

## So, You Want to be a Sales Representative

Communication Studies Department

<http://www.mnstate.edu/cmst>

**Overview:** 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 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.

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. \

**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.

**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.

**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.

**For More Information:** <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>

**Source:** U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook