

RETAIL/MERCHANDISING

What can I do with this degree?

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

BUYING/PURCHASING

One begins as a buyer trainee and advances to the level of buyer and beyond.

Department stores
Specialty stores (clothing, home furnishings, jewelry, books, etc.)
Discount stores/mass merchants
Grocery stores

Develop analytical and problem-solving skills to analyze industry trends and sales data in order to forecast and plan for consumer needs.
Develop organizational skills to oversee the daily operation of your department or store such as monitoring inventory.
Develop excellent interpersonal skills to work with and motivate sales force.
Develop excellent communication skills, written and oral, to write reports and to interact with vendors.
Be prepared to travel frequently in order to visit various markets and search for new merchandise.
Be able to work well under pressure: A buyer's goal is to always beat the sales and profit record of the last year.
Be aware that mergers and acquisitions have reduced the number of opportunities in this field.

MANAGEMENT/ADMINISTRATION

Store Management
-One usually begins as an assistant manager and advances to higher level management positions.

Department stores
Specialty stores
Discount stores/mass merchants
Grocery stores

Be prepared to start at the bottom: Most management training programs start their associates on the sales floor.
Be willing to relocate to take advantage of promotion opportunities.
Develop excellent interpersonal skills to assist customers and employees and to handle complaints.
Develop excellent organizational skills to handle the daily operation of your store or department.
Gain leadership experience through extracurricular activities.
Be aware of the abundant number of opportunities in this field.

AREAS

EMPLOYERS

STRATEGIES

SALES

Entry-level positions do not require a college degree, but the degree may be necessary for promotions.

Department stores
Specialty stores
Discount stores/mass merchants

A summer or part-time sales job is a good way to gain retailing experience and is often a stepping-stone to higher-level positions.
Obtain a position at a store with a good reputation: You'll learn the most from good management.
Develop excellent interpersonal skills to interact with consumers and supervisors.
Develop problem-solving skills to handle customer inquiries and complaints.
Ask for assignments outside your normal job description.

VISUAL MERCHANDISING

People working in this area are responsible for the overall feel of the store and for creating a pleasant environment in which customers can shop. Visual merchandisers display products favorably within the store and in store windows.

Department stores
Specialty stores

Develop excellent interpersonal skills to work with buyers and managers and to implement their input.
Develop mechanical aptitude to build props or to adjust lighting for displays.
Be aware that positions in this area are limited.

NON-STORE RETAILING

Mail Order

-A mail order house sells to customers through the mail, usually through a catalog. Major companies well known for their substantial mail order business include JC Penney, Spiegel, and Victoria's Secret.

Mail order houses
Advertising agencies
Magazine, book, and record companies
TV retailing networks
Internet marketers

Supplement your coursework with marketing, advertising, or communications classes.

Direct Marketing

-Direct marketers advertise directly to the customer through mail, magazines, radio, or TV to get an immediate response by telephone, mail, or fax.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Obtain retail experience through a summer job, part-time job or internship.
- Computer knowledge is important: Many retailers are going on-line to promote themselves or to actually sell merchandise over the Internet. In addition, computers are used to manage sales figures and merchandise inventory.
- Join student branches of professional retailing associations. Read their publications and attend their meetings.
- Read the business section of newspapers and magazines to keep track of current trends in retail.
- Be prepared to work holidays and weekends, which are the busiest times for retailers.
- Contact the stores where you like to shop and inquire about whether they have management training programs.
- Most retailers promote from within the organization, so management trainee programs are a good way to get your foot in the door.
- Supplement your coursework with classes in marketing, accounting, communications, and computers.