

So You Want to be in Sales? Select a career in sales for the right reasons

Rita's Career Corner ...With Rita B. Allen

Our economy has started to rebound and as it does, the need for driven and qualified sales people is on the rise. As this happens, an effective recruitment strategy for quite a few industries to fill these sales roles has been to recruit new college graduates, experienced professionals looking to make a career transition, and/or the pool of talented professionals currently in transition from their last position. A career in sales is very rewarding and can also be very lucrative for those who have the appropriate skills, competencies and most importantly the aspiration.

Sales is a highly competitive field requiring very specific abilities and characteristics to be successful. It is a targeted career path to select only if you truly believe it is the right path for you based on your aspirations, interests, skills, competencies and abilities. It requires a certain "fire in your belly" to want to excel and to truly have passion for selling as well as for the product or service you are selling. Many young professionals enter the field to find they actually hate making cold calls or have difficulty dealing with rejection. Experienced professionals may move into a sales role because they would like to try a new field and/or they can't find a job in their area of specialty...only to find that they do not enjoy being on the road so much or are overwhelmed by all the networking required. For these reasons, there can be a high level of turnover in the entry level sales roles.

Pursuing a career in sales has many benefits and can differ from industry to industry. If you talk to a successful sales professional, you can feel their energy and passion for their work. It takes a lot of heart and belief in your product or service in addition to a variety of skill sets such as influencing, relationship building, financial and business acumen, negotiating, resilience, communicating, listening and presenting. There is also a big difference between marketing and sales along with unique expectations for each. Be sure to pursue the right career for the right reasons.

So, if you are considering a career in sales as a new path for you, do your research and make the decision for the right reasons. Stay true to yourself and what's important for you to be successful.

Do Your Homework:

- Talk to people who are in sales to understand a typical day, week and month
- Ask a lot of questions - learn as much as you can about the role
- What are the skills necessary to be successful?
- What are the greatest frustrations?

Be Honest With Yourself:

- Assess your strengths and weaknesses
- Compare with those required of a successful sales person
- Identify potential gaps in your skills and/or aspirations
- Listen to your gut – don't talk yourself into or out of anything

Make the right decision for the right reasons:

- Follow your heart and your passion – always play to your strengths
- Believe in the product and/or service
- Turn to mentors, advisors and supports for help and advice
- Make an informed decision

A career in sales is a vital and growing profession with a lot of opportunity. In the global competitive marketplace we live today, we are all expected to have sales skills. Everyone in an organization is selling and influencing their stakeholders and is a representative of the company and should see that as part of their job in addition to their functional responsibilities. We are also selling when we recruit new talent into our organizations. Sales skills are required by all. Be prepared to make the distinction of building your sales skills to be effective in your functional area vs. pursuing sales as a potential career path. Don't make the wrong decision for the right reasons.

Ask Rita...

Question: I am at a cross roads and thinking of moving into sales because I really enjoy meeting new people and am outgoing. What else should I consider to make a career change into sales?

Answer: There are several things to consider before moving into any new career starting with assessing how well it is aligned with your skills, competencies, interests, and aspirations. While good interpersonal skills and being comfortable meeting and interacting with people are important to be successful in sales, it requires a lot of other competencies you also want to assess within yourself. Are you good at setting and meeting specific financial goals and deliverables? Do you have the persistence and resilience to continue to nurture relationships even when you get no for an answer? Can you effectively inquire to learn about the needs of your customer so you

can influence them appropriately to address those needs? Does closing a deal excite you in a way that creates an adrenaline rush that you want to repeat again and again? Last but not least, will you be comfortable with a variable salary based on your performance rather than a fixed amount? These are all important questions to assess and reflect upon to determine if a sales career may be right for you. Sales is an extremely rewarding and exciting field when it's a right match. Be sure to do your homework to assess if it's the right match for you. Good luck!

Send your questions to: [Rita B. Allen](#)

Rita Balian Allen is the President of Rita B. Allen Associates, a provider of career management/talent management consulting and executive coaching services located in Waltham at www.ritaballenassociates.com and the President of ACPI – NE (Association of Career Professionals International – New England), www.acpi-ne.org)