or no previous experience and discourage models from attending modeling schools and purchasing professional photographs. Agents continually scout for new faces, and many of the top models are discovered in this way. Most agencies review snapshots or have "open calls", during which models are seen in person; this service usually is provided free of charge. Some agencies sponsor modeling contests and searches. Very few people who send in snapshots or attend open calls are offered contracts.

Agencies advise models on how to dress, wear makeup, and conduct themselves properly during go-sees and bookings. Because models' advancement depends on their previous work, development of a good portfolio is key to getting assignments. The higher the quality and currency of the photos in the portfolio, the more likely it is that the model will find work.

Other qualifications. Employers look for demonstrators and product promoters with good communication skills and a pleasant appearance and personality. Demonstrators and product promoters must be comfortable with public speaking. They should be able to entertain an audience and use humor, spontaneity, and personal interest in the product as promotional tools. Foreign language skills are helpful.

Models should be photogenic and have a basic knowledge of hair styling, makeup, and clothing. Some local governments require models under the age of 18 to hold a work permit. An attractive physical appearance is necessary to become a successful model. A model should have flawless skin, healthy hair, and attractive facial features. Specific requirements depend on the client, but most models must be within certain ranges for height, weight, and clothing size in order to meet the practical needs of fashion designers, photographers, and advertisers. Requirements may change slightly from time to time as our society's perceptions of physical beauty change. However, most fashion designers feel that their clothing looks best on tall, thin models. Although physical requirements may be relaxed for some types of modeling jobs, opportunities are limited for those who do not meet these basic requirements.

A model's career depends on preservation of his or her physical characteristics, so models must control their diet, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep in order to stay healthy. Haircuts, pedicures, and manicures are necessary work-related expenses for models.

In addition to being attractive, models must be photogenic. The ability to relate to the camera in order to capture the desired look on film is essential and agents test prospective models using snapshots or professional photographs. For photographic and runway work, models must be able to move gracefully and confidently. Training in acting, voice, and dance is useful and allows a model to be considered for television work. Foreign language skills are useful because successful models travel frequently to foreign countries.

Models must interact with a large number of people and personality plays an important role in success. They must be professional, polite, and prompt as every contact could lead to future employment. Organizational skills are necessary to manage personal lives, financial matters, and work and travel schedules. Competition for jobs is keen and clients' needs are very specific so patience and persistence are essential.

Advancement. Demonstrators and product promoters who perform well and show leadership abilities may advance to other marketing and sales occupations or open their own business.

Models advance by working more regularly and being selected for assignments that have higher pay. They may begin to appear in magazine, print campaigns, commercials, or runway shows with a higher profile. They may begin to work with clients who will provide them with more national exposure. A model's selection of an agency is an important factor for advancement in the occupation. The better the reputation and skill of the agency, the more assignments a model is likely to get. Prospective clients prefer to work with agents, making it very difficult for a model to pursue a freelance career. Modeling careers are relatively short and most models eventually transfer to other occupations.

Employment

Demonstrators, product promoters, and models held about 107,000 jobs in 2006. Of these, models held only about 2,000 jobs in 2006. About 22 percent of all salaried jobs for demonstrators, product promoters, and models were in retail trade, especially general merchandise stores, and 14 percent were in administrative and support services—which includes employment services. Other jobs were found in advertising and related services.

Job Outlook

Employment of demonstrators, product promoters, and models is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations through 2016. Job openings for demonstrators and product promoters should be plentiful over the next decade but models should face keen competition for the small number of openings.

Employment change. Demonstrators and product promoters are expected to experience 18 percent growth between 2006 and 2016, which is faster than the average for all occupations. Job growth should be driven by increases in the number and size of trade shows and greater use of these workers in department stores and various retail shops for in-store promotions. Product demonstration is considered a very effective marketing tool. New jobs should arise as firms devote a greater percentage of marketing budgets to product demonstration. However, it is also an expensive method of marketing, which will somewhat limit growth.

Employment of models is expected to grow by 10 percent between 2006 and 2016, which is as fast as the average for all occupations. Growth in the employment of models will be driven by their continued use in advertising products. Advertisers will continue to use models in fashion shows, catalogs, and print campaigns as a method to increase awareness of their product.

Job prospects. Job openings should be plentiful for demonstrators and product promoters. Employers may have difficulty finding qualified demonstrators who are willing to fill part-time, short-term positions. On the other hand, modeling is considered a glamorous occupation, with limited formal entry requirements. Consequently, those who wish to pursue a modeling career can expect keen competition for jobs. The modeling profession typically attracts many more jobseekers than there are job openings available. Only models who closely meet the unique requirements of the occupation will achieve regular employment. The increasing diversification of the general population should boost demand for models more representative of diverse racial and ethnic groups. Work for male models also should increase as society becomes more receptive to the marketing of men's fashions. Because fashions change frequently, demand for a model's look may fluctuate. Most models experience periods of unemployment.

Employment of demonstrators, product promoters, and models is affected by downturns in the business cycle. Many firms tend to reduce advertising budgets during recessions

Earnings

Demonstrators and product promoters had median hourly earnings of \$10.65 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$8.77 and \$13.91. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$7.70, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$19.27. Employers of demonstrators, product promoters, and models generally pay for job-related travel expenses.

Median hourly earnings of models were \$11.22 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$9.52 and \$14.42. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$7.67, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$18.68. Earnings vary for different types of modeling, and depend on the experience and reputation of the model. Female models typically earn more than male models for similar work. Hourly earnings can be relatively high, particularly for supermodels and others in high demand, but models may not have work every day, and jobs may last only a few hours. Models occasionally receive clothing or clothing discounts instead of, or in addition to, regular earnings. Almost all models work with agents, and pay 15 to 20 percent of their earnings in return for an agent's services. Models who do not find immediate work may receive payments, called advances, from agents to cover promotional and living expenses. Models must provide their own health and retirement benefits.

Related Occupations

Demonstrators, product promoters, and models create public interest in buying clothing, products, and services. Others who create interest in a product or service include actors, producers,

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Models, demonstrators, and product promoters.....	41-9010	107,000	126,000	19,000	18
Demonstrators and product promoters.....	41-9011	105,000	124,000	19,000	18
Models.....	41-9012	2,000	2,200	200	10

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

and directors; insurance sales agents; real estate brokers; retail salespersons; sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing; and reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks.

Sources of Additional Information

For information about modeling schools and agencies in your area, contact a local consumer affairs organization such as the Better Business Bureau.

Insurance Sales Agents

(O*NET 41-3021.00)

Significant Points

- In addition to offering insurance policies, agents increasingly sell mutual funds, annuities, and securities and offer comprehensive financial planning services, including retirement and estate planning.
- Agents must obtain a license in the States where they sell.
- Job opportunities should be good for college graduates who have sales ability, excellent interpersonal skills, and expertise in a wide range of insurance and financial services.

Nature of the Work

Most people have their first contact with an insurance company through an insurance sales agent. These workers help individuals, families, and businesses select insurance policies that provide the best protection for their lives, health, and property.

Insurance sales agents, commonly referred to as “producers” in the insurance industry, sell one or more types of insurance, such as property and casualty, life, health, disability, and long-term care. Property and casualty insurance agents sell policies that protect individuals and businesses from financial loss resulting from automobile accidents, fire, theft, storms, and other events that can damage property. For businesses, property and casualty insurance can also cover injured workers’ compensation, product liability claims, or medical malpractice claims.

Life insurance agents specialize in selling policies that pay beneficiaries when a policyholder dies. Depending on the policyholder’s circumstances, a cash-value policy can be designed to provide retirement income, funds for the education of children, or other benefits as well. Life insurance agents also sell annuities that promise a retirement income. Health insurance agents sell health insurance policies that cover the costs of medical care and loss of income due to illness or injury. They also may sell dental insurance and short-term and long-term-disability insurance policies. Agents may specialize in any one of these product areas, or function as generalists, providing multiple products to a single customer.

An increasing number of insurance sales agents are offering comprehensive financial planning services to their clients. These services include retirement planning, estate planning,

and assistance in setting up pension plans for businesses. As a result, many insurance agents are involved in “cross-selling” or “total account development”. Besides offering insurance, these agents may become licensed to sell mutual funds, variable annuities, and other securities. This practice is most common with life insurance agents who already sell annuities, but many property and casualty agents also sell financial products. (See the statement on securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Insurance sales agents also prepare reports, maintain records, and seek out new clients. In the event that policy holders experience a loss, agents help them settle their insurance claims. Increasingly, some agents are also offering their clients financial analysis or advice on how to minimize risk.

Insurance sales agents working exclusively for one insurance company are referred to as captive agents. Independent insurance agents, or brokers, represent several companies and match insurance policies for their clients with the company that offers the best rate and coverage.

Technology has greatly affected the insurance business, making it much more efficient and giving the agent the ability to take on more clients. Agents’ computers are now linked directly to insurance carriers via the Internet, making the tasks of obtaining price quotes and processing applications and service requests faster and easier. Computers also allow agents to be better informed about new products that the insurance carriers may be offering.

The growing use of the Internet in the insurance industry has altered the relationship between agent and client. Agents formerly used to devote much of their time to marketing and selling products to new clients. Now, clients are increasingly obtaining insurance quotes from a company’s Web site and then contacting the company directly to purchase policies. This interaction gives the client a more active role in selecting their policy, while reducing the amount of time agents spend actively seeking new clients. Insurance sales agents also obtain many new accounts through referrals, so it is important that they maintain regular contact with their clients to ensure that the clients’ financial needs are being met. Developing a satisfied clientele that will recommend an agent’s services to other potential customers is a key to success for agents.

Increasing competition in the insurance industry has spurred carriers and agents to find new ways to keep their clients satisfied. One solution is to increase the use of call centers, which usually are accessible to clients 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Insurance carriers and sales agents also are hiring customer service representatives to handle routine tasks such as answering questions, making changes in policies, processing claims, and selling more products to clients. The opportunity to cross-sell new products to clients will help agents’ businesses grow. The use of call centers also allows agents to concentrate their efforts on seeking out new clients and maintaining relationships with old ones. (See elsewhere in the *Handbook* the statements on customer service representatives and claims adjusters, appraisers, examiners, and investigators.)

Work environment. Insurance sales agents working as captive agents are usually based in small offices, from which they contact clients and provide information on the policies they sell.



Insurance sales agents carefully review the terms of a new policy with their clients.

Independent insurance agents, or brokers, may work in offices of varying sizes, depending on the size of the agency. However, much of their time may be spent outside their offices, traveling locally to meet with clients, close sales, or investigate claims. Agents usually determine their own hours of work and often schedule evening and weekend appointments for the convenience of clients. Some sales agents may meet with clients during business hours and then spend evenings doing paperwork and preparing presentations to prospective clients. Although most agents work a 40-hour week, some work 60 hours a week or longer.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Every sales agent involved in the solicitation, selling, or negotiation of insurance must have a State issued license. Licensure requirements vary by State but typically require some insurance-related coursework and the passing of several exams. Although some agents are hired right out of college, many are hired by insurance companies as customer service representatives and are later promoted to sales agent.

Education and training. For insurance sales agent jobs, many companies and independent agencies prefer to hire college graduates—especially those who have majored in business or economics. High school graduates may be hired if they have proven sales ability or have been successful in other types of work.

College training can help agents grasp the technical aspects of insurance policies as well as the industry fundamentals and operational procedures of selling insurance. Many colleges and universities offer courses in insurance, and a few schools offer a bachelor's degree in the field. College courses in finance, mathematics, accounting, economics, business law, marketing, and business administration enable insurance sales agents to

understand how social and economic conditions relate to the insurance industry. Courses in psychology, sociology, and public speaking can prove useful in improving sales techniques. In addition, familiarity with computers and popular software packages has become very important because computers provide instantaneous information on a wide variety of financial products and greatly improve agents' efficiency.

Agents learn many of their job duties on the job from other agents. Many employers have their new agents shadow an experienced agent for a period of time. This allows the agent to learn how to conduct their business, how the agency interacts with clients, and how to write policies.

Employers also are placing greater emphasis on continuing professional education as the diversity of financial products sold by insurance agents increases. It is important for insurance agents to keep up to date on issues concerning clients. Changes in tax laws, government benefits programs, and other State and Federal regulations can affect the insurance needs of clients and the way in which agents conduct business. Agents can enhance their selling skills and broaden their knowledge of insurance and other financial services by taking courses at colleges and universities and by attending institutes, conferences, and seminars sponsored by insurance organizations.

Licensure. Insurance sales agents must obtain a license in the States where they plan to work. Separate licenses are required for agents to sell life and health insurance and property and casualty insurance. In most States, licenses are issued only to applicants who complete specified prelicensing courses and who pass State examinations covering insurance fundamentals and State insurance laws. The insurance industry is increasingly moving toward uniform State licensing standards and reciprocal licensing, allowing agents who earn a license in one State to become licensed in other States more easily. Most State licensing authorities also have mandatory continuing education requirements focusing on insurance laws, consumer protection, ethics, and the technical details of various insurance policies.

As the demand for financial products and financial planning increases, many insurance agents, especially those involved in life insurance, are choosing to gain the proper licensing and certification to sell securities and other financial products. Doing so, however, requires substantial study and passing an additional examination—either the Series 6 or Series 7 licensing exam, both of which are administered by the National Association of Securities Dealers (NASD). The Series 6 exam is for individuals who wish to sell only mutual funds and variable annuities, whereas the Series 7 exam is the main NASD series license that qualifies agents as general securities sales representatives.

Other qualifications. Previous experience in sales or insurance jobs can be very useful in becoming an insurance sales agent. In fact, many entrants to insurance sales agent jobs transfer from other sales related occupations, such as customer service representative positions. In selling commercial insurance, technical experience in a particular field can help sell policies to those in the same profession. As a result, new agents tend to be older than entrants in many other occupations.

Insurance sales agents should be flexible, enthusiastic, confident, disciplined, hard working, and willing to solve problems. They should communicate effectively and inspire customer

confidence. Because they usually work without supervision, sales agents must be able to plan their time well and have the initiative to locate new clients.

Certification and advancement. A number of organizations offer professional designation programs that certify agents' expertise in specialties such as life, health, and property and casualty insurance, as well as financial consulting. For example, The National Alliance for Education and Research offers a wide variety of courses in health, life and property, and casualty insurance for independent insurance agents. Although voluntary, such programs assure clients and employers that an agent has a thorough understanding of the relevant specialty. Agents are usually required to complete a specified number of hours of continuing education to retain their designation.

In the area of financial planning, many agents find it worthwhile to demonstrate competency by earning the certified financial planner or chartered financial consultant designation. The Certified Financial Planner credential, issued by the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, requires relevant experience, completion of education requirements, passing a comprehensive examination, and adherence to an enforceable code of ethics. The exam tests the candidate's knowledge of the financial planning process, insurance and risk management, employee benefits planning, taxes and retirement planning, and investment and estate planning.

The Chartered Financial Consultant (ChFC) and the Chartered Life Underwriter (CLU) designations, issued by the American College in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, typically require professional experience and the completion of an eight-course program of study. Many property and casualty insurance agents obtain the Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter (CPCU) designation, offered by the American Institute for Chartered Property Casualty Underwriter. The majority of professional designations in insurance have continuing education requirements.

An insurance sales agent who shows ability and leadership may become a sales manager in a local office. A few advance to agency managerial or executive positions. However, many who have built up a good clientele prefer to remain in sales work. Some—particularly in the property and casualty field—establish their own independent agencies or brokerage firms.

Employment

Insurance sales agents held about 436,000 jobs in 2006. Almost 50 percent of insurance sales agents work for insurance agencies and brokerages. About 23 percent work directly for insurance carriers. Although most insurance agents specialize in life and health insurance or property and casualty insurance, a growing number of "multiline" agents sell all lines of insurance. A small number of agents work for banks and securities brokerages as a result of the increasing integration of the finance and insurance

industries. Approximately 26 percent of insurance sales agents are self employed.

Insurance sales agents are employed throughout the country, but most work in or near large urban centers. Some are employed in the headquarters of insurance companies, but the majority work out of local offices or independent agencies.

Job Outlook

Employment of insurance sales agents is expected to grow about average for all occupations through 2016, and opportunities will be favorable for persons who are college graduates and who have sales ability, excellent interpersonal skills, and expertise in a wide range of insurance and financial services.

Employment change. Employment of insurance sales agents is expected to increase by 13 percent over the 2006-16 period, which is about as fast as average for all occupations. Future demand for insurance sales agents depends largely on the volume of sales of insurance and other financial products. Sales of health insurance and long-term-care insurance are expected to rise sharply as the population ages. In addition, a growing population will increase demand for insurance for automobiles, homes, and high-priced valuables and equipment. As new businesses emerge and existing firms expand their insurance coverage, sales of commercial insurance also should increase, including coverage such as product liability, workers' compensation, employee benefits, and pollution liability insurance.

Employment of agents will not keep up with the rising level of insurance sales, however. Many insurance carriers are trying to contain costs and are shedding their captive agents—those agents working directly for insurance carriers. Instead carriers are relying more on independent agents or direct marketing through the mail, by phone, or on the Internet.

In many ways, the Internet should not greatly threaten agents' jobs as was widely thought. The automation of policy and claims processing is allowing insurance agents to take on more clients. Most clients value their relationship with their agent and still prefer discussing their policies directly with their agents, rather than through a computer.

Insurance and investments are becoming more complex, and many people and businesses lack the time and expertise to buy insurance without the advice of an agent.

Job prospects. Multilingual agents should have good job prospects because they can serve a wider range of customers. Additionally, insurance language tends to be quite technical, so agents who have a firm understanding of relevant technical and legal terms will also be desirable to employers. Many beginning agents fail to earn enough from commissions to meet their income goals and eventually transfer to other careers. Many job openings are likely to result from the need to replace agents who leave the occupation or retire, as a large number of agents are expected to retire over the next decade.

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016		Change, 2006-16	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Insurance sales agents	41-3021	436,000	492,000	56,000	13	

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

Agents may face increased competition from traditional securities brokers and bankers as they begin to sell insurance policies. Insurance sales agents will need to expand the products and services they offer as consolidation increases among insurance companies, banks, and brokerage firms and as demands increase from clients for more comprehensive financial planning.

Independent agents who incorporate new technology into their existing businesses will remain competitive. Agents who use the Internet to market their products will reach a broader client base and expand their business. Agents who offer better customer service also will remain competitive. Carriers and agencies are increasingly using call centers in an effort to offer better service to customers because they provide greater access to clients' policies and more prompt services.

Most individuals and businesses consider insurance a necessity, regardless of economic conditions, so agents are not likely to face unemployment because of a recession.

Earnings

The median annual earnings of wage and salary insurance sales agents were \$43,870 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$31,640 and \$69,180. The lowest 10 percent had earnings of \$24,600 or less, while the highest 10 percent earned more than \$115,090. Median annual earnings in May 2006 in the two industries employing the largest number of insurance sales agents were \$46,210 for insurance carriers, and \$42,950 for agencies, brokerages, and other insurance related activities.

Many independent agents are paid by commission only, whereas sales workers who are employees of an agency or an insurance carrier may be paid in one of three ways: salary only, salary plus commission, or salary plus bonus. In general, commissions are the most common form of compensation, especially for experienced agents. The amount of the commission depends on the type and amount of insurance sold and on whether the transaction is a new policy or a renewal. Bonuses usually are awarded when agents meet their sales goals or when an agency meets its profit goals. Some agents involved with financial planning receive a fee for their services, rather than a commission.

Company-paid benefits to insurance sales agents usually include continuing education, training to qualify for licensing, group insurance plans, office space, and clerical support services. Some companies also may pay for automobile and transportation expenses, attendance at conventions and meetings, promotion and marketing expenses, and retirement plans. Independent agents working for insurance agencies receive fewer benefits, but their commissions may be higher to help them pay for marketing and other expenses.

Related Occupations

Other workers who provide or sell financial products or services include real estate brokers and sales agents; securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents; financial analysts and personal financial advisors; and financial managers. Occupations with similar sales duties include sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing; customer service representatives, and advertising sales agents. Other occupations in the insurance industry include insurance underwriters and claims adjusters, examiners, and investigators.

Sources of Additional Information

Occupational information about insurance sales agents is available from the home office of many insurance companies. Information on State licensing requirements may be obtained from the department of insurance at any State capital.

For information about insurance sales careers and training, contact:

► Independent Insurance Agents and Brokers of America, 127 S. Peyton St., Alexandria, VA 22314.

Internet: <http://www.iiaba.org>

► Insurance Vocational Education Student Training (InVEST), 127 S. Peyton St., Alexandria, VA 22314.

Internet: <http://www.investprogram.org>

► National Association of Professional Insurance Agents, 400 N. Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

Internet: <http://www.pianet.org>

For information about health insurance sales careers, contact:

► National Association of Health Underwriters, 2000 N. 14th St., Suite 450, Arlington, VA 22201.

Internet: <http://www.nahu.org>

For general information on the property and casualty field, contact:

► Insurance Information Institute, 110 William St., New York, NY 10038. Internet: <http://www.iii.org>

For information about professional designation programs, contact:

► The American Institute for Chartered Property and Casualty Underwriters/Insurance Institute of America, 720 Providence Rd., P.O. Box 3016, Malvern, PA 19355-0716.

Internet: <http://www.aicpcu.org>

► The American College, 270 Bryn Mawr Ave., Bryn Mawr, PA 19010-2195. Internet: <http://www.theamericancollege.edu>

Real Estate Brokers and Sales Agents

(O*NET 41-9021.00, 41-9022.00)

Significant Points

- Real estate brokers and sales agents often work evenings and weekends and usually are on call to suit the needs of clients.
- A license is required in every State and the District of Columbia.
- Although gaining a job may be relatively easy, beginning workers face competition from well-established, more experienced agents and brokers.
- Employment is sensitive to swings in the economy, especially interest rates; during periods of declining economic activity and rising interest rates, the volume of sales and the resulting demand for sales workers fall.

Nature of the Work

One of the most complex and significant financial events in peoples' lives is the purchase or sale of a home or investment property. Because of this complexity and significance, people

typically seek the help of real estate brokers and sales agents when buying or selling real estate.

Real estate brokers and sales agents have a thorough knowledge of the real estate market in their communities. They know which neighborhoods will best fit clients' needs and budgets. They are familiar with local zoning and tax laws and know where to obtain financing. Agents and brokers also act as intermediaries in price negotiations between buyers and sellers.

When selling property, brokers and agents arrange for title searches to verify ownership and for meetings between buyers and sellers during which they agree to the details of the transactions and in a final meeting, the new owners take possession of the property. They also may help to arrange favorable financing from a lender for the prospective buyer; often, this makes the difference between success and failure in closing a sale. In some cases, brokers and agents assume primary responsibility for closing sales; in others, lawyers or lenders do.

Agents and brokers spend a significant amount of time looking for properties to sell. They obtain listings—agreements by owners to place properties for sale with the firm. When listing a property for sale, agents and brokers compare the listed property with similar properties that recently sold, in order to determine a competitive market price for the property. Following the sale of the property, both the agent who sold it and the agent who obtained the listing receive a portion of the commission. Thus, agents who sell a property that they themselves have listed can increase their commission.

Before showing residential properties to potential buyers, agents meet with them to get an idea of the type of home the buyers would like. In this prequalifying phase, the agent determines how much the buyers can afford to spend. In addition, the agent and the buyer usually sign a loyalty contract, which states that the agent will be the only one to show houses to the buyer. An agent or broker then generates lists of properties for sale, their location and description, and available sources of financing. In some cases, agents and brokers use computers to give buyers a virtual tour of properties that interest them.

Agents may meet several times with prospective buyers to discuss and visit available properties. Agents identify and emphasize the most pertinent selling points. To a young family looking for a house, for example, they may emphasize the convenient floor plan, the area's low crime rate, and the proximity to schools and shopping. To a potential investor, they may point out the tax advantages of owning a rental property and the ease of finding a renter. If bargaining over price becomes necessary, agents must follow their client's instructions carefully and may have to present counteroffers to get the best possible price.

Once the buyer and seller have signed a contract, the real estate broker or agent must make sure that all special terms of the contract are met before the closing date. The agent must make sure that any legally mandated or agreed-upon inspections, such as termite and radon inspections, take place. In addition, if the seller agrees to any repairs, the broker or agent ensures they are made. Increasingly, brokers and agents are handling environmental problems as well, by making sure that the properties they sell meet environmental regulations. For example, they may be responsible for dealing with lead paint on the walls.



Real estate brokers and sales agents have knowledge of the real estate market and are on call to suit the needs of clients.

Loan officers, attorneys, or other people handle many details, but the agent must ensure that they are carried out.

Most real estate brokers and sales agents sell residential property. A small number—usually employed in large or specialized firms—sell commercial, industrial, agricultural, or other types of real estate. Every specialty requires knowledge of that particular type of property and clientele. Selling or leasing business property requires an understanding of leasing practices, business trends, and the location of the property. Agents who sell or lease industrial properties must know about the region's transportation, utilities, and labor supply. Whatever the type of property, the agent or broker must know how to meet the client's particular requirements.

Brokers and agents do the same type of work, but brokers are licensed to manage their own real estate businesses. Agents must work with a broker. They usually provide their services to a licensed real estate broker on a contract basis. In return, the broker pays the agent a portion of the commission earned from the agent's sale of the property. Brokers, as independent businesspeople, often sell real estate owned by others; they also may rent or manage properties for a fee.

Work environment. Advances in telecommunications and the ability to retrieve data about properties over the Internet allow many real estate brokers and sales agents to work out of their homes instead of real estate offices. Even with this convenience, workers spend much of their time away from their desks—showing properties to customers, analyzing properties for sale, meeting with prospective clients, or researching the real estate market.

Agents and brokers often work more than a standard 40-hour week. They usually work evenings and weekends and are usually on call to respond to the needs of clients. Although the hours are long and frequently irregular, most agents and brokers have the freedom to determine their own schedule. They can arrange their work so that they have time off when they want it. Business usually is slower during the winter season.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

In every State and the District of Columbia, real estate brokers and sales agents must be licensed. Prospective agents must be high school graduates, be at least 18 years old, and pass a written test.

Education and training. Agents and brokers must be high school graduates. In fact, as real estate transactions have become more legally complex, many firms have turned to college graduates to fill positions. A large number of agents and brokers have some college training. College courses in real estate, finance, business administration, statistics, economics, law, and English are helpful. For those who intend to start their own company, business courses such as marketing and accounting are as important as courses in real estate or finance.

More than 1,000 universities, colleges, and community colleges offer courses in real estate. Most offer an associate or bachelor's degree in real estate; some offer graduate degrees. Many local real estate associations that are members of the National Association of Realtors sponsor courses covering the fundamentals and legal aspects of the field. Advanced courses in mortgage financing, property development and management, and other subjects also are available.

Many firms offer formal training programs for both beginners and experienced agents. Larger firms usually offer more extensive programs than smaller firms do.

Licensure. In every State and the District of Columbia, real estate brokers and sales agents must be licensed. Prospective brokers and agents must pass a written examination. The examination—more comprehensive for brokers than for agents—includes questions on basic real estate transactions and laws affecting the sale of property. Most States require candidates for the general sales license to complete between 30 and 90 hours of classroom instruction. To get a broker's license an individual needs between 60 and 90 hours of formal training and a specific amount of experience selling real estate, usually 1 to 3 years. Some States waive the experience requirements for the broker's license for applicants who have a bachelor's degree in real estate.

State licenses typically must be renewed every 1 or 2 years; usually, no examination is needed. However, many States require continuing education for license renewals. Prospective agents and brokers should contact the real estate licensing commission of the State in which they wish to work to verify the exact licensing requirements.

Other qualifications. Personality traits are as important as academic background. Brokers look for agents who have a pleasant personality, honesty, and a neat appearance. Maturity, good judgment, trustworthiness, and enthusiasm for the job are required to attract prospective customers in this highly competitive field. Agents should be well organized, be detail oriented, and have a good memory for names, faces, and business particulars. They must be at least 18 years old.

Those interested in jobs as real estate agents often begin in their own communities. Their knowledge of local neighbor-

hoods is a clear advantage. Under the direction of an experienced agent, beginners learn the practical aspects of the job, including the use of computers to locate or list available properties and identify sources of financing.

Advancement. As agents gain knowledge and expertise, they become more efficient in closing a greater number of transactions and increase their earnings. In many large firms, experienced agents can advance to sales manager or general manager. People who earn their broker's license may open their own offices. Others with experience and training in estimating property value may become real estate appraisers, and people familiar with operating and maintaining rental properties may become property managers. (See the *Handbook* statements on property, real estate, and community association managers; and appraisers and assessors of real estate.) Experienced agents and brokers with a thorough knowledge of business conditions and property values in their localities may enter mortgage financing or real estate investment counseling.

Employment

In 2006, real estate brokers and sales agents held about 564,000 jobs; real estate sales agents held approximately 77 percent of these jobs.

Many real estate brokers and sales agents worked part time, combining their real estate activities with other careers. About 61 percent real estate brokers and sales agents were self-employed. Real estate is sold in all areas, but employment is concentrated in large urban areas and in rapidly growing communities.

Most real estate firms are relatively small; indeed, some are one-person businesses. By contrast, some large real estate firms have several hundred agents operating out of numerous branch offices. Many brokers have franchise agreements with national or regional real estate organizations. Under this type of arrangement, the broker pays a fee in exchange for the privilege of using the more widely known name of the parent organization. Although franchised brokers often receive help in training sales staff and running their offices, they bear the ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of their firms.

Job Outlook

Average employment growth is expected because of the increasing housing needs of a growing population, as well as the perception that real estate is a good investment. Beginning agents and brokers face competition from their well-established, more experienced counterparts.

Employment change. Employment of real estate brokers and sales agents is expected to grow 11 percent during the 2006-16 projection decade—about as fast as the average for

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Real estate brokers and sales agents	41-9020	564,000	624,000	60,000	11
Real estate brokers	41-9021	131,000	146,000	15,000	11
Real estate sales agents	41-9022	432,000	478,000	46,000	11

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

all occupations. Relatively low interest rates and the perception that real estate usually is a good investment may continue to stimulate sales of real estate, resulting in the need for more agents and brokers. However, job growth will be somewhat limited by the increasing use of technology, which is improving the productivity of agents and brokers. For example, prospective customers often can perform their own searches for properties that meet their criteria by accessing real estate information on the Internet. The increasing use of technology is likely to be more detrimental to part-time or temporary real estate agents than to full-time agents because part-time agents generally are not able to compete with full-time agents who have invested in new technology. Changing legal requirements, such as disclosure laws, also may dissuade some who are not serious about practicing full time from continuing to work part time.

Job prospects. In addition to job growth, a large number of job openings will arise from the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force. Real estate brokers and sales agents are older, on average, than are most other workers. Historically, many homemakers and retired people were attracted to real estate sales by the flexible and part-time work schedules characteristic of the field. These individuals could enter, leave, and later return to the occupation, depending on the strength of the real estate market, their family responsibilities, or other personal circumstances. Recently, however, the attractiveness of part-time real estate work has declined, as increasingly complex legal and technological requirements are raising startup costs associated with becoming an agent.

Employment of real estate brokers and sales agents often is sensitive to swings in the economy, especially interest rates. During periods of declining economic activity and rising interest rates, the volume of sales and the resulting demand for sales workers falls. As a result, the earnings of agents and brokers decline, and many work fewer hours or leave the occupation altogether.

This occupation is relatively easy to enter and is attractive because of its flexible working conditions; the high interest in, and familiarity with, local real estate markets that entrants often have; and the potential for high earnings. Therefore, although gaining a job as a real estate agent or broker may be relatively easy, beginning agents and brokers face competition from their well-established, more experienced counterparts in obtaining listings and in closing an adequate number of sales.

Well-trained, ambitious people who enjoy selling—particularly those with extensive social and business connections in their communities—should have the best chance for success.

Earnings

The median annual earnings, including commissions, of salaried real estate sales agents were \$39,760 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$26,790 and \$65,270 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$20,170, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$111,500. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest number of real estate sales agents in May 2006 were:

Residential building construction.....	\$53,390
Land subdivision	49,230
Offices of real estate agents and brokers.....	39,930
Activities related to real estate	36,510
Lessors of real estate	32,580

Median annual earnings, including commissions, of salaried real estate brokers were \$60,790 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$37,800 and \$102,180 a year. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest number of real estate brokers in May 2006 were:

Offices of real estate agents and brokers.....	\$64,350
Lessors of real estate	61,030
Activities related to real estate	48,250

Commissions on sales are the main source of earnings of real estate agents and brokers. The rate of commission varies according to whatever the agent and broker agree on, the type of property, and its value. The percentage paid on the sale of farm and commercial properties or unimproved land is typically higher than the percentage paid for selling a home.

Commissions may be divided among several agents and brokers. The broker or agent who obtains a listing usually shares the commission with the broker or agent who sells the property and with the firms that employ each of them. Although an agent's share varies greatly from one firm to another, often it is about half of the total amount received by the firm. Agents who both list and sell a property maximize their commission.

Income usually increases as an agent gains experience, but individual motivation, economic conditions, and the type and location of the property affect earnings, too. Sales workers who are active in community organizations and in local real estate associations can broaden their contacts and increase their earnings. A beginner's earnings often are irregular because a few weeks or even months may go by without a sale. Although some brokers allow an agent to draw against future earnings from a special account, the practice is not common with new employees. The beginner, therefore, should have enough money to live for about 6 months or until commissions increase.

Related Occupations

Selling expensive items such as homes requires maturity, tact, and a sense of responsibility. Other sales workers who find these character traits important in their work include insurance sales agents; retail salespersons; sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing; and securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents. Although not involving sales, others who need an understanding of real estate include property, real estate, and community association managers, as well as appraisers and assessors of real estate.

Sources of Additional Information

Information on licensing requirements for real estate brokers and sales agents is available from most local real estate organizations or from the State real estate commission or board.

More information about opportunities in real estate is available on the Internet site of the following organization:

► National Association of Realtors. Internet: <http://www.realtor.org>

Retail Salespersons

(O*NET 41-2031.00)

Significant Points

- Good employment opportunities are expected because of the need to replace the large number of workers who leave the occupation each year.
- Most salespersons work evenings and weekends, particularly during sales and other peak retail periods.
- Employers look for people who enjoy working with others and who have tact, patience, an interest in sales work, a neat appearance, and the ability to communicate clearly.

Nature of the Work

Consumers spend millions of dollars every day on merchandise and often rely on a store's sales force for help. Whether selling shoes, computer equipment, or automobiles, retail salespersons assist customers in finding what they are looking for and try to interest them in buying the merchandise. Most are able to describe a product's features, demonstrate its use, or show various models and colors.

In addition to selling, most retail salespersons—especially those who work in department and apparel stores—make out sales checks; receive cash, checks, debit, and charge payments; bag or package purchases; and give change and receipts. Depending on the hours they work, retail salespersons may have to open or close cash registers. This work may include counting the money in the register; separating charge slips, coupons, and exchange vouchers; and making deposits at the cash office. Salespersons often are held responsible for the contents of their registers, and repeated shortages are cause for dismissal in many organizations. (Cashiers, who have similar duties, are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Retailers stress the importance of providing courteous and efficient service to remain competitive. For example, when a customer wants an item that is not on the sales floor, the salesperson may check the stockroom, place a special order, or call another store to locate the item.

For some sales jobs, particularly those involving expensive and complex items, retail salespersons need special knowledge or skills. For example, salespersons who sell automobiles must be able to explain the features of various models, the manufacturers' specifications, the types of options and financing available, and the warranty.

Salespersons also may handle returns and exchanges of merchandise, wrap gifts, and keep their work areas neat. In addition, they may help stock shelves or racks, arrange for mailing or delivery of purchases, mark price tags, take inventory, and prepare displays.

Frequently, salespersons must be aware of special sales and promotions. They also must recognize security risks and thefts and know how to handle or prevent such situations.



Retail salespersons must know about the products they are selling, and answer questions from customers.

Work environment. Most salespersons in retail trade work in clean, comfortable, well-lit stores. However, they often stand for long periods and may need supervisory approval to leave the sales floor. They also may work outdoors if they sell items such as cars, plants, or lumber yard materials.

The Monday-through-Friday, 9-to-5 workweek is the exception rather than the rule in retail trade. Most salespersons work evenings and weekends, particularly during sales and other peak retail periods. The end-of-year holiday season is the busiest time for most retailers. As a result, many employers limit the use of vacation time between Thanksgiving and the beginning of January.

This occupation offers many opportunities for part-time work and is especially appealing to students, retirees, and others seeking to supplement their income. More than 32 percent of retail salespersons worked part-time in 2006. However, most of those selling big-ticket items work full time and have substantial experience.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Retail salespeople typically learn their skills through on-the-job training. Although advancement opportunities are limited, having a college degree or a great deal of experience may help retail salespersons move into management positions.

Education and training. There usually are no formal education requirements for this type of work, although a high school diploma or the equivalent is often preferred. A college degree may be required for management trainee positions, especially in larger retail establishments.

In most small stores, an experienced employee or the store owner instructs newly hired sales personnel in making out sales checks and operating cash registers. In large stores, training programs are more formal and are usually conducted over several days. Topics discussed often include customer service, security, the store's policies and procedures, and how to work a cash register. Depending on the type of product they are selling, employees may be given additional specialized training by sales representatives. For example, those working in cosmetics receive instruction on the types of products the store offers and for whom the cosmetics would be most beneficial. Likewise, salespersons employed by motor vehicle dealers may be in-

structed on the technical details of standard and optional equipment available on new vehicle models. Since providing the best possible service to customers is a high priority for many employers, employees often are given periodic training to update and refine their skills.

Other qualifications. Employers look for people who enjoy working with others and who have the tact and patience to deal with difficult customers. Among other desirable characteristics are an interest in sales work, a neat appearance, and the ability to communicate clearly and effectively. The ability to speak more than one language may be helpful for employment in communities where people from various cultures live and shop. Before hiring a salesperson, some employers may conduct a background check, especially for a job selling high-priced items.

Advancement. Opportunities for advancement vary. In some small establishments, advancement is limited because one person—often the owner—does most of the managerial work. In others, some salespersons are promoted to assistant manager. Large retail businesses usually prefer to hire college graduates as management trainees, making a college education increasingly important. However, motivated and capable employees without college degrees still may advance to administrative or supervisory positions in large establishments.

As salespersons gain experience and seniority, they usually move to positions of greater responsibility and may be given their choice of departments in which to work. This often means moving to areas with higher potential earnings and commissions. The highest earnings potential usually lies in selling “big-ticket” items—such as cars, jewelry, furniture, and electronic equipment—although doing so often requires extensive knowledge of the product and an extraordinary talent for persuasion.

Retail selling experience may be an asset when applying for sales positions with larger retailers or in nonretail industries, such as financial services, wholesale trade, or manufacturing.

Employment

Retail salespersons held about 4.5 million jobs in 2006. They worked in stores ranging from small specialty shops employing a few workers to giant department stores with hundreds of salespersons. In addition, some were self-employed representatives of direct-sales companies and mail-order houses. The largest employers of retail salespersons are department stores, clothing and clothing accessories stores, building material and garden equipment and supplies dealers, other general merchandise stores, and motor vehicle and parts dealers.

Because retail stores are found in every city and town, employment is distributed geographically in much the same way as the population.

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Retail salespersons	41-2031	4,477,000	5,034,000	557,000	12

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

Job Outlook

Due to the high level of turnover in this occupation, opportunities are expected to be good. The average projected employment growth in this occupation reflects the expansion of the economy and consumer spending.

Employment change. Employment is expected to grow by 12 percent over the 2006-16 decade, which is about as fast as the average for all occupations. In fact, due to the size of this occupation, retail salespersons will have one of the largest numbers of new jobs arise, about 557,000 over the projections decade. This growth reflects rising retail sales stemming from a growing population. Many retail establishments will continue to expand in size and number, leading to new retail sales positions. Since retail salespeople must be available to assist customers in person, this is not an occupation that will suffer negative effects from advancements in technology. To the contrary, software that integrates purchase transactions, inventory management, and purchasing has greatly changed retailing, but retail salespersons continue to be essential in dealing with customers. There will also be an increased demand for retail salespersons in warehouse clubs and supercenters, which sell a wide assortment of goods at low prices, since they continue to grow as many consumers prefer these stores.

Despite the growing popularity of electronic commerce, the impact of electronic commerce on employment of retail salespersons is expected to be minimal. Internet sales have not decreased the need for retail salespersons. Retail stores commonly use an online presence to complement their in-store sales; there are a limited number of Internet-only apparel and specialty stores. Retail salespersons will remain important in assuring customers, providing specialized service, and increasing customer satisfaction. Most shoppers continue to prefer to make their purchases in stores, and growth of retail sales will continue to generate employment growth in various retail establishments.

Job prospects. As in the past, employment opportunities for retail salespersons are expected to be good because of the need to replace the large number of workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force each year. Warehouse clubs and supercenters are expected to have excellent job prospects as they continue to grow in popularity with consumers. In addition, many new jobs will be created for retail salespersons as businesses seek to expand operations and enhance customer service.

Opportunities for part-time work should be abundant, and demand will be strong for temporary workers during peak selling periods, such as the end-of-year holiday season. The availability of part-time and temporary work attracts many people seeking to supplement their income.

During economic downturns, sales volumes and the resulting demand for sales workers usually decline. Purchases of costly items, such as cars, appliances, and furniture, tend to be postponed during difficult economic times. In areas of high unemployment, sales of many types of goods decline. However, because many retail salespersons constantly transfer to other occupations in search of better pay or career opportunities, employers often can adjust employment levels simply by not replacing all those who leave.

Earnings

Median hourly earnings of retail salespersons, including commissions, were \$9.50 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$7.81 and \$12.83 an hour. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$6.79, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$18.48 an hour. Median hourly earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of retail salespersons in May 2006 were as follows:

Automobile dealers	\$18.70
Building material and supplies dealers	11.37
Other general merchandise stores	8.79
Department stores	8.70
Clothing stores	8.53

Many beginning or inexperienced workers earn the Federal minimum wage of \$5.85 an hour, but many States set minimum wages higher than the Federal minimum. Under Federal law, this wage will increase to \$6.55 in the summer of 2008 and to \$7.25 in the summer of 2009. In areas where employers have difficulty attracting and retaining workers, wages tend to be higher than the legislated minimum.

Compensation systems can vary by type of establishment and merchandise sold. Salespersons receive hourly wages, commissions, or a combination thereof. Under a commission system, salespersons receive a percentage of the sales they make. This system offers sales workers the opportunity to increase their earnings considerably, but they may find that their earnings strongly depend on their ability to sell their product and on the ups and downs of the economy.

Benefits may be limited in smaller stores, but benefits in large establishments usually are comparable to those offered by other employers. In addition, nearly all salespersons are able to buy their store's merchandise at a discount, with the savings depending on the type of merchandise. Also, to bolster revenue, employers may use incentive programs such as awards, banquets, bonuses, and profit-sharing plans to promote teamwork among the sales staff.

Related Occupations

Salespersons use sales techniques, coupled with their knowledge of merchandise, to assist customers and encourage purchases. Workers in other occupations who use these same skills include sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing; securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents; counter and rental clerks; real estate brokers and sales agents; purchasing managers, buyers, and purchasing agents; insurance sales agents; sales engineers; and cashiers.

Sources of Additional Information

Information on careers in retail sales may be obtained from the personnel offices of local stores or from State merchants' associations.

General information about retailing is available from:

► National Retail Federation, 325 7th St.NW., Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20004.

Information about training for a career in automobile sales is available from:

► National Automobile Dealers Association, Public Relations Department, 8400 Westpark Dr., McLean, VA 22102-3591. Internet: <http://www.nada.org>

Sales Engineers

(O*NET 41-9031.00)

Significant Points

- A bachelor's degree in engineering usually is required; many sales engineers have previous work experience in an engineering specialty.
- Projected employment growth will stem from the increasing numbers of technical products and services for sale.
- More job opportunities are expected in independent sales agencies.
- Earnings are typically based on a combination of salary and commission.

Nature of the Work

Many products and services, especially those purchased by large companies and institutions, are highly complex. Sales engineers—who also may be called *manufacturers' agents*, *sales representatives*, or *technical sales support workers*—work with the production, engineering, or research and development departments of their companies, or with independent sales firms, to determine how products and services could be designed or modified to suit customers' needs. They also may advise customers on how best to use the products or services provided.

Sales engineers sell and consult on technologically and scientifically advanced products. They should possess extensive knowledge of these products, including their components and processes. Sales engineers then use their technical skills to demonstrate to potential customers how and why the products or services they are selling would suit the customer better than competitors' products. Often, there may not be a directly competitive product. In these cases, the job of the sales engineer is to demonstrate to the customer the usefulness of the product or service—for example, how much money new production machinery would save.

Engineers apply the theories and principles of science and mathematics to technical problems. Their work is the link between scientific discoveries and commercial applications. Many sales engineers specialize in products that are related to their engineering specialty. For example, sales engineers sell-

ing chemical products may have chemical engineering backgrounds, while those selling business software or information systems may have degrees in computer engineering. (Information on engineers, including 17 engineering specialties, appears elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Many of the duties of sales engineers are similar to those of other salespersons. They must interest the client in purchasing their products, many of which are durable manufactured products such as turbines. Sales engineers often are teamed with other salespersons who concentrate on the marketing and sales, enabling the sales engineer to concentrate on the technical aspects of the job. By working on a sales team, each member is able to focus on his or her strengths and expertise. (Information on other sales occupations, including sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, appears elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Sales engineers tend to employ selling techniques that are different from those used by most other sales workers. They generally use a “consultative” style; that is, they focus on the client’s problem and show how it could be solved or mitigated with their product or service. This selling style differs from the “benefits and features” method, whereby the salesperson describes the product and leaves the customer to decide how it would be useful.

In addition to maintaining current clients and attracting new ones, sales engineers help clients solve any problems that arise when the product is installed. Afterward, they may continue to serve as a liaison between the client and their company. Increasingly, sales engineers are asked to undertake tasks related to sales, such as market research, because of their familiarity with clients’ purchasing needs. Drawing on this same familiarity, sales engineers may help identify and develop new products.

Work environment. Sales engineers may work directly for manufacturers or service providers, or they may work in small independent sales firms. In an independent firm, they may sell complementary products from several different suppliers.

Workers in this occupation can encounter pressure and stress because their income and job security often depend directly on their success in sales and customer service. Many sales engineers work more than 40 hours per week to meet sales goals and client needs. Although the hours may be long and often



Most sales engineers have a bachelor’s degree in engineering.

irregular, many sales engineers have the freedom to determine their own schedules. Consequently, they often can arrange their appointments so that they can have time off when they want it.

Some sales engineers have large territories and travel extensively. Because sales regions may cover several States, sales engineers may be away from home for several days or even weeks at a time. Others work near their home base and travel mostly by car. International travel to secure contracts with foreign clients is becoming more common.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Most sales engineers have a bachelor’s degree in engineering, and many have previous work experience in an engineering specialty. New sales engineers may need some on-the-job training in sales or may work closely with a sales mentor familiar with company policies and practices before they can work on their own.

Education and training. A bachelor’s degree in engineering usually is required to become a sales engineer. However, some workers with previous experience in sales combined with technical experience or training sometimes hold the title of sales engineer. Also, workers who have a degree in a science, such as chemistry, or even a degree in business with little or no previous sales experience, may be termed sales engineers.

Admissions requirements for undergraduate engineering schools include a solid background in mathematics (algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and calculus) and the physical sciences (biology, chemistry, and physics), as well as basic courses in English, social studies, humanities, and computer science. University programs vary in content, though all require the development of computer skills. Once a university has been selected, a student must choose an area of engineering in which to specialize. Some programs offer a general engineering curriculum; students then specialize on the job or in graduate school. Most engineering degrees are granted in electrical, mechanical, or civil engineering. However, engineers trained in one branch may work in related branches.

New graduates with engineering degrees may need sales experience and training before they can work independently as sales engineers. Training may involve teaming with a sales mentor who is familiar with the employer’s business practices, customers, procedures, and company culture. After the training period has been completed, sales engineers may continue to partner with someone who lacks technical skills, yet excels in the art of sales.

It is important for sales engineers to continue their engineering and sales education throughout their careers. Much of their value to their employers depends on their knowledge of and ability to sell the latest technologies. Sales engineers in high-technology fields, such as information technology or advanced electronics, may find that technical knowledge rapidly becomes obsolete.

Other qualifications. Many sales engineers first work as engineers. For some, engineering experience is necessary to obtain the technical background needed to sell their employers’ products or services effectively. Others move into the occupation because it offers better earnings and advancement potential

than engineering or because they are looking for a new challenge.

Advancement. Promotion may include a higher commission rate, larger sales territory, or elevation to the position of supervisor or marketing manager. Alternatively, sales engineers may leave their companies and form independent firms. Independent firms tend to be small, and relatively few sales engineers are self-employed.

Employment

Sales engineers held about 76,000 jobs in 2006. About 37 percent were employed in wholesale trade and another 26 percent were employed in the manufacturing industries. Smaller numbers of sales engineers worked in information industries, such as software publishing and telecommunications; professional, scientific, and technical services, such as computer systems design and related services; architectural, engineering, and related services; and other industries. Unlike workers in many other sales occupations, very few sales engineers are self-employed.

Job Outlook

Job growth for sales engineers is projected to be about average through 2016, and opportunities will be good in independent sales agencies because of the increase in outsourcing of sales departments by manufacturers.

Employment change. Employment of sales engineers is expected to grow by 9 percent between 2006 and 2016, which is about as fast as the average for all occupations. Projected employment growth stems from the increasing variety and technical nature of goods and services to be sold. Competitive pressures and advancing technology will force companies to improve and update product designs more frequently and to optimize their manufacturing and sales processes, and thus require the services of a sales engineer.

In wholesale trade, both outsourcing to independent sales agencies and the use of information technology are expected to create some job growth for sales engineers. Although outsourcing should lead to more jobs in independent agencies, employment growth for sales engineers in wholesale trade likely will be dampened by the increasing ability of businesses to find, order, and track shipments directly from wholesalers through the Internet, without assistance from sales engineers. However, since direct purchases from wholesalers are more likely to be non-scientific or non-technical products, their impact on sales engineers should remain somewhat limited.

Job prospects. Manufacturers, especially foreign manufacturers that sell their products in the United States, are expected to continue outsourcing more of their sales functions to independent sales agencies in an attempt to control costs. Additionally, since independent agencies can carry multiple lines of products, a single sales engineer can handle more products

than the single product line they would have handled under a manufacturer. This should result in more job opportunities for sales engineers in independent agencies.

Employment opportunities may fluctuate from year to year because sales are affected by changing economic conditions, legislative issues, and consumer preferences. Prospects will be best for those with the appropriate knowledge or technical expertise, as well as the personal traits necessary for successful sales work. In addition to new positions created as companies expand their sales forces, some openings will arise each year from the need to replace sales engineers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force.

Earnings

Median annual earnings, including commissions, of wage and salary sales engineers were \$77,720 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$59,490 and \$100,280 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$47,010, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$127,680 a year. Median annual earnings of those employed by firms in the computer systems design and related services industry were \$90,950.

Compensation varies significantly by the type of firm and the product sold. Most employers offer a combination of salary and commission payments or a salary plus a bonus. Those working in independent sales companies may solely earn commissions. Commissions usually are based on the amount of sales, whereas bonuses may depend on individual performance, on the performance of all workers in the group or district, or on the company's performance. Earnings from commissions and bonuses may vary greatly from year to year, depending on sales ability, the demand for the company's products or services, and the overall economy.

In addition to their earnings, sales engineers who work for manufacturers usually are reimbursed for expenses such as transportation, meals, hotels, and customer entertainment. In addition to typical benefits, sales engineers may get personal use of a company car and frequent-flyer mileage. Some companies offer incentives such as free vacation trips or gifts for outstanding performance. Sales engineers who work in independent firms may have higher but less stable earnings and, often, relatively few benefits. Most independent sales engineers do not earn any income while on vacation.

Related Occupations

Sales engineers must have sales ability and knowledge of the products and services they sell, as well as technical and analytical skills. Other occupations that require similar skills include advertising, marketing, promotions, public relations, and sales managers; engineers; insurance sales agents; purchasing managers, buyers and purchasing agents; real estate brokers and sales agents; sales representatives, wholesale and manufactur-

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016		Change, 2006-16	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Sales engineers.....	41-9031	76,000	82,000	6,500	9	

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

ing; and securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents.

Sources of Additional Information

Information on careers for manufacturers' representatives and agents is available from:

► Manufacturers' Agents National Association, P.O. Box 3467, Laguna Hills, CA 92654.

Internet: <http://www.manaonline.org>

► Manufacturers' Representatives Educational Research Foundation, 8329 Cole St., Arvada, CO 80005.

Internet: <http://www.mrref.org>

Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing

(O*NET 41-4011.00, 41-4012.00)

Significant Points

- Competition for jobs is expected, but opportunities will be best for those with a college degree, the appropriate technical expertise, and the personal traits necessary for successful selling.
- Job prospects for sales representatives will be better for those working with essential goods, since the demand for these products do not fluctuate with the economy.
- Earnings of sales representatives are relatively high and usually are based on a combination of salary and commission.

Nature of the Work

Sales representatives are an important part of manufacturers' and wholesalers' success. Regardless of the type of product they sell, sales representatives' primary duties are to make wholesale and retail buyers and purchasing agents interested in their merchandise and to address any of their clients' questions and concerns. Sales representatives demonstrate their products and explain how using those products can reduce costs and increase sales.

Sales representatives may represent one or several manufacturers or wholesale distributors by selling one product or a complementary line of products. The clients of sales representatives span almost every industry and include other manufacturers, wholesale and retail establishments, construction contractors, and government agencies. (Retail salespersons, who sell directly to consumers, and sales engineers, who specialize in sales of technical products and services, are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

The process of promoting and selling products can take up to several months. Sales representatives present their products to a customer and negotiate the sale. Whether in person or over the phone, they can make a persuasive sales pitch and often will immediately answer technical and non-technical questions about the products. They may also record any interactions with

clients and their respective sales to better match their future needs and sales potential.

There are two major categories of products that sales representatives work with: technical and scientific products and all products except technical and scientific products. Technical and scientific products may include anything from agricultural and mechanical equipment to electrical and pharmaceutical goods. Products included in the later category are more everyday items, including goods such as food, office supplies, and apparel.

Sales representatives stay abreast of new products and the changing needs of their customers in a variety of ways. They attend trade shows at which new products and technologies are showcased. They also attend conferences and conventions to meet other sales representatives and clients and discuss new product developments. In addition, the entire sales force may participate in company-sponsored meetings to review sales performance, product development, sales goals, and profitability.

Frequently, sales representatives who lack the necessary expertise about a given product may team with a technical expert. In this arrangement, the technical expert—sometimes a sales engineer—attends the sales presentation to explain the product and answer questions or concerns. The sales representative makes the preliminary contact with customers, introduces the company's product, and closes the sale. The representative is then able to spend more time maintaining and soliciting accounts and less time acquiring technical knowledge. After the sale, representatives may make follow-up visits to ensure that the equipment is functioning properly and may even help train customers' employees to operate and maintain new equipment. Those selling technical goods may also help set up the installation. Those selling consumer goods often suggest how and where merchandise should be displayed. When working with retailers, they may help arrange promotional programs, store displays, and advertising.

Obtaining new accounts is an important part of the job for all sales representatives. Sales representatives follow leads from other clients, track advertisements in trade journals, participate in trade shows and conferences, and may visit potential clients unannounced. In addition, they may spend time meeting with and entertaining prospective clients during evenings and weekends.

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, regardless of where they are employed, may work in either inside sales or outside "field" sales. *Inside sales representatives* may spend a lot of their time on the phone, taking orders and resolving any problems or complaints about the merchandise. These sales representatives typically do not leave the office. *Outside sales representatives* spend much of their time traveling to and visiting with current clients and prospective buyers. During a sales call, they discuss the client's needs and suggest how their merchandise or services can meet those needs. They may show samples or catalogs that describe items their company stocks and inform customers about prices,

availability, and ways in which their products can save money and boost productivity. Given that a number of manufacturers and wholesalers sell similar products, sales representatives must emphasize any unique qualities of their products and services. Since many sales representatives sell several complementary products made by different manufacturers, they may take a broad approach to their customers' business. For example, sales representatives may help install new equipment and train employees in its use.

Sales representatives working at an independent sales agency usually sell several products from multiple manufacturers. Additionally, these firms may only cover a certain territory, ranging from local areas to several States. These independent firms are called "manufacturers' representative companies" because their selling is on behalf of the manufacturers.

Depending on where they work, sales representatives may have different job titles. *Manufacturers' agents* or *manufacturers' representatives*, for example, are self-employed sales workers who own independent firms which contract their services to all types of manufacturing companies.

Work environment. Some sales representatives have large territories and travel considerably. Because a sales region may cover several States, representatives may be away from home for several days or weeks at a time. Others work near their home base and travel mostly by car. Sales representatives often are on their feet for long periods and may carry heavy sample products, necessitating some physical stamina.

Sales representatives may work more than 40 hours per week because of the nature of the work and the amount of travel. Since sales calls take place during regular working hours, most of the planning and paperwork involved with sales must be completed during the evening and on the weekends. Although the hours are long and often irregular, many sales representatives



Sales representatives may travel to meet with prospective clients to discuss products and their uses.

working for independent sales companies have the freedom to determine their own schedules.

Dealing with different types of people can be stimulating but demanding. Sales representatives often face competition from representatives of other companies. Companies usually set goals or quotas that representatives are expected to meet. Because their earnings depend on commissions, manufacturers' representatives are also under the added pressure to maintain and expand their clientele.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Many employers hire individuals with previous sales experience who lack a college degree, but hiring candidates with a college degree is becoming increasingly common. Regardless of educational background, factors such as personality, the ability to sell, and familiarity with brands are essential to being a successful sales representative.

Education and training. Since there is no formal educational requirement for sales representative, their levels of education varies. Having a bachelor's degree can be highly desirable, especially for sales representatives who work with technical and scientific products. This is because technological advances result in new and more complex products. Additionally, manufacturers' representatives who start their own independent sales company might have an MBA. As shown in the tabulation below, in 2006 many sales representatives had a bachelor's degree, and many others had some college classes. Some, however, had no degree or formal training, but these workers often had sales experience or potential.

	Percent
High school graduate or less	27
Some college, no degree	19
Associate's degree.....	9
Bachelor's degree.....	38
Graduate degree	6

Many sales representatives attend seminars in sales techniques or take courses in marketing, economics, communication, or even a foreign language to provide the extra edge needed to make sales. Often, companies have formal training programs for beginning sales representatives lasting up to 2 years. However, most businesses accelerate these programs to reduce costs and expedite the returns from training. In some programs, trainees rotate among jobs in plants and offices to learn all phases of production, installation, and distribution of the product. In others, trainees take formal classroom instruction at the plant, followed by on-the-job training under the supervision of a field sales manager.

Regardless of where they work, new employees may get training by accompanying experienced workers on their sales calls. As they gain familiarity with the firm's products and clients, the new workers are given increasing responsibility until they are eventually assigned their own territory. As businesses experience greater competition, representatives face more pressure to produce sales.

Other qualifications. For sales representative jobs, companies seek the best and brightest individuals who have the personality and desire to sell. Those who want to become sales

representatives should be goal oriented, persuasive, and able to work well both independently and as part of a team. A pleasant personality and appearance, the ability to communicate well with people, and problem-solving skills are highly valued. Patience and perseverance are also keys to completing a sale, which can take up to several months. Sales representatives also need to be able to work with computers since computers are increasingly used to place and track orders and to monitor inventory levels.

Manufacturers' representatives who operate a sales agency must also manage their business. This requires organizational and general business skills, as well as knowledge of accounting, marketing, and administration. Usually, however, sales representatives gain experience and recognition with a manufacturer or wholesaler before becoming self-employed.

Certification and advancement. Certifications are available that provide formal recognition of the skills of sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing. Many obtaining certification in this profession have either the Certified Professional Manufacturers' Representative (CPMR) or the Certified Sales Professional (CSP), offered by the Manufacturers' Representatives Education Research Foundation. Certification typically involves completion of formal training and passing an examination.

Frequently, promotion takes the form of an assignment to a larger account or territory where commissions are likely to be greater. Those who have good sales records and leadership ability may advance to higher level positions such as sales supervisor, district manager, or vice president of sales. Others find opportunities in purchasing, advertising, or marketing research.

Advancement opportunities typically depend on whether the sales representatives are working directly for a manufacturer or wholesaler or if they are working with an independent sales agency. Experienced sales representatives working directly for a manufacturer or wholesaler may move into jobs as sales trainers and instruct new employees on selling techniques and company policies and procedures. Some leave the manufacturer or wholesaler and start their own independent sales company. Those working for an independent sales company can also advance by going into business for themselves or by receiving higher pay.

Employment

Manufacturers' and wholesale sales representatives held about 2 million jobs in 2006. About 21 percent worked with technical and scientific products. Almost 60 percent of all representatives

worked in wholesale trade. Others were employed in manufacturing, retail trade, information, and construction. Because of the diversity of products and services sold, employment opportunities are available throughout the country in a wide range of industries. In addition to those working directly for a firm, some sales representatives are self-employed manufacturers' agents. They often form small sales firms that may start with just themselves and gradually grow to employ a small staff.

Job Outlook

Job growth of sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, is expected to be average, but keen competition is expected for these highly paid sales jobs.

Employment change. Employment of sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, is expected to grow by 9 percent between 2006 and 2016, which is about as fast as the average for all occupations. Given the size of this occupation, a large number of new jobs, about 182,000 will arise over the projections decade. This is primarily because of continued growth in the variety and number of goods sold throughout the economy. Technological progress will also have an impact on job growth. Sales representatives can help ensure that retailers offer the latest technology available to their customers or that businesses acquire the right technical products that will increase their efficiency in operations. Advances in technology will therefore lead to more products being demanded and sold, and thus growth in the sales representative profession.

At the same time, however, computers and other information technology are also making sales representatives more effective and productive, allowing sales representatives to handle more clients, and thus hindering job growth somewhat.

Employment growth will be greatest in independent sales companies as manufacturers and wholesalers continue to outsource sales activities to independent agents rather than using in-house or direct sales workers. Independent agent companies are paid only if they sell, a practice that reduces the overhead cost to their clients. Also, by using agents who usually contract their services to more than one company, companies can share costs of the agents with each other. As the customers of independent agents continue to merge with other companies, independent agent companies and other wholesale trade firms will also merge with each other in response to better serve their clients.

Job prospects. Earnings of sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing are relatively high, especially for those selling technical and scientific products, so keen competition is likely for jobs. Prospects will be best for those with a solid

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing	41-4000	1,973,000	2,155,000	182,000	9
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, technical and scientific products	41-4011	411,000	462,000	51,000	12
Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products	41-4012	1,562,000	1,693,000	131,000	8

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

technical background and the personal traits necessary for successful selling. Opportunities will be better for sales representatives working for an independent sales company as opposed to working directly for a manufacturer because manufacturers are expected to continue contracting out field sales duties.

Opportunities for sales representatives in manufacturing are likely to be best for those selling products for which there is strong demand. Jobs will be most plentiful in small wholesale and manufacturing firms because a growing number of these companies will rely on agents to market their products as a way to control their costs and expand their customer base.

Employment opportunities and earnings may fluctuate from year to year because sales are affected by changing economic conditions, legislative issues, and consumer preferences. Also, many job openings will result from the need to replace workers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force.

Earnings

Median annual earnings of wage and salary sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, technical and scientific products, were \$64,440, including commissions, in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$45,630 and \$91,090 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$33,410, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$121,850 a year. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of sales representatives, technical and scientific products, were as follows:

Computer systems design and related services	\$75,240
Wholesale electronic markets and agents and brokers.....	69,510
Professional and commercial equipment and supplies merchant wholesalers	67,700
Drugs and druggists' sundries merchant wholesalers	66,210
Electrical and electronic goods merchant wholesalers	61,000

Median annual earnings of wage and salary sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products, were \$49,610, including commission, in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$35,460 and \$71,650 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$26,030, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$101,030 a year. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of sales representatives, except technical and scientific products, were as follows:

Wholesale electronic markets and agents and brokers.....	\$54,900
Professional and commercial equipment and supplies merchant wholesalers	49,730
Machinery, equipment, and supplies merchant wholesalers	48,620
Grocery and related product wholesalers.....	46,150
Miscellaneous nondurable goods merchant wholesalers	42,530

Compensation methods for those representatives working for an independent sales company vary significantly by the type of firm and the product sold. Most employers use a combination of salary and commissions or salary plus bonus. Commissions usually are based on the amount of sales, whereas bonuses may depend on individual performance, on the performance of all

sales workers in the group or district, or on the company's performance. Unlike those working directly for a manufacturer or wholesaler, sales representatives working for an independent sales company usually are not reimbursed for expenses. Depending on the type of product or products they are selling, their experience in the field, and the number of clients they have, they can earn significantly more or less than those working in direct sales for a manufacturer or wholesaler.

In addition to their earnings, sales representatives working directly for a manufacturer or wholesaler usually are reimbursed for expenses such as transportation costs, meals, hotels, and entertaining customers. They often receive benefits such as health and life insurance, pension plans, vacation and sick leave, personal use of a company car, and frequent flyer mileage. Some companies offer incentives such as free vacation trips or gifts for outstanding sales workers.

Related Occupations

Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, must have sales ability and knowledge of the products they sell. Other occupations that require similar skills include advertising, marketing, promotions, public relations, and sales managers; insurance sales agents; purchasing managers, buyers, and purchasing agents; real estate brokers and sales agents; retail salespersons; sales engineers; and securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents.

Sources of Additional Information

Information on careers for manufacturers' representatives and sales agents is available from:

► Manufacturers' Agents National Association, One Spectrum Pointe, Suite 150, Lake Forest, CA 92630.

Internet: <http://www.manaonline.org>

► Manufacturers' Representatives Educational Research Foundation, 8329 Cole St., Arvada, CO 80005.

Internet: <http://www.mrref.org>

Sales Worker Supervisors

(O*NET 41-1011.00, 41-1012.00)

Significant Points

- Overall employment is projected to grow more slowly than average.
- Applicants with retail experience should have the best job opportunities.
- Long, irregular hours, including evenings and weekends, are common.

Nature of the Work

Sales worker supervisors oversee the work of sales and related workers, such as retail salespersons, cashiers, customer service representatives, stock clerks and order fillers, sales engineers, and wholesale sales representatives. Sales worker supervisors are responsible for interviewing, hiring, and training employees. They also may prepare work schedules and assign workers

to specific duties. Many of these supervisors hold job titles such as *sales manager* or *department manager*. Under the occupational classification system used in the *Handbook*, however, workers who mainly supervise workers and who do not focus on broader managerial issues of planning and strategy are classified as supervisors.

In retail establishments, sales worker supervisors ensure that customers receive satisfactory service and quality goods. They also answer customers' inquiries, deal with complaints, and sometimes handle purchasing, budgeting, and accounting.

Responsibilities vary with the size and type of establishment. As the size of retail stores and the types of goods and services increase, supervisors tend to specialize in one department or one aspect of merchandising. Sales worker supervisors in large retail establishments are often referred to as department supervisors or managers. They provide day-to-day oversight of individual departments, such as shoes, cosmetics, or housewares in department stores; produce or meat in grocery stores; and car sales in automotive dealerships. Department supervisors establish and implement policies, goals, and procedures for their specific departments; coordinate activities with other department heads; and strive for smooth operations within their departments. They supervise employees who price and ticket goods and place them on display; clean and organize shelves, displays, and inventories in stockrooms; and inspect merchandise to ensure that nothing is outdated. Sales worker supervisors also review inventory and sales records, develop merchandising techniques, and coordinate sales promotions. In addition, they may greet and assist customers and promote sales and good public relations.

Sales worker supervisors in non-retail establishments oversee and coordinate the activities of sales workers who sell industrial products, insurance policies, or services such as advertising, financial, or Internet services. They may prepare budgets, make personnel decisions, devise sales-incentive programs, and approve sales contracts.

In small or independent companies and retail stores, sales worker supervisors not only directly supervise sales associates, but they also are responsible for the operation of the entire company or store. Some are self-employed business or store owners.

Work environment. Most sales worker supervisors have offices. In retail trade, their offices are within the stores, usually close to the areas they oversee. Although they spend some time in the office completing merchandise orders or arranging work schedules, a large portion of their workday is spent on the sales floor, supervising employees or selling.

Work hours of supervisors vary greatly among establishments because work schedules usually depend on customers' needs. Supervisors generally work at least 40 hours a week. Long, irregular hours are common, particularly during sales, holidays, and busy shopping seasons and at times when inventory is taken. Supervisors are expected to work some evenings and weekends but usually are given a day off during the week. Hours can change weekly, and supervisors sometimes must report to work on short notice, especially when employees are absent. Independent owners often can set their own schedules, but hours must be convenient to customers.



Sales worker supervisors monitor their staff to ensure high quality service to customers.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Sales worker supervisors usually gain knowledge of management principles and practices through work experience. Many supervisors begin their careers on the sales floor as salespersons, cashiers, or customer service representatives. These workers should be patient, decisive, and sales-oriented.

Education and training. The educational backgrounds of sales worker supervisors vary widely. Supervisors who have postsecondary education often hold associate or bachelor's degrees in liberal arts, social sciences, business, or management. Recommended high school or college courses include those related to business, such as accounting, marketing, management, and sales, and those related to social science, such as psychology, sociology, and communication. Supervisors also must know how to use computers because almost all cash registers, inventory control systems, and sales quotes and contracts are computerized. To gain experience, many college students participate in internship programs that usually are developed jointly by schools and businesses.

Having previous sales experience is usually a requirement for becoming a sales worker supervisor. Most sales worker supervisors have retail sales experience or experience as a customer service representative. In these positions, they learn merchandising, customer service, and the basic policies and procedures of the company.

The type and amount of training available to supervisors varies by company. Many national retail chains and companies have formal training programs for management trainees that include both classroom and on-site training. Training time may be as brief as 1 week or may last more than 1 year, giving trainees experience during all sales seasons.

Ordinarily, classroom training includes topics such as interviewing, customer service skills, inventory management, employee relations, and scheduling. Management trainees may work in one specific department while training on the job, or they may rotate through several departments to gain a well-rounded knowledge of the company's operation. Training programs for retail franchises are generally extensive, covering all functions of the company's operation, including budgeting, marketing, management, finance, purchasing, product preparation, human resource management, and compensation. College graduates usually can enter management training programs directly, without much experience.

Other qualifications. Sales worker supervisors must get along with all types of people. They need initiative, self-discipline, good judgment, and decisiveness. Patience and a conciliatory temperament are necessary when dealing with demanding customers. Supervisors also must be able to motivate, organize, and direct the work of subordinates and communicate clearly and persuasively with customers and other supervisors.

Advancement. Supervisors who display leadership and team-building skills, self-confidence, motivation, and decisiveness become candidates for promotion to assistant manager or manager. A postsecondary degree may speed their advancement into management because employers view it as a sign of motivation and maturity—qualities deemed important for promotion to more responsible positions. In many retail establishments, managers are promoted from within the company. In small retail establishments, where the number of positions is limited, advancement to a higher management position may come slowly. Large establishments often have extensive career ladder programs and may offer supervisors the opportunity to transfer to another store in the chain or to the central office. Although promotions may occur more quickly in large establishments, some managers may need to relocate every several years in order to advance.

Supervisors also can become advertising, marketing, promotions, public relations, and sales managers—workers who coordinate marketing plans, monitor sales, and propose advertisements and promotions—or purchasing managers, buyers, or purchasing agents—workers who purchase goods and supplies for their organization or for resale. (These occupations are covered elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

Some supervisors who have worked in their industry for a long time open their own stores or sales firms. However, retail trade and sales occupations are highly competitive, and although many independent owners succeed, some fail to cover expenses and eventually go out of business. To prosper, owners usually need good business sense and strong customer service and public relations skills.

Employment

Sales worker supervisors held about 2.2 million jobs in 2006. Approximately 37 percent were self-employed, most of whom were store owners. About 44 percent of sales worker supervisors were wage-and-salary workers employed in the retail sector; some of the largest employers were grocery stores, department stores, motor vehicle and parts dealers, and clothing and clothing accessory stores. The remaining sales worker supervisors worked in non-retail establishments.

Job Outlook

Despite slower than average growth, retail sales worker supervisors with previous experience in sales are expected to have good job prospects because of the large size of the occupation and the need to replace workers who leave their positions.

Employment change. Employment of sales worker supervisors is expected to grow by 4 percent between 2006 and 2016, which is more slowly than the average for all occupations. Growth in the occupation will be limited as retail companies increase the responsibilities of retail salespersons and existing sales worker supervisors.

The Internet and electronic commerce are creating new opportunities to reach and communicate with potential customers. Some firms are hiring Internet sales supervisors, who are in charge of maintaining an Internet site and answering inquiries relating to the product, to prices, and to the terms of delivery. However, Internet sales and electronic commerce may reduce the number of additional sales workers needed in stores, thus reducing the total number of additional supervisors required. Overall, the impact of electronic commerce on employment of sales worker supervisors should be minimal.

Projected employment growth of sales worker supervisors will mirror, in part, the patterns of employment growth in the industries in which they work. For example, faster-than-average employment growth is expected in many of the rapidly growing service-providing industries. In contrast, the number of self-employed sales worker supervisors is expected to grow slowly as independent retailers face increasing competition from national chains.

Unlike mid-level and top-level managers, retail store managers generally will not be affected by the restructuring and con-

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Supervisors, sales workers	41-1000	2,206,000	2,296,000	91,000	4
First-line supervisors/managers of retail sales workers	41-1011	1,676,000	1,747,000	71,000	4
First-line supervisors/managers of non-retail sales workers.....	41-1012	530,000	549,000	19,000	4

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

solidation taking place at the corporate headquarters of many retail chains.

Job prospects. Candidates who have retail experience—as a salesperson, cashier, or customer service representative, for example—will have the best opportunities for jobs as supervisors, especially in retail establishments. Stronger competition for supervisory jobs is expected in non-retail establishments, particularly those with the most attractive earnings and work environment.

Some of the job openings over the next decade will occur as experienced supervisors move into higher levels of management, transfer to other occupations, or leave the labor force. However, these job openings will not be great in number since, as with other supervisory and managerial occupations, the separation rate is low. This is the case especially for non-retail sales worker supervisors.

Earnings

Salaries of sales worker supervisors vary substantially, depending on a worker's level of responsibility and length of service and the type, size, and location of the firm.

Salaried supervisors of retail sales workers had median annual earnings of \$33,960, including commissions, in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$26,490 and \$44,570 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$21,420, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$59,710 a year. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of salaried supervisors of retail sales workers were as follows:

Building material and supplies dealers	\$35,820
Grocery stores	33,390
Clothing stores	33,140
Gasoline stations	29,270
Other general merchandise stores	28,870

Salaried supervisors of nonretail sales workers had median annual earnings of, \$65,510, including commissions, in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$48,900 and \$94,670 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$34,840, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$135,270 a year. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of salaried supervisors of nonretail sales workers were as follows:

Professional and commercial equipment and supplies merchant wholesalers	\$80,650
Wholesale electronic markets and agents and brokers.....	78,260
Machinery, equipment, and supplies merchant wholesalers	65,660
Postal service	58,640
Business support services	45,490

Compensation systems vary by type of establishment and by merchandise sold. Many supervisors receive a commission or a combination of salary and commission. Under a commission system, supervisors receive a percentage of department or store sales. Thus, these supervisors' earnings depend on their ability to sell their product and the condition of the economy. Those

who sell large amounts of merchandise or exceed sales goals often receive bonuses or other awards.

Related Occupations

Sales worker supervisors serve customers, supervise workers, and direct and coordinate the operations of an establishment. Workers with similar responsibilities include financial managers, food service managers, lodging managers, office and administrative support worker supervisors and managers, and medical and health services managers.

Sources of Additional Information

Information on employment opportunities for sales worker supervisors may be obtained from the employment offices of various retail establishments or from State employment service offices.

General information on management careers in retail establishments is available from:

► National Retail Federation, 325 7th St.NW., Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20004.

Information about management careers and training programs in the motor vehicle dealers industry is available from:

► National Automobile Dealers Association, Public Relations Dept., 8400 Westpark Dr., McLean, VA 22102-3591.

Internet: <http://www.nada.org>

Information about management careers in convenience stores is available from:

► National Association of Convenience Stores, 1600 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314-3436.

Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents

(O*NET 41-3031.00, 41-3031.01, 41-3031.02)

Significant Points

- A college degree, sales ability, good interpersonal and communication skills, and a strong desire to succeed are important qualifications.
- Competition for entry-level jobs usually is keen, especially in investment banks; opportunities should be better in smaller firms.
- Many people leave the occupation because of underperformance, but those who are successful have a very strong attachment to their occupation because of high earnings and considerable investment in training.

Nature of the Work

Each day, hundreds of billions of dollars change hands on the major United States securities exchanges. This money is used to purchase stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and other financial instruments, called securities. Securities are bought and sold by large institutional investors, wealthy individuals, mutual funds and pension plans, and the general public. In fact, about half of American households own stock. Most securities trades are ar-

ranged through securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents, whether they are between individuals with a few hundred dollars to invest or between large institutions having millions of dollars. The duties of sales agents vary greatly depending on occupational specialty.

The most common type of securities sales agent is called a *broker* or *stock broker*. These are the people who sell securities to everyday people, also known as retail investors. Although only about 2 out of every 10 equities are held by small investors, most investors fall into this category. Because there are so many retail investors, they must work through a broker rather than trading directly on an exchange. First, the investor speaks with the broker, discussing the terms of the trade. Then, the broker relays this information to a trader at the company's headquarters. Because most securities companies are very large, they can often find other company clients who are willing to buy or sell the same security. Otherwise, the stock trader places an order with a floor broker at an exchange, or trades the stock on an electronic network. The broker charges a fee for this service, and may also make money by finding a lower price for the security than was arranged with the investor.

The most important part of a broker's job is finding clients and building a customer base. Thus, beginning securities and commodities sales agents spend much of their time searching for customers, often relying heavily on telephone solicitation. They also may meet clients through business and social contacts. Agents also join civic organizations and other social groups to expand their networks of possible clients. Many find it useful to contact potential clients by teaching adult education investment courses or by giving lectures at libraries or social clubs. Brokerage firms may give sales agents lists of people with whom the firm has done business in the past. Some agents inherit the clients of agents who have retired. After an agent is established, referrals from satisfied clients are an important source of new business.

Investment bankers are sales agents who connect businesses that need money to finance their operations or expansion plans with investors who are interested in providing that funding in exchange for debt (in the form of bonds) or equity (in the form of stock). This process is called underwriting, and it is the main function of the investment bank. Investment bankers have to sell twice: first, they sell their advisory services to help companies set up issuing new stock or bonds, and second, they then sell the securities they issue to investors.

Perhaps the most important advisory service provided by investment banks is to help companies new to the public investment arena issue stock for the first time. This process, known as an initial public offering, or IPO, can take a great deal of effort because private companies must meet stringent requirements to become public or be allowed to issue stocks and bonds. Corporate finance departments also help private companies sell stock to institutional investors or wealthy individuals. They also advise companies that are interested in funding their operations by taking on debt. This debt can be issued in the form of bonds. Unlike a stock, which entitles its holder to partial ownership of a company, a bond entitles its holder to be repaid with a predetermined rate of interest.

Another important advisory service is provided by the mergers and acquisitions department. Bankers in this area advise companies that are interested in merging with or purchasing other companies. They also help companies that would like to be acquired. Once a potential seller or buyer is found, bankers advise their client on how to execute the agreement. Generally both buyers and sellers have investment banks working for them to make sure that the transaction goes smoothly.

Investment banking sales agents and traders sell stocks and bonds to investors. Instead of selling their services to companies for fees, salespeople and traders sell securities to customers for commissions. These sales agents generally work by telephone, calling customers and their agents to discuss new stock and bond issues. When an investor decides to make a purchase, the order goes to the trading floor. Traders execute buy and sell orders from clients and make trades on behalf of the bank itself. Because markets fluctuate so much, trading is a split-second decision making process. If a trader cannot secure the promised price on an exchange, millions of dollars could potentially be lost. On the other hand, if a trader finds a better deal, the bank could make millions more.

A small but powerful group of sales agents work directly on the floor of a stock or commodities exchange. When a firm or investor wishes to buy or sell a security or commodity, sales agents relay the order through their firm's computers to the floor of the exchange. There, *floor brokers* negotiate the price with other floor brokers, make the sale, and forward the purchase price to the sales agents. In addition to floor brokers, who work for individual securities dealers, there are also independent brokers. These are similar to floor brokers, except that they are not buyers for specific firms. Instead, they can buy and sell stocks for their own accounts, or corporate accounts that they manage, or they can sell their services to floor brokers who are too busy to execute all of the trades they are responsible for making. Specialists or market makers also work directly on the exchange floor, and there is generally one for each security or commodity being traded. They facilitate the trading process by quoting prices and by buying or selling shares when there are too many or too few available.

Financial services sales agents sell a wide variety of banking, accounting, securities, insurance, tax preparation, and other related services. They contact potential customers to explain their services and to ascertain customers' banking and other financial needs. They also may solicit businesses to participate in consumer credit card programs.

Work environment. Most securities and commodities sales agents work in offices under fairly stressful conditions. The pace of work is very fast, and managers tend to be very demanding of their workers since both commissions and advancement are tied to sales.

Stock brokers and investment advisors generally work somewhat more than 40 hours a week, but they may not work at traditional times. Evening and weekend work is often necessary, as many of their clients work during the day. A growing number of securities sales agents, employed mostly by discount or online brokerage firms, work in call-center environments. In these centers, hundreds of agents spend much of the day on the telephone taking orders from clients or offering advice and in-

formation on different securities. Often, such call centers operate 24 hours a day, requiring agents to work in shifts.

Investment bankers in corporate finance or mergers and acquisitions typically work long hours and endure extreme stress, especially at the junior levels. Evening and weekend work is common. Because banks work with companies all over the world, extensive travel is often part of the job. With some experience, the workload becomes more manageable, but since higher-level workers generally have more contact with clients, they also tend to travel more.

Sales and trading departments typically work somewhat more than 40 hours a week, but not nearly as much as their counterparts in investment banking. They also travel less, and many only travel a few times a year for conferences or training. On the other hand, their jobs are incredibly stressful. For sales agents, every minute of the day that is wasted means they might have made another sale. Since both commissions and advancement are tied to sales, this can be very stressful. Traders have perhaps the most stressful jobs of all, as split second decisions can lead to millions of dollars being won or lost. Trading floors are very busy and often very loud. Exchange workers, much like traders, have highly stressful jobs because the bulk of their work takes place on the floor of the exchanges. However, exchange traders and workers typically work shorter hours than



Securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents spend much of their time on the telephone with clients.

many other agents since most of their work is done while the market is open.

Exchange workers, much like traders, have highly stressful jobs, but the bulk of their work takes place on the floor of the exchanges, so hours are not very long. Trading floors of exchanges are even busier and louder than those inside of investment banks. Stress is very high, as millions of dollars are on the line for almost every trade, but workers who have made it to this level are generally up to the task.

Financial services sales agents normally work 40 hours a week in a comfortable, less stressful office environment. They may spend considerable time outside the office, meeting with current and prospective clients, attending civic functions, and participating in trade association meetings. Some financial services sales agents work exclusively inside banks, providing service to walk-in customers.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Most positions require a bachelor's degree, although few require a specific major. An MBA or professional certification can also be very helpful. Advancement is often very difficult, but those who are successful can have extremely lucrative careers.

Education and training. A college education is important for securities and commodities sales agents, especially in larger firms, because they must be knowledgeable about economic conditions and trends. Most workers have a bachelor's degree in business, finance, accounting, or economics, although this is not necessarily a requirement. Many firms hire summer interns before their last year of college and those who are most successful are offered full-time jobs after they graduate.

After working for a few years, many agents get Master's degrees in Business Administration (MBA). This degree is a requirement for many of the high-level positions in the securities industry. Because the MBA is a professional degree designed to expose students to real-world business practices, it is considered to be a major asset for jobseekers. Employers often reward MBA-holders with higher-level positions, better compensation, and even large signing bonuses.

Most employers provide intensive on-the-job training, especially for entry-level employees. While college coursework is helpful, most firms have a specialized business model which employees must learn. New employees must also come to know the large number of products and services offered by most firms. Trainees in large firms may receive classroom instruction in securities analysis, effective speaking, and the finer points of selling. Firms often rotate their trainees among various departments, to give them a broad perspective of the securities business. In small firms, sales agents often receive training in outside institutions and on the job.

Securities and commodities sales agents must keep up with new products and services and other developments. Because of this, brokers regularly attend conferences and training seminars.

Licensure. Brokers and investment advisors must register as representatives of their firm with the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA). Before beginners can qualify as registered representatives, they must be an employee of a registered firm for at least 4 months and pass the General Securities

Registered Representative Examination—known as the Series 7 Exam—administered by FINRA. The exam takes 6 hours and contains 250 multiple-choice questions; a passing score is above 70 percent.

Most States require a second examination—the Uniform Securities Agents State Law Examination (Series 63 or 66). This test measures the prospective representative’s knowledge of the securities business in general, customer protection requirements, and recordkeeping procedures. Most firms offer training to help their employees pass these exams.

There are many other licenses available, each of which gives the holder the right to sell different products and services. Most experienced representatives have several. Traders and some other workers also need licenses, although these vary greatly by firm and specialization. Financial services sales agents may also need to be licensed, especially if they sell securities or insurance.

Registered representatives must attend periodic continuing education classes to maintain their licenses. Courses consist of computer-based training in regulatory matters and company training on new products and services.

Other qualifications. Many employers consider personal qualities and skills more important than academic training. Employers seek applicants who have excellent interpersonal and communication skills, a strong work ethic, the ability to work in a team, and a desire to succeed. The ability to understand and analyze numbers is also especially important. Because securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents are entrusted with large sums of money and personal information, employers also make sure that applicants have a good credit history and a clean record. Self-confidence and an ability to handle frequent rejection are important ingredients for success.

Maturity and the ability to work independently are important so many employers prefer to hire those who have achieved success in other jobs. Most firms prefer candidates with sales experience, particularly those who have worked on commission in areas such as real estate or insurance. Other firms prefer to hire workers right out of college, with the intention of molding them to their corporate image.

Advancement. The principal form of advancement for brokers, investment advisors, and financial services sales agents is an increase in the number and size of the accounts they handle. Although beginners usually service the accounts of individual investors, they may eventually handle very large institutional accounts, such as those of banks and pension funds. After taking a series of tests, some brokers become portfolio managers and have greater authority to make investment decisions regarding an account. Some experienced sales agents become branch office managers and supervise other sales agents while

continuing to provide services for their own customers. A few agents advance to top management positions or become partners in their firms.

Investment bankers who enter the occupation directly after college generally start as analysts. At this level, employees have some contact with clients but spend most of their time producing “pitchbooks,” information booklets used to sell products. They also receive intensive training. After 2 to 3 years, top analysts may be promoted to an associate position or asked to leave. Recent graduates from MBA programs can start as associates, which is similar to the analyst position, but with more responsibilities. Associate may lead a group of analysts and tend to have more contact with clients. After 2 to 3 years, associates are promoted or terminated. Successful associates can become vice presidents, who manage the work of analysts and associates and have a great deal of contact with clients. Vice presidents may advance to become directors, sometimes called executive directors.

Employment

Securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents held about 320,000 jobs in 2006. More than half of jobs were in the securities, commodity contracts, and other financial investments and related activities industry. One in 5 worked in the depository and nondepository credit intermediation industries, which include commercial banks, savings institutions, and credit unions. About 1 out of 6 securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents were self-employed.

Although securities and commodities sales agents are employed by firms in all parts of the country, about 1 in 10 jobs were located in New York City, including the majority of those in investment banking. Because of their close relationship to stock exchanges and large banking operations, most of the major investment banks in the United States are based in New York City. Smaller investment banks can be found in many major American cities and some major investment banks have operations in other cities, although most of their business remains in New York.

Job Outlook

Securities, commodities, and financial services sales agent jobs are projected to grow rapidly over the next decade, especially in the banking industry. However, the number of applicants will continue to far exceed the number of job openings in this high-paying occupation.

Employment change. Employment of securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents is expected to grow 25 percent during the 2006-16 decade, which is much faster than the average for all occupations. The replacement of traditional pension plans with self-directed retirement accounts has led more Americans to hold stock in recent years. This change

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016		Change, 2006-16	
			Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents.....	41-3031	320,000	399,000	79,000	25	

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

means that where companies were making investments to secure their employees' retirements in the past, individuals now save money for their own retirements. About half of American households now own stock, and the number of new investors grows daily. While these individual investors are still only a small part of the total, the nationwide interest in owning securities will greatly increase the number of brokers and investment advisors.

Members of the baby boomer generation, in their peak savings years, will fuel much of this increase in investment. As they begin to retire, the number of transactions they make will go up, fueling the need for more investment advisors and brokers. The growing demand for brokers will also stem from the increasing number and complexity of investment products, as well as the effects of globalization. As the public and businesses become more sophisticated about investing, they are venturing into the options and futures markets. Also, markets for investment are expanding with the increase in global trading of stocks and bonds.

The deregulation of financial markets has broken down the barriers between investment activities and banking. The result is that banks now compete with securities companies on all levels. Many of the major investment banks are now owned by large banks and most major banks also have brokerages, which allow their customers to quickly and easily transfer money between their personal banking and investment accounts. This will lead to increased employment of financial services sales agents in banks as they expand their product offerings in order to compete directly with other investment firms.

Job prospects. Despite job growth, competition for jobs in this occupation usually is keen with more applicants than jobs, especially in larger companies. Jobs in brokerages are competitive but are accessible to graduates who have first-rate résumés, strong interpersonal skills, and good grades. Opportunities for beginning sales agents should be better in smaller firms. Investment banking is especially known for its competitive hiring process. Having a degree from a prestigious undergraduate institution is very helpful, as are excellent grades in finance, economics, accounting, and business courses. Competition is even greater for positions working in exchanges.

Employment in the securities industry is closely connected with market conditions and the state of the overall economy and is highly volatile during recessionary periods. Turnover is high for newcomers, who face difficult prospects no matter when they join the industry. Once established, however, securities and commodities sales agents have a very strong attachment to their profession because of their high earnings and considerable investment in training.

Earnings

The median annual wage-and-salary earnings of securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents were \$68,500 in May 2006. The middle half earned between \$42,630 and \$126,290. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$31,170, and the highest 10 percent made more than \$145,600.

Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents were:

Other financial investment activities.....	\$103,640
Security and commodity contracts intermediation and brokerage.....	81,050
Activities related to credit intermediation.....	67,080
Other nondepository credit intermediation.....	53,750
Nondepository credit intermediation	52,100

Because this is a sales occupation, many workers are paid a commission based on the amount of stocks, bonds, mutual funds, insurance, and other products they sell. Earnings from commissions are likely to be high when there is much buying and selling, and low when there is a slump in market activity. Most firms provide sales agents with a steady income by paying a “draw against commission”—a minimum salary based on commissions they can be expected to earn. Trainee brokers usually are paid a salary until they develop a client base. The salary gradually decreases in favor of commissions as the broker gains clients.

Investment bankers in corporate finance and mergers and acquisitions are generally paid a base salary with the opportunity to earn a substantial bonus. At the higher levels, bonuses far exceed base salary. This arrangement works similarly to commissions but gives banks greater flexibility to reward members of the team who were more effective. Since investment bankers in sales and trading departments generally work alone, they generally work on commissions.

Brokers who work for discount brokerage firms that promote the use of telephone and online trading services usually are paid a salary, sometimes boosted by bonuses that reflect the profitability of the office. Financial services sales agents usually are paid a salary also, although bonuses or commissions from sales are starting to account for a larger share of their income.

Benefits in the securities industry are generally very good. They normally include health care, retirement, and life insurance. Securities firms may also give discounts to employees on financial services that they sell to customers. Other benefits may include paid lunches with clients, paid dinners for employees who work late, and often extensive travel opportunities

Related Occupations

Other jobs requiring knowledge of finance and an ability to sell include insurance sales agents, real estate brokers and sales agents, financial analysts and personal financial advisors, and loan officers.

Sources of Additional Information

For information on securities industry employment, contact:

- American Academy of Financial Management, 245 Glendale Dr., Metairie, LA 70001. Internet: <http://www.aafm.org>
- Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association, 120 Broadway, 35th Floor, New York, NY 10271.

Internet: <http://www.sifma.org>

For information on licensing, contact:

- Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA). 1735 K St., NW., Washington, DC 20006. Internet: <http://www.finra.org>

Travel Agents

(O*NET 41-3041.00)

Significant Points

- Travel benefits, such as reduced rates for transportation and lodging, attract people to this occupation.
- Training at a postsecondary vocational school, college, or university is increasingly important.
- Travel agents increasingly specialize in specific destinations or by type of travel or traveler.

Nature of the Work

Travel agents help travelers sort through vast amounts of information to help them make the best possible travel arrangements. They offer advice on destinations and make arrangements for transportation, hotel accommodations, car rentals, and tours for their clients. They are also the primary source of bookings for most of the major cruise lines. In addition, resorts and specialty travel groups use travel agents to promote travel packages to their clients.

Travel agents are also increasingly expected to know about and be able to advise travelers about their destinations, such as the weather conditions, local ordinances and customs, attractions, and exhibitions. For those traveling internationally, agents also provide information on customs regulations, required papers (passports, visas, and certificates of vaccination), travel advisories, and currency exchange rates. In the event of changes in itinerary in the middle of a trip, travel agents intercede on the traveler's behalf to make alternate booking arrangements.

Travel agents use a variety of published and computer-based sources for information on departure and arrival times, fares, quality of hotel accommodations, and group discounts. They may also visit hotels, resorts, and restaurants themselves to evaluate the comfort, cleanliness, and the quality of specific hotels and restaurants so that they can base recommendations on their own experiences or those of colleagues or clients.

Travel agents who primarily work for tour operators and other travel arrangers may help develop, arrange, and sell the company's own package tours and travel services. They may promote these services, using telemarketing, direct mail, and the Internet. They make presentations to social and special-interest groups, arrange advertising displays, and suggest company-sponsored trips to business managers.

Agents face increasing competition from travel and airline websites for low-cost fares, but travelers still prefer using travel agents who can provide customized service and planning for complex itineraries to remote or multiple destinations. To attract these travelers, many travel agents specialize in specific interest destinations, travel to certain regions, or in selling to particular demographic groups.

Work environment. Travel agents spend most of their time behind a desk conferring with clients, completing paperwork, contacting airlines and hotels to make travel arrangements, and



Travel agents collect information from clients concerning travel dates and destinations before researching fares and routes on computers.

promoting tours. Most of their time is spent either on the telephone or on the computer researching travel itineraries or updating reservations and travel documents. Agents may be under a great deal of pressure during travel emergencies or when they need to reschedule missed reservations. Peak vacation times, such as summer and holiday travel periods, also tend to be hectic.

Many agents, especially those who are self-employed, frequently work long hours. Advanced computer systems and telecommunications networks make it possible for a growing number of travel agents to work at home; however, some agents feel a need to have an office presence to attract walk-in business.

Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

A love of travel and knowledge and enthusiasm for advising people about travel destinations and itineraries are important traits for a travel agent to have. Superb communication and computer skills are essential for talking with clients and making travel reservations.

Education and training. The minimum requirement for those interested in becoming a travel agent is a high school diploma or equivalent; although many travel agencies prefer applicants who have a college degree and business or travel experience.

rience. Much of the training is provided on the job, a significant part of which consists of instruction on how to use reservation systems.

Training specific to becoming a travel agent is available at the many vocational schools that offer full-time travel agent programs leading to a postsecondary vocational award. Travel agent courses also are offered in public adult education programs, online, and in community colleges. These programs teach students about cruise lines and sales techniques and how to use the reservations systems. They also provide general information about travel destinations. A few colleges offer bachelor's or master's degrees in travel and tourism. Some employers prefer agents who have backgrounds in computer science, geography, communication, foreign languages, or world history, because these backgrounds suggest an existing interest in travel and culture and help agents develop a rapport with clients. Courses in accounting and business management also are important, especially for those who expect to manage or start their own travel agencies. Continuing education is critical because the abundance of travel information readily available through the Internet and other sources has resulted in a more informed consumer who wants to deal with an expert when choosing a travel agent.

Other qualifications. Travel agents must be well-organized, accurate, and detail-oriented in order to compile information from various sources and to plan and organize their clients' travel itineraries. Agents also must be professional and courteous when dealing with travel representatives and clients. Other desirable qualifications include good writing and interpersonal skills and sales abilities.

Personal travel experience is an asset because knowledge about a city or foreign country often helps influence a client's travel plans. Business experience or training increasingly is important because agents need to know how to run a business profitably. As the Internet has become an important tool for making travel arrangements, more travel agencies use websites to provide their services to clients. This trend has increased the importance of computer skills in this occupation.

Certification and advancement. Some employees start as reservation clerks or receptionists in travel agencies. With experience and some formal training, they can take on greater responsibilities and eventually assume travel agent duties. In agencies with many offices, travel agents may advance to busier offices or to office manager or other managerial position.

Those who start their own agencies generally have experience in an established agency. These agents must gain formal approval from suppliers or corporations, such as airlines, ship lines, or rail lines to extend credit on reservations and ensure payment. The Airlines Reporting Corporation and the International Airlines Travel Agency Network, for example, are the approving bodies for airlines. To gain approval, an agency must

be financially sound and employ at least one experienced manager or travel agent.

The National Business Travel Association offers three types of designations for corporate travel professionals—Corporate Travel Expert, Certified Corporate Travel Executive, and Global Leadership Professional.

Experienced travel agents can take advanced self-study or group-study courses from the Travel Institute, leading to the Certified Travel Counselor designation. The Travel Institute also offers marketing and sales skills development programs and destination specialist programs, which provide detailed knowledge of regions such as North America, Western Europe, the Caribbean, and the Pacific Rim. With the trend toward more specialization, these and other destination specialist courses are increasingly important.

Employment

Travel agents held about 101,000 jobs in May 2006 and are found in every part of the country. Nearly two-thirds worked for travel agencies. Another 13 percent were self-employed. The remainder worked for tour operators, visitor's bureaus, reservation offices, and other travel arrangers.

Job Outlook

Employment of travel agents is expected to change little through 2016. Travel agents who specialize in a travel destination, type of traveler, or mode of transportation will have the best chances for success.

Employment change. Employment of travel agents is expected to increase by 1 percent, which is considered little or no growth. As spending on travel and tourism rebound from recent recessionary periods and as more travelers begin taking more exotic and customized trips, the demands for the specialized services offered by travel agents will offset the service lost to Internet bookings for simpler itineraries. The ease of Internet use and the ready availability of travel and airline websites that allow people to research and plan their own trips, make their own reservations, and purchase their own tickets will result in less demand for travel agents for routine travel arrangements. There will be, however, many consumers who still prefer to use a professional travel agent to plan a complete trip; to deal with more complex transactions; to ensure reliability; to suggest excursions or destinations that might otherwise be missed; to save time; or, in some cases, to save money. In addition, higher projected levels of travel, especially from businesses and retiring baby boomers will offset the loss of routine transactions. Furthermore, luxury and specialty travel is expected to increase among the growing number of Americans who are seeking out exotic and unique vacations and a growing part of travel agents' business is organizing and selling tours for the growing number of international visitors.

Projections data from the National Employment Matrix

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2006	Projected employment, 2016	Change, 2006-16	
				Number	Percent
Travel agents	41-3041	101,000	102,000	1,000	1

NOTE: Data in this table are rounded. See the discussion of the employment projections table in the *Handbook* introductory chapter on *Occupational Information Included in the Handbook*.

Job prospects. Applicants for travel agent jobs should face fair to good job opportunities, depending on one's qualifications and experience. Opportunities should be better for agents who specialize in specific destinations, luxury travel, or particular types of travelers such as ethnic groups or groups with a special interest or hobby.

The demand for travel is sensitive to economic downturns and international political crises, when travel plans are likely to be deferred. Thus job opportunities for travel agents will fluctuate with changing economic and political times. Many openings, though, are expected to occur as agents leave for other occupations or retire.

Earnings

Experience, sales ability, and the size and location of the agency determine the salary of a travel agent. Median annual earnings of travel agents were \$29,210 in May 2006. The middle 50 percent earned between \$23,020 and \$36,920. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$18,100, while the top 10 percent earned more than \$46,270. Median earnings in May 2006 for travel agents employed in the travel arrangement and reservation services industry were \$29,160.

Salaried agents usually enjoy standard employer-paid benefits that self-employed agents must provide for themselves. When traveling for personal reasons, agents usually get reduced rates for transportation and accommodations. In addition, agents sometimes take "familiarization" trips, at lower cost or no cost

to themselves, to learn about various vacation sites. These benefits often attract people to this occupation.

Earnings of travel agents who own their agencies depend mainly on commissions from travel-related bookings and service fees they charge clients. Often it takes time to acquire a sufficient number of clients to have adequate earnings, so it is not unusual for new self-employed agents to have low earnings. Established agents may have lower earnings during economic downturns.

Related Occupations

Travel agents organize and schedule business, educational, or recreational travel or activities. Other workers with similar responsibilities include tour guides and escorts, travel guides, reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks, retail salespersons, and hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks.

Sources of Additional Information

For further information on training opportunities, contact:

► American Society of Travel Agents, Education Department, 1101 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314.

Internet: <http://www.asta.org>

For information on training and certification qualifications for business travel management, contact:

► National Business Travel Association, 110 North Royal Street, 4th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22314. Internet: www.nbta.org