



So You Want to Work in Retail Sector?

Breaking into the work force in the area of retail sales is relatively easy. Retail jobs, especially before the holidays, are plentiful and working in this industry can offer perks, such as generous discounts and first dibs on sale items.



Generally speaking, a lack of experience is not always viewed as a bad thing in the retail industry. Training is always going to be needed, regardless of prior experience, and sometimes a potential employer will welcome the untainted candidate that can

be molded into the exact employee they are looking for.

When searching for job openings, don't make the lazy man's mistake of making phone calls to find out if a certain business is hiring. Yes, it takes more work to get out there and hit the pavement, but remember, a prospective employer is going to judge you on everything that you do, say, and wear. Presenting yourself in a professional light is just as important as dressing properly for your interview.

When inquiring about job openings, try to stop in during a time of day that isn't a busy or rush period. If you don't have the opportunity to speak to a manager when picking up an application, try to turn it back in on a day when he or she will be available. Don't be afraid to ask one of the employees when the best time to come back is. People are generally willing to help.

Filling out the application properly can make or break you, especially if you don't have a prior work history to assess. Certain parts of the application may seem unimportant to you, but try to think like the employer. If you can't even fill out a job application correctly, what would make them think that you would put any more effort into your job.

Make sure you write legibly on the application, using black or blue ink, and double check for spelling errors. When supplying references, keep in mind that the retailer doesn't want your mom or Aunt Bertha as a reference. They are looking for professional references who can vouch for your reliability and possible work ethic. If you've never held a job, use a teacher,

coach, or minister as a reference.

When turning in your application, try to speak to a manager so they can put a face and overall professional appearance with the information. Shake the manager's hand, introduce yourself and let them know how interested in the position you are. Enthusiasm and self-assurance goes a long way in retail sales. This will immediately tell the manager that you have the ability to conduct yourself in a professional and assertive manner, which are the main requirements for retail sales.

If you receive the call to come in for an interview, you've made it to the next step, and this is a crucial one. If the interview goes well, you are almost guaranteed the position. A job interview is your opportunity to show the potential employer exactly what they will be getting when they hire you. This is your chance to shine, so make sure you dress and act the part. Be on time for the interview. Excuses like traffic jams or car trouble are tiring to hear from the person who is already hired. No one wants to hear these lame excuses from a potential employee. If getting the job is important to you, it is better to arrive twenty minutes early and wait in your car for a while, than it is to be even one minute late.

Some questions during an interview, especially ones that seem like small talk, are to assess your demeanor and the way you interact with others. A wise manager will try to build his sales staff with personalities that will work well together. Hiring an individual who will not 'fit in' with the other employees can ultimately affect a company's bottom line. Be sure to present yourself in a way that is self confident, teachable, and willing to help. Let your interviewer know why you want to work for the company and what strengths you can bring to the table.

A position in retail sales can provide valuable experience that could eventually lead to a more aggressive, commission based sales position in another industry. Just keep in mind that even though you will be gaining communication and people skills in retail sales, it DOES differ from outside sales. Retail sales



Retail Career Feature

is more of a customer service or 'clerk' job. You are there to help, answer questions, and assist in finalizing the customer's purchase. Your job does not involve generating interest in the product. Sometimes retail sales people receive a monthly bonus if they reach a certain sales goal. This can be achieved through building on the interest that a customer already has. If you are working in a clothing store and the customer is purchasing pants, suggest a matching belt, sweater, and

earrings. Building on a sale is fairly simple, as the initial interest has already been established.

Opportunity for advancement in retail and customer service sales is promising. It is common for the manager to have been promoted from the original sales team, and with a college degree and a good sales record, one can climb right up the corporate ladder to a regional manager position or higher.

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