Sales Manager: Salary, Job Description, and Requirements

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Companies around the world sell products and services to generate revenue and profits. Sales managers are skilled professionals who play a dynamic role in their companies, from developing sales teams to reducing turnover to providing insight into sales outlooks. The typical sales manager salary reflects the education and skill required to excel in the role.

An MBA degree is essential to a sales manager's tool kit. These programs offer a mix of classroom instruction and real-world experience designed to prepare students for the fast-paced, complex world of sales.

Sales Manager Job Description

Sales managers are leaders who have numerous responsibilities and perform a wide range of tasks. While no two sales manager job descriptions are exactly the same — varying by employer, location, and industry — they have some areas in common.

Duties and Responsibilities

- Before a company can grow and succeed, it must have a competent, professional sales manager who can oversee its entire sales department. The job duties and responsibilities related to this oversight include the following:
- Planning, interviewing, hiring, and firing sales representatives
- Directing sales activity within a specified region
- Preparing budgets and reports
- Acting as the face of the company to both internal and external partners
- Identifying sales opportunities, including emerging markets for products or services
- Using data to drive decision-making as it relates to meeting or exceeding performance metrics or allocating resources
- Determining pricing and discount strategies

Work Environment

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, about 20 percent of all sales managers in the United States worked in wholesale trade as of 2023, while 17 percent worked in retail trade; 14 percent worked in professional, scientific, and technical services; 11 percent worked in manufacturing settings; and 10 percent worked in finance and insurance.

Sales managers usually work in offices or retail stores, though they may be called upon to travel to meet with prospective or existing clients. The typical sales manager salary reflects the stressful aspects of the role, such as the demand to reach sales goals or hit deadlines. They tend to work 40 or more hours a week, and they may also be required to work nights, weekends, and holidays.

How to Become a Sales Manager

Sales managers enjoy leadership roles; this means that their education, skills, and experience should encompass areas such as business and leadership. Earning the

right degree, gaining relevant experience, honing important skills, and obtaining professional credentials are vital for success — and for earning a higher sales manager salary.

Education

Most students aspiring to work in sales start by earning a traditional four-year bachelor’s degree in a relevant field. Some common fields are finance, accounting, business, and business management. In today’s dynamic economy, many companies prefer to hire sales managers with a graduate degree, such as an MBA.

Students who have already completed their baccalaureate education can expect to spend between two and three years completing an MBA. Coursework focuses on various aspects of sales and leadership, including marketing, management, negotiations, accounting, strategy, and communication. Many programs allow students to specialize in a particular area of business administration, such as business analytics, finance, or marketing.

Experience

Sales manager employers prefer candidates with experience in business and sales. This experience demonstrates a strong work ethic and the ability to handle the responsibilities required to perform the role’s most important tasks. Aspiring sales managers often take on part-time roles as customer service representatives or retail sales associates during their baccalaureate education, and many relevant bachelor’s degree programs offer internship opportunities.

Key Skills

Part-time employment and internships are also important in developing valuable skills and qualities. The more skilled the professional, the higher the potential sales manager salary. The most important skills include the following:

- Listening and communication
- Leadership
- Planning
- Time management
- Problem-solving

- Decision-making
- Analytics
- Customer relationship management system knowledge
- Coaching
- Sales and sales planning
- Task delegation

Professional Certifications

Sales managers do not need to be licensed or certified to work in any state or territory, but candidates with professional certifications may have an advantage with employers. Certifications demonstrate candidates' expertise in different areas. The most popular certifications for sales managers include the following:

- **Certified Professional Sales Person:** This certification is offered by the National Association of Sales Professionals. The certification program is a six-week course that builds on the strategic sales process and teaches clear and effective communication.
- **Certified Professional Sales Leader:** This certification is also offered by the National Association of Sales Professionals. While it is similar to the Certified Professional Sales Person credential, it is geared toward sales leaders, including sales managers.
- **Certified Sales Executive:** This certification is offered by SMEI. It is designed to provide candidates with professionalism, valuable leadership skills, and advanced sales leadership knowledge.

Sales Manager Salary and Job Outlook

The median annual sales manager salary was $135,160 as of May 2023, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Those working in professional, scientific, and professional services earned the highest salaries, at just over $165,000, while those working in retail trade earned a median salary of about $83,900.

The BLS projects that the employment of sales managers will rise by 6 percent between 2023 and 2033. Factors such as the growing global economy, the rise in online shopping, and increasing emphasis on customer service will contribute to the growth.

Develop the Skills to Become a Top Sales Manager

Sales managers are vital to business success. Through motivating and coaching staff, analyzing vast amounts of data, and creating plans and budgets, these professionals play a critical role in a company's success. A management career in retail, enterprise, e-commerce, or inside sales can be challenging and professionally rewarding — as long as you have the right foundation.

The full-time MBA degree program at the A. B. Freeman School of Business at Tulane University offers a strong basis for a successful sales manager career. With courses such as Career Development, Financial Models for Business Decisions, and Marketing Management, our curriculum focuses on teaching students the skills and experience they will need to become the business leaders of the future.

Find out how we can help you take control of your career.

Sources:

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