

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, their earnings can be significantly higher or lower than those working in direct sales.

### 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, and 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

Career information on manufacturers' agents is available from:

► Manufacturers' Agents National Association, P.O. Box 3467, Laguna Hills, CA 92654-3467. Internet: <http://www.manaonline.org>

Career and certification information is available from:

► Manufacturers' Representatives Educational Research Foundation, P.O. Box 247, Geneva, IL 60134. Internet: <http://www.mrref.org>

## Sales Worker Supervisors

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

### Significant Points

- Applicants with experience as a retail salesperson, cashier, or customer service representative should have the best job opportunities.
- The number of self-employed sales worker supervisors in retail trade is expected to decline as independent retailers face increasing competition from national chains.
- Work schedules may be irregular and often include evenings and weekends.
- A postsecondary degree is increasingly needed for advancement into management.

### 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 and manufacturing sales representatives. They are responsible for interviewing, hiring, and training employees, as well as preparing work schedules and assigning workers to specific duties. Many of these workers hold job titles such as *sales manager* or *department manager*. Under the occupational classification system used in the *Handbook*, however, workers with the title *manager*, who mainly supervise nonsupervisory workers, are called *supervisors* rather than *managers* even though many of these workers often perform many managerial functions. (Sales worker supervisors oversee retail salespersons, cashiers, customer service representatives, stock clerks and order fillers, sales engineers, and sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing; these workers are discussed elsewhere in the *Handbook*.)

In retail establishments, sales worker supervisors ensure that customers receive satisfactory service and quality goods. They also



*Sales worker supervisors ensure that the store functions smoothly.*

answer customers' inquiries and deal with complaints, and may handle purchasing, budgeting, and accounting. Their responsibilities vary, depending on the size and type of establishment. As the size of retail stores and the types of goods and services increase, these workers tend to specialize in one department or one aspect of merchandising. (Managers in eating and drinking places are discussed in the *Handbook* statement on food service managers.)

Sales worker supervisors in large retail establishments, often referred to as department managers, provide day-to-day oversight of individual departments, such as shoes, cosmetics, or housewares in large department stores; produce and meat in grocery stores; and sales in automotive dealerships. These workers establish and implement policies, goals, objectives, 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 inventory in stockrooms; and inspect merchandise to ensure that nothing is outdated. Sales worker supervisors also review inventory and sales records, develop merchandising techniques, coordinate sales promotions, and may greet and assist customers and promote sales and good public relations.

Sale workers supervisors in nonretail establishments supervise and coordinate the activities of sales workers who sell industrial products, automobiles, or services such as advertising or Internet services. They may prepare budgets, make personnel decisions, devise sales-incentive programs, assign sales territories, or approve sales contracts.

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

### Working Conditions

Most sales worker supervisors have offices. In retail trade, their offices are within the stores, usually close to the area they oversee. Although some time is spent 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. Most supervisors work 40 hours or more a week; long hours are common. This is particularly true during sales, holidays, busy shopping hours,

and times during which inventory is taken. They are expected to work evenings and weekends, but usually are compensated with a day off during the week. Hours can change weekly, and managers sometimes must report to work on short notice, especially when employees are absent. Independent owners can often set their own schedules, but hours must be convenient to customers.

### Employment

Sales worker supervisors held about 2.5 million jobs in 2000. About one-third were self-employed; most of these were store owners. Most are found in grocery and department stores, motor vehicle dealerships, and clothing and accessory stores, and in services such as advertising or other business services.

### Training, Other Qualifications, and Advancement

Sales worker supervisors usually acquire knowledge of management principles and practices—an essential requirement for a supervisory or managerial position in retail trade—through work experience. Many supervisors begin their careers on the sales floor as salespersons, cashiers, or customer service representatives. In these positions, they learn merchandising, customer service, and the basic policies and procedures of the company.

The educational background of sales worker supervisors varies widely. Regardless of the education received, recommended courses include accounting, marketing, management, and sales, as well as psychology, sociology, and communication. Supervisors must be computer literate because almost all cash registers, inventory control systems, and sales quotes and contracts are computerized.

Most supervisors who have postsecondary education hold associate or bachelor's degrees in liberal arts, social sciences, business, or management. To gain experience, many college students participate in internship programs that usually are developed jointly by individual schools and firms.

Once supervisors are on the job, the type and amount of training available to them varies from company to company. Many national retail chains and companies have formal training programs for management trainees that include both classroom and onsite training. Training time may be as brief as 1 week but may also last up to 1 year or more, because many organizations require that trainees gain experience during all sales seasons.

Ordinarily, classroom training includes such topics as interviewing and customer service skills, employee and inventory management, 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.

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

Individuals 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 advancement, because it is viewed by employers 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 if an opening occurs. Although promotions may occur more quickly in large establishments, some managers may need to relocate every several years 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 in other *Handbook* statements.)

Some supervisors who have worked in their industry for a long time open their own stores or sales firms. However, retail trade and sales 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.

### Job Outlook

Candidates who have retail experience will have the best job opportunities. As in other fields, competition is expected for sales worker supervisor jobs with the most attractive earnings and working conditions.

Employment of sales worker supervisors is expected to grow more slowly than the average for all occupations through the year 2010. Growth in this occupation will be restrained somewhat as retail companies hire more sales staff, but increase the responsibilities of sales worker supervisors. However, many job openings are expected to occur as experienced supervisors and managers move into higher levels of management, transfer to other occupations, or leave the labor force.

The Internet and electronic commerce are creating new opportunities to reach and communicate with potential customers. Some firms are hiring Internet sales managers, who are in charge of maintaining an Internet site and answering inquiries relating to the product, price, and delivery terms—a trend that will increase demand for these supervisors. Overall, however, Internet sales and electronic commerce will reduce somewhat the number of additional sales workers needed, thus reducing the number of additional supervisors needed.

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 rapidly growing services industries. The number of self-employed retail sales worker supervisors is expected to decline, as independent retailers face increasing competition from national chains.

Unlike middle- and upper-level management positions, store-level retail supervisors generally will not be affected by the restructuring and consolidation taking place at the corporate and headquarters levels of many retail chains.

### Earnings

Salaries of sales worker supervisors vary substantially, depending upon the level of responsibility; length of service; and type, size, and location of the firm.

In 2000, median annual earnings of salaried sales worker supervisors of retail sales workers, including commission, were \$27,510.

The middle 50 percent earned between \$21,050 and \$37,200 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$16,910, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$52,590 a year. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of salaried sales worker supervisors of retail sales workers in 2000 were as follows:

Grocery stores .....	\$27,380
Drug stores and proprietary stores .....	27,250
Miscellaneous shopping goods stores .....	25,750
Gasoline service stations .....	23,630
Department stores .....	23,530

In 2000, median annual earnings of salaried sales worker supervisors of non-retail sales workers, including commission, were \$48,960. The middle 50 percent earned between \$33,270 and \$72,770 a year. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$23,850, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$107,520 a year. Median annual earnings in the industries employing the largest numbers of salaried sales worker supervisors of non-retail sales workers in 2000 were as follows:

Professional and commercial equipment .....	\$66,610
Machinery, equipment, and supplies .....	56,380
Groceries and related products .....	47,920
Telephone communication .....	47,540
Miscellaneous business services .....	31,600

Compensation systems vary by type of establishment and 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. Under these systems, supervisors have the opportunity to significantly increase their earnings, but they may find that their 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. Others with similar responsibilities include financial managers, food service managers, lodging 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 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. Internet: <http://www.nrf.com>

Information on management careers in grocery stores, and on schools offering related programs, is available from:

► Food Distributors International, 201 Park Washington Ct., Falls Church, VA 22046-4521. Internet: <http://fdi.org>

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, 1605 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314-2792. Internet: <http://www.cstorecentral.com>

## Securities, Commodities, and Financial Services Sales Agents

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

### Significant Points

- Employment is expected to grow faster than average, but competition for entry-level jobs is expected to be keen because sales agents who succeed often have high earnings.
- A college degree, sales ability, good interpersonal and communication skills, and a strong desire to succeed are important qualifications for this profession.
- Beginning securities and commodities sales agents must pass a licensing exam to sell securities and commodities. Many eventually leave the occupation because they are unable to establish a sufficient clientele.

### Nature of the Work

Most investors, whether they are individuals with a few hundred dollars to invest or large institutions with millions, use *securities, commodities, and financial services sales agents* when buying or selling stocks, bonds, shares in mutual funds, insurance annuities, or other financial products. In addition, many clients seek out these agents for advice on investments, estate planning, and other financial matters.

*Securities and commodities sales agents*, also called brokers, stockbrokers, registered representatives, account executives, or financial consultants, perform a variety of tasks depending on their specific job duties. When an investor wishes to buy or sell a security, for example, sales agents may relay the order through their firm's computers to the floor of a securities exchange, such as the New York Stock Exchange. There, securities and commodities sales agents known as *floor brokers* negotiate the price with other floor brokers, make the sale, and forward the purchase price to the sales agents. If a security is not traded on an exchange, as in the case of bonds and over-the-counter stocks, the broker sends the order to the firm's trading department. Here, other securities sales agents, known as *dealers*, buy and sell securities directly from other dealers using their own funds or those of the firm, with the intention of reselling the security to customers at a profit. After the transaction has been completed, the broker notifies the customer of the final price.

Securities and commodities sales agents also provide many related services for their customers. They may explain stock market terms and trading practices, offer financial counseling or advice on the purchase or sale of particular securities, and devise an individual client's financial portfolio, which could include securities, life insurance, corporate and municipal bonds, mutual funds, certificates of deposit, annuities, and other investments.

Not all customers have the same investment goals. Some individuals prefer long-term investments for capital growth or to provide income over a number of years; others might want to invest in speculative securities that they hope will quickly rise in price. Securities and commodities sales agents furnish information about advantages and disadvantages of an investment based on each customer's objectives. They also supply the latest price quotes on any security, as well as information on the activities and financial positions of the corporations issuing these securities.

Most securities and commodities sales agents serve individual investors, but others specialize in institutional investors, such as