

## **JOB PROFILE: PURCHASING**

### **WHAT DOES A BUYER DO?**

The role of buyers, often includes choosing products, finding suppliers, making sure goods arrive on time and presenting new ideas to senior management teams. Other responsibilities may involve storage and stock control, budgeting and sales analysis. Buyers use computers to record and analyse performance and monitor stock levels. They also spend time reading catalogues, consulting trade directories and using the Internet.

### **WHAT'S A WORKING WEEK LIKE?**

Buyers work office hours, but may have to work extra hours when necessary, during evenings and weekends. It may be possible to work flexible hours. The work is office-based with visits to suppliers, possibly abroad, so buyers may have to spend short periods away from home.

A driving license may be an advantage.

### **WHAT SKILLS WOULD I NEED TO BECOME A BUYER?**

- Be able to make decisions, meet targets and work under pressure
- Have a business-like approach, with tact and diplomacy when negotiating
- Enjoy dealing with people by phone and in person
- Have good creative ability and an eye for detail
- Have excellent planning and organisational skills
- Have excellent communication skills and social confidence
- Have high levels of stamina

- Be able to absorb and assess information quickly
- Have numerical skills to interpret statistics and make commercial decisions

### **HOW DO I BECOME A BUYER?**

Normally you will need a degree, but a higher national diploma or equivalent is sometimes accepted. Qualifications in business/management, economics or foreign languages may be particularly useful.

For a BTEC higher national course you need five GCSEs (A-C)/S grades (1-3) with one A level/Advanced Higher/two Higher grades, or a relevant BTEC national diploma, or appropriate SQA modules or equivalent.

Courses for BTEC/SQA Higher National Certificate or Diploma in Business Studies, with purchasing options, are available at a number of colleges, either full- or part-time, usually lasting two or three years. Degree courses normally require five GCSEs (A-C)/S grades (1-3) with two or three A levels/Advanced Highers/three or four Higher grades, or a relevant BTEC national diploma, or appropriate SQA modules or equivalent. An Access to Higher Education course may also be acceptable as an entry requirement.

If experienced in a related field, you may be able to gain recognition of skills through Accredited Prior Learning (APL). Please check with colleges or universities for exact entry requirements. Well-developed negotiation and communication

skills and sound business knowledge are important skills.

## TRAINING FOR WORK

Once you are in the job, you will need to gain the professional CIPS qualifications, which are internationally recognised. Contact CIPS for further information (see email below for further information). Many employers run their own training schemes. For example, some retail stores offer graduate management trainee schemes, with progression to a buying role. You may then be required to take CIPS professional qualifications, which are available in various modes such as full-time, part-time, modular, flexible and by distance learning.

The CIPS Certificates in Purchasing and Supply are for those with few or no qualifications who are employed in purchasing at a clerical level or in stores and warehouses. On completion of the qualifications, they may move onto courses leading to CIPS professional stages. The CIPS Certificates in Purchasing and Supply are available at many colleges that run the CIPS Graduate Diploma. Most courses are part-time and take one year. NVQs/SVQs in Procurement are available at levels 2, 3 and 4. Completion of level 4 offers a route to CIPS Membership, providing applicants have the appropriate experience. Foundation and Advanced Modern Apprenticeships (MAPPs) may be available for people aged 16-24.

## ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

Purchasing or buying departments vary tremendously in size and scope. Most retail head offices are located in London or the south east, with some in the midlands. Otherwise, there are opportunities throughout the UK. Opportunities exist in manufacturing, service industries, retailing, wholesalers, the civil service, local authorities, public service industries and the armed services.

In larger organisations promotion prospects are good, although progression depends on qualifications and ability. Small firms have more limited prospects, so buyers may have to move employers to further their career. It may be possible to work abroad. Some buyers move into related areas of work such as computing, distribution, logistics, stores and materials control, marketing or sales.

## SALARIES

*(Figures are intended as a guideline only - salaries vary depending on the employer and location)*

New entrants may earn £12,500 - £17,000 a year. Buyer's assistants earn slightly less.

After three or four year's experience, a typical salary may range from £16,000 to £26,000.

In the most senior jobs it may be possible to earn £50,000 or more.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

[www.cips.org](http://www.cips.org)

[www.ciltuk.org.uk/pages/home](http://www.ciltuk.org.uk/pages/home)