

MAIN FEATURE



A Sales Engineering Job May Be the Right Option for You

[By Surajit Sen Sharma]

Sales engineers merge technical knowledge with sales skills. The tasks involved in and pay for sales engineering jobs depend on one's level of sales skill and the technical product knowledge needed to competently market the product or service of one's employer. A resume that will be submitted for a position as a sales engineer needs to feature qualifications or work experience that demonstrate the candidate has a combination of technical knowledge and sales skills relevant to the job at hand.

The Basic Attributes of a Sales Engineer

Successful sales engineers have the following core attributes:

- a concrete technological background
- strong judgment and business sense
- ability to work as a team player
- ability to build relationships quickly
- analytical ability and problem-solving skills
- resilience and tenacity
- independence

The Basic Requirements to Enter the Industry

Entry-level requirements differ according to the product or service. For example, a sales engineer selling complex electronic systems for submarines will usually be an electronic engineering graduate, while a sales engineer selling burglar-alarm systems will usually be someone with in-depth technical knowledge of the product who does not necessarily hold a degree.

Sales engineering jobs are usually filled by people with industry-relevant engineering degrees; for example, employers offering sales engineering jobs in the construction industry would give preference to civil

engineers, and production engineers would likely be preferred for sales engineer jobs in the manufacturing industry.

The Typical Tasks of a Sales Engineer

Regardless of the type of product or service being promoted, the position of a sales engineer is that of a marketer of technological products. The basic tasks involved in sales engineering jobs are similar to those of marketing executives and may include:

- searching for new clients and maximizing customer potential in target markets
- establishing and maintaining client relationships
- managing and interpreting client requirements
- making technical presentations
- persuading clients to choose products or services
- preparing estimates for clients
- negotiating contract terms
- offering client and product support services
- providing technical assistance and product education
- analyzing costs and sales
- coordinating sales projects
- meeting regular sales targets

- preparing reports
- supporting marketing activities by representing the company at trade shows, seminars, and other marketing events
- liaising with other members of the sales team and other technical experts
- helping to design custom-made products
- providing training and creating support materials for the sales team

Work Prospects

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, sales engineering jobs are expected to continue to increase through 2014 at a 9-17% growth rate. In the U.S., there were about 74,000 sales engineering jobs in 2004. Median annual earnings were about \$70,620 in 2004. However, statistics show that compared to members of other sales occupations, very few sales engineers are self-employed.

ON THE NET

Bureau of Labor Statistics: Sales Engineers
www.bls.gov/oco/ocos123.htm

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