

TEXTILE MARKETING & FASHION MERCHANDISING



The retail industry is the nation's largest industry sector employer. Obtain retail experience through summer jobs, part-time jobs, or internships. Become familiar with software and technology related to sales, distribution, and inventory tracking such as JDA. Join student branches of professional retailing associations. Read their publications and attend their meetings to stay abreast of changing trends in the field, (i.e., content) "shopper marketing."

Maintain up-to-date knowledge of trends in retail through industry publications. Attend professional conferences. 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, and communications. 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.

AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

- Product development
- Planning and allocation
- Global sourcing
- Corporate
- Regional
- Store
- Store assistant
- Store department
- Retail
- Industrial
- Wholesale
- Direct marketing
- Consumer product
- Financial services
- Insurance
- Real estate
- Space planning

Discount stores
Department stores
Mass merchants
Specialty stores
Online retailers
Call centers
Consumer product companies
Service organizations (e.g., estate planning, fundraising, etc.)
Non-profit organizations
Manufacturers
Financial companies
Insurance companies
Print and electronic media outlets
Magazine, newspaper, book publishing companies
Internet marketing companies

COMMON EMPLOYERS



PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS



National Association for Retail Marketing Services
National Retail Federation
Retail Industry Leaders Association



STRATEGIES ON ENTERING THE FIELD

- Obtain sales and retail experience through part-time jobs and internships.
- Supplement curriculum with business courses as some employers prefer it and others require it.
- Develop organizational skills and attention to detail to monitor inventory and compare products, prices, and markets.
- Forecasting skills are expected as buyers select merchandise that may sell six months later.
- Acquire analytical and mathematical skills to operate within a budget and to evaluate sales data including competitors'.
- Build excellent interpersonal and communication skills for negotiating with vendors. Prepare to work under pressure and exhibit good judgment and decisiveness.
- Be prepared to travel frequently in order to visit fashion and trade shows and industry conferences to search for new merchandise. Overtime is generally required.
- Expect to work with overseas suppliers. Knowledge of languages, customs, and cultures will be helpful.
- Exhibit 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.
- Seek retail experience through internships or part-time jobs.
- Get involved in student organizations and pursue 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. Managers may be expected to train, evaluate, and coach junior team members.
- Develop quick decision-making, problem solving, and communication skills to assist customers, manage employees, monitor promotions and sales goals, and work with buyers.
- Exhibit excellent organizational skills which are necessary to oversee the daily operations of a store or a department.
- Plan to work long and irregular hours, including holidays, especially during peak sales times.