

Sales Advice

# How to Stand Out as a Graduate



# Make Your Skills Stand Out

A career in sales is renowned for its financial rewards and opportunities for rapid career progression. As a result, competition for these roles has increased, as graduates look for a highly lucrative job with instant rewards.

There is such a wide variety of sales roles available in different sectors that it can help graduates to secure their job if they choose an industry in which they have specialised knowledge. To make sure that candidates chose the field most suited to their interests, it is essential to dedicate some time into research before applying the various sales fields in offer.

Whatever your decision, the vast majority of sales roles are available for any graduates because most positions offer training for successful candidates.



## WHY THIS GUIDE?

Careers in sales continue to appeal to graduates, which has made it increasingly difficult to stand out and secure your dream sales job among the competition.

Candidates often have the right qualifications and personality for sales, but miss out on employment because they fail to demonstrate these skills in their application and through the interview process. This guide outlines the essential qualities and skills you need to highlight when you're applying for a career in sales.

## Personality

Sales is one of the few careers where your personality will determine how successful you are. Employers are looking for hard-working, persistent, competitive candidates that can build great relationships with customers.

Candidates that are ambitious will impress potential employers because the best sales people are driven by a desire to do improve on their last performance. Employers want enthusiastic graduates that can demonstrate their competitive edge, as it will enable candidates to continually exceed targets. The sales sector is built on people that strive to do better and offers enticing rewards for those who over-achieve.

Regardless, some customers will be reluctant and say no to what you're offering. In such a customer service based role the responses may be negative objections, which can be difficult to deal with on both a business and personal level.

Candidates must be resilient and should give examples of when they have overcome a difficult situation to impress employers in their applications or interviews.

Sales is predominately based on communication, so graduates must be confident and have excellent verbal and written skills to support their customer interactions. Building and maintaining relationships is an essential element of sales, so candidates must be able to demonstrate their charisma.



“To summarise: without confidence in your communication skills, you won't get far. Candidates must be able to build relationships, prove their resilience and demonstrate an ambitious nature in order to secure a sales position.”

## Experience

In sales, having the confidence and competency to engage with clients is valued much more than specific qualifications. Still, it is important to highlight any form of sales experience that you have from your education, personal life or previous roles.

Although degrees in marketing and business are related to sales, most employers are not that concerned about the subject graduates have a degree in. Unless you're going into a specialised role, employers look at your degree as a demonstration of your academic ability and dedication to self-improvement.



"If you have been a member of a sports team, or led a university society, these examples of teamwork and liaising are an effective way to demonstrate that you have the skills needed for sales."

Graduates should highlight any previous work experience that has involved dealing with customers.

Experience in telesales or street fundraising will be advantageous, but even hospitality and retail require a high standard of customer service that employers will be looking for.



However, instead of just bullet pointing your experience, you need to explain and provide examples of how your previous job roles have developed the specific skills necessary for sales. In short, any form of experience which has involved managing people and providing a high level of customer service demonstrates your ability to interact and build relationships with clients.

## Preparation

Never underestimate the importance of your CV. Your CV is the only thing that employers have to compare you against every other candidate, so make sure it's providing all the information required for the sales role.

Your CV has to highlight why you want a career in sales, and why you want a career within the company you're applying to. Every CV should be tailored to the company's specific job requirements, even if the only change you make is moving your skills around. Fundamentally, a CV is your potential employer's first insight into your sales skills, so make sure every point is relevant to the role you're applying for.

To make sure your application and interview are as relevant as possible, it is essential to research the company you're applying to,

their competitors and the role. With the internet there is no excuse for not completing this research and any gaps in your knowledge will be noticed and appear unprofessional.

During an interview, you will be required to show how you have demonstrated the skills required for sales - so make sure you have some well thought through, engaging examples. When asked why you have chosen sales, try to avoid the obvious response of money. Instead, discuss room for growth and how you thrive in a competitive, fast-paced environment, as employers want to make sure you're committed to the role rather than the rewards.

Candidates may be asked to an assessment day or to partake in a role play, which will be much more interactive, so prepare to get involved.

Depending on your interviewer and the atmosphere,

you can try and close the interview on what they think about you and how you have done in the process. This will not only demonstrate your sales ability, but ensure you leave the interview with a definitive picture of how you have done.

Those first few months once you leave university and start researching and applying for jobs can be overwhelming. Sometimes it can be weeks before your prospective employer responds, but don't lose faith. Following an interview if you haven't heard anything from the company then you can re-initiate the conversation with either a phone call or a thank you e-mail. This proves your commitment to the role and will ensure you stand out from other candidates.

Don't panic! When applying for a role in sales all you need is:

**Confidence.** Without confidence in your communication skills, you won't get far. Candidates must be able to build relationships, prove their resilience and ambitious nature in order to secure a sales position.

**Experience.** Any form of experience which has involved managing people and providing a high level of customer service demonstrates your ability to interact and build relationships with clients.

**Research.** Knowledge on the employer, your role and the latest sales news is essential to show a genuine interest in the role. Other candidates will have the research so any gaps in your knowledge will seem unprofessional and make employers less likely to hire you.



## Conclusion...



Fundamentally, sales managers are looking for articulate, driven and hard-working people to thrive in a sales role. For candidates to be successful, they need to understand and exceed the requirements of a sales

person. If you thoroughly research your prospective company and demonstrate that you have the skills to support your ambitious personality, then you'll soon be progressing up the sales ladder in your new job.

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