

RETAIL/MERCHANDISING

What can I do with this major?

AREAS

BUYING/PURCHASING

Product Development
Planning and Allocation

EMPLOYERS

Discount stores
Mass merchants
Grocery stores
Specialty stores (e.g., clothing, home furnishings,
jewelry, books, electronics, etc.)
Department stores
Grocery stores
Pharmacy retailers

STRATEGIES

Obtain sales and retail experience through part-time jobs and internships.
Prepare to work under pressure in fast-paced environments.
Develop organizational skills and attention to detail to monitor inventory and compare products, prices and markets.
Acquire analytical and mathematical skills to operate within a budget and to evaluate sales data including competitors'.
Develop excellent interpersonal and communication skills for negotiating with vendors.
Be prepared to travel frequently in order to visit markets and search for new merchandise.
Expect to work with overseas suppliers. Knowledge of languages, customs and cultures will be helpful.
Develop a competitive drive with the understanding that a buyer's goal is to beat the sales and profit records of the previous year.
Be prepared to begin as a buyer trainee. Training periods can range from 1 to 5 years.

SALES

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

Profit and non-profit organizations
Product and service organizations
Manufacturers
Financial companies
Insurance companies
Print and electronic media outlets
Software and technology companies
Retail stores

Obtain a part-time job or internship in sales to gain experience, as these positions are often stepping stones to higher-level positions.
Demonstrate initiative, organization and problem-solving skills.
Enjoy working with people.
A commitment to customer satisfaction is imperative.
Learn to communicate effectively with a wide-range of people. Take additional courses in interpersonal communication and public speaking.
Develop persuasion skills and extensive knowledge of merchandise for sale.
Cultivate a competitive drive to reach sales quotas and break sales records under pressure.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

MANAGEMENT/ADMINISTRATION

Corporate
Regional
Store
Store Assistant
Store Department

Discount stores
Mass merchants
Grocery stores
Specialty stores
Dealerships
Department stores
Grocery stores
Pharmacy retailers

Seek retail experience through internships or part-time jobs.
Get involved in student organizations and seek leadership roles.
Be prepared to start in entry-level management trainee positions.
Learn to work well on a team and to motivate and direct others.
Develop quick decision-making, problem solving skills and communication skills to assist customers, manage employees, monitor promotions and sales goals and work with buyers.
Excellent organizational skills are necessary to oversee the daily operations of a store or a department.
Plan to work long and/or irregular hours, including holidays.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Recruiting/Staffing
Compensation
Benefits
Orientation/Training
Safety/Health
Employee Relations
Employee Services

Discount stores
Mass merchants
Grocery stores
Specialty stores
Department stores
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Supplement degree program with classes in psychology, sociology and human resource development.
Gain relevant experience through internships.
Develop strong verbal and written communication skills.
Learn to solve problems creatively, and build conflict resolution skills.
Develop strong computer skills, as many human resource systems are automated.
Join the Society of Human Resource Management and other related professional associations.
Seek endorsements such as the Professional Human Resource Certification (PHR).
Earn a master's degree for career advancement or a law degree for employment law.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

SMALL BUSINESS

Ownership
Independent Consulting

Self-employed
Companies that utilize independent consultants
(e.g., Mary Kay Cosmetics, Tupperware)

Entrepreneurial spirit, including self-discipline and perseverance, are keys to success.
Develop an excellent knowledge of and belief in a particular product or service.
Supplement program with courses in accounting, advertising or computers.
Obtain extensive sales and business experience by working for a company or retailer in a related product area before launching a small business.
Build relationships with potential investors and customers.

VISUAL MERCHANDISING

Department stores
Specialty stores

Demonstrate creativity and knowledge of design concepts (lighting, color, etc.); knowledge of fashion and sales trends is also helpful.
Seek retail sales experience and plan to shadow or intern with a visual merchandiser.
Supplement degree with courses on buying behavior, consumer psychology, interior design, art, fashion design and/or interior decorating.
Develop mechanical aptitude to set up displays, build props and adjust lighting.

NON-STORE RETAILING

E-commerce
Direct Marketing
Catalog:
Sales, Management, Fulfillment/Distribution,
Production

E-tail companies (e.g., Amazon.com, Dell.com)
Internet retailers (e.g., Spiegel, JC Penney)
Home shopping networks
Advertising agencies
Magazine, book and record companies
Internet marketing companies

Supplement program with courses in marketing, advertising or communications.
Obtain sales experience through a retail or telemarketing position.
Develop strong computer skills.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Obtain retail experience through summer jobs, part-time jobs or internships.
- Computer knowledge is crucial. Become familiar with technology related to internet sales, distribution and inventory tracking.
- Join student branches of professional retailing associations. Read their publications and attend their meetings.
- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of trends in retail through newspapers and magazines.
- Be prepared to work holidays and weekends, typically the busiest times for retailers.
- Consider developing proficiency in second or third languages to increase marketability.
- Contact stores or markets of interest. Inquire about management training programs.
- Most retailers promote from within the organization; therefore, management trainee programs or sales associate positions are a good way to begin.
- Supplement program with courses in marketing, accounting, communications and computers.
- Consider earning certifications from the National Retail Federation.
- A degree in Retail/Merchandising may qualify one for career opportunities in areas of business outside of retail including marketing, finance, insurance, banking, management, etc. Determine an area of interest and build relevant skills and experiences.