

Jobs in retail

Sector by sector

This factsheet is designed to introduce you to the distinct business areas in the retail sector. There are nine 'sub-sectors', offering a huge variety of job options, whether working in grocery stores, electrical or fashion outlets – or any other retail area. They are:

- Store Operations
- Human Resources/Training
- Finance and Administration
- Buying
- Customer Contact Centres
- Marketing
- Logistics
- Information Technology (IT)
- Visual Merchandising



Websites and other resources to help you find out more are listed at the end of this factsheet.

Store Operations

The majority of jobs in retail fall under the heading of store operations; these are jobs that ensure the smooth running of the store and the selling of merchandise. Jobs include management roles and shopfloor positions such as a sales assistant or department manager.

Regional Director
Regional sales manager
Area manager
Store manager
Deputy store manager
Department manager
Sales assistant supervisor
Assistant sales person
Saturday job



**Example career path in
Store Operations**

Here are some typical jobs in this business area:

- Director of Operations
- Regional Manager
- Store Manager
- Floor Manager
- Department Manager
- Assistant Department Manager
- Supervisor
- Senior Sales Assistant
- Sales Assistant – general, beauty consultancy, lingerie fitting, visual merchandising, bakery, butchery ...
- Style Adviser
- Trolley Pusher

Human Resources/Training

Human Resources and Training involves the development and implementation of policies relating to the effective use of human resources within an organisation. Whatever the size or type of business, all organisations need to have policies in place covering working practices, recruitment, pay, conditions of employment and diversity. In smaller businesses, the HR function may be part of an individual's role, rather than a full-time job.

The HR function should help to ensure that the organisation employs the right balance of staff in terms of skills and experience, and that training and development opportunities are available to employees to enhance their performance and support the organisation's objectives.

Here are some job roles in Human Resources and Training:

- HR Director
- HR Manager
- Personnel Manager
- HR Assistant
- Training Director
- Training Manager
- Training Officer
- Recruitment Officer

Finance and Administration

A career in corporate finance means that you may work for a company to help it find money to run the business, grow the business, make acquisitions, plan for its financial future and manage transactions. You might work for a large multinational company or a smaller player with high growth prospects. Responsibility can come fast and your attention to detail and problem-solving skills will get put to work quickly in corporate finance.

Jobs in corporate finance are relatively stable providing that you maintain an excellent standard of work. Attention to detail is key. The key to progression in corporate finance is to work with a long view of what is going to make your company successful. Many would argue that corporate finance jobs are the most desirable in the entire field of finance. Here are some examples:

- Finance Director
- Finance Controller
- Financial Analyst
- Credit Manager
- Chief Accountant
- Accountant
- Clerks
- Audit Manager
- Procurement Manager
- Tax and Treasury Manager

Abi, 27
HR Business Partner
Harrods

"The majority of my time is spent giving advice to line managers, coaching them on the application of HR policies, best practice and employment law and providing them with the tools to handle their own issues."

Tom, 24
Retail Finance Analyst
Arcadia Group

"I have always liked the idea of analysing data to provide information for driving the decision-making process. I was also interested in clothes and fashion, so retail finance was a good way of marrying the two interests."

Buying

The main role of a retail buyer is to successfully purchase merchandise ensuring that the price, quality and availability meet customer needs. With a full understanding of their clientele, buyers are able to maximise profits and make available a commercially viable range of merchandise at competitive prices.

The role of the buyer is demanding yet rewarding. Although support is provided it does involve considerable responsibility and autonomy. The ability to multi-task, prioritise work and meet strict deadlines are key requirements of a role that also requires other skills such as analytical, motivational and leadership skills. Job roles in this business area include:

- Merchandiser
- Assistant Buyer
- Senior Buyer
- Head of Buying

Melissa, 24 **Category product manager** **The Co-operative Group**

“While the buyer does the negotiation, I attend ‘taste panels’, monitor performance when the product becomes part of our range, and answer any queries about the product.”

Customer Contact Centres (Call Centres)

Contact centre operators (sometimes known as call centre operators) normally work in the customer services department of an organisation, maintaining regular contact with customers by telephone, email, SMS messaging, fax and post. The work may involve selling goods and services, or providing information and advice. Much of it is done by accessing and updating customer’s records via a computer database.

In an after sales capacity, contact centre staff respond to and solve problems which their customers have encountered in both products and services whilst shopping from their stores or websites. They may replace products and/or refund the customer where the product or service did not meet the customers’ expectations or compensate them in some way within the scope of their customer service policy.

As in other business areas in retail, there is room for progression. Customer service teams will be led by supervisors or managers and certain staff may be specialised in handling high level complaints and issues, or the systems that support customer orders and enquiries.

Marketing

Marketing Executives in this field are involved in promoting and selling fast-moving consumer goods (commonly known as FMCGs) and products to the public, usually via the retail trade. FMCGs are typically high-volume, low-value items with high public visibility and short life span, such as food, drink, confectionery, toiletries, and household goods. Marketing Executives may work on various projects to support the Brand Manager in developing brands and promoting existing products, raising public awareness of the client's products through advertising campaigns and in-store promotions and building brand loyalty.

Alternative job titles are frequently used, e.g. Assistant Brand Manager, Assistant Product manager. A wide range of other job roles exist in Marketing, including:

- Marketeer
- Information Analyst
- Loyalty Campaign Manager
- Brand Manager
- Events Planner
- Packaging Designers
- Marketing Planner
- Design Planner
- Customer Insight Manager
- Marketing Manager
- Marketing Director
- Head of PR
- PR Assistant
- Fairtrade Ranging Strategist

Giorgio, 25
PR and Press Co-ordinator
IKEA

"I work in a deadline-driven environment, liaising with journalists, who may have requested information or interviews, and our PR agency. All external enquiries are handled through our office."

Logistics

Logistics is the UK's fifth biggest industry employing 1.7 million people across 65,000 organisations. The industry is essential to the efficient performance of the UK, touching every business and household. It involves the movement, handling and storing of goods through a variety of modes of transport including rail, road, air, deep sea, short sea and waterways across different supply chains, such as Clothing & Footwear, Electronics & Electrical, Food & Drink, Furniture & Furnishings and Pharmaceutical & Healthcare.

There are a range of benefits to working in Logistics: you can take on real responsibility, you may get the the opportunity to travel - even globally. Recruitment in this industry is also on the increase – giving a greater degree of job security. This flexible career path offers both part-time and full-time opportunities. Here are a few examples of job roles in Logistics:

- Large Goods Vehicle (LGV) Driver
- Warehouse / Distribution Manager
- Transport Supervisor
- Shipping Clerk
- Packer
- Logistics Director
- Courier
- Distribution Manager

Information Technology

Information Systems Managers install computer systems, ensure that back-up systems operate effectively, buy hardware and software, provide the ICT technology infrastructures for an organisation, and contribute to organisational policy with regard to quality standards and strategic planning.

Information Systems Managers work with varying sizes of organisation in every industry and service sector, usually with a staff of technicians, programmers and database administrators reporting to them.

Within the ICT sector actual job roles are dependent on the employing organisation. You might, for example, be a service delivery manager in a software house or a data processing manager in an end-user organisation. The importance of web transactions in retail has meant that website management has become a vital role. Other example job roles include:

- Business Analyst
- CAD/CAM Programmer
- Graphic Designer
- Service Technician
- Systems Architect
- Web Designer

Visual Merchandising

Visual merchandisers create window and interior displays in shops and department stores. Their aim is to present goods in an attractive and eye-catching way in order to attract customers and maximise sales. As a visual merchandiser, work can include designing ideas for displays or following pre-designed plans, drawing designs and plans by hand or computer and deciding how to use space and lighting creatively.

In a large retail company, visual merchandising is done by of a display team, and follows design plans created by a visual merchandising manager or display designer at head office. Examples of job roles in this business area include:

- Visual Merchandising Manager
- Display Designer
- Window Dresser
- Display Assistant

Further information

Skillsmart Retail offers a variety of information and advice on different job roles – including case studies – on its dedicated website www.skillsmartretail.com/careers. We also recommend the following websites and resources for information about retail careers.

Retail on-line recruitment

www.inretail.co.uk
www.retailcareers.co.uk
www.retailmoves.com
www.retailchoice.com

HR & Training careers

www.peoplemanagement.co.uk

Finance careers

www.fssc.org.uk

IT careers

www.e-skills.com/careers

Logistics careers

www.skillsforlogistics.org

Graduate Recruitment

www.graduatetoretail.org
www.thebigchoice.com
www.doctorjob.com
www.targetcareers.co.uk/retail

Factsheets

Skillsmart Retail publishes a range of detailed careers factsheets. They include:

- Working for yourself