

# Understanding the Local Labor Market

## Promising Career Pathways in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County

### Focus: Sales Occupations

*Understanding the Local Labor Market: Promising Career Pathways in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County* is intended as a useful resource for career counselors and other professionals responsible for helping jobseekers make informed decisions about employment and training. Featured occupations are selected on the basis of vacancies, wages and benefits, and opportunities for advancement.

#### What do sales people do?

- Sales is a broad category that encompasses occupations that entail selling raw materials, manufactured goods, or services to individuals or businesses. Sales occupations include:
  - *Retail salespersons* who assist retail store customers;
  - *Sales managers* who supervise salespersons;
  - *Services sales representatives* who sell a company's services (including advertising sales agents, insurance sales agents, and financial services sales agents);
  - *Wholesale and manufacturing sales representatives* who sell goods for wholesalers or manufacturers;
  - *Other sales* (including telemarketers, door-to-door salespersons, real estate agents and brokers).

#### What are wages, benefits, and work conditions for sales occupations?

- Wages, benefits and work conditions vary by occupation and employer. Wages are often based on a combination of salary and commission. As is shown in the table below, average wages for sales occupations in Allegheny County range from \$20,388 (retail salesperson) to \$73,813 (securities sales representative).
- Sales positions (especially in retail) may require irregular hours and work schedules.

**Wages for Sales Positions  
Allegheny County**

	Average Annual Wage
Supervisors (Retail Sales)	\$36,101
Supervisors (Non-Retail)	\$60,479
Retail Salespersons	\$20,388
Advertising Sales Agents	\$48,774
Insurance Sales Agents	\$63,220
Financial Services Sales Agents	\$73,813
Wholesale/Manufacturing Sales Reps	\$55,689
Real Estate Agents	\$37,420
Real Estate Brokers	\$60,390
Telemarketers	\$23,612
Door-to-Door Sales Reps	\$41,132

Source: PA Dept. of Labor & Industry, Center for Workforce Information & Analysis

#### What do workers in sales occupations like about their jobs?

- Sales workers enjoy constant interaction with customers.
- Self-employment is not uncommon (especially for insurance, securities, and real estate sales positions). These workers enjoy the freedom of being their own bosses.
- Sales positions can be lucrative and the ability to earn commissions is a motivating factor.
- They thrive under pressure.

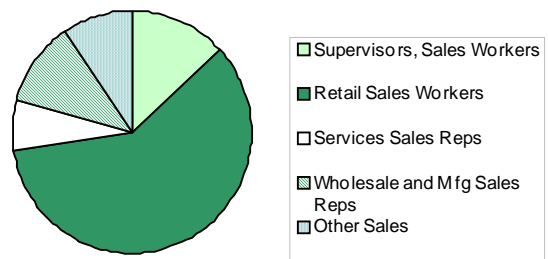
#### What are advancement opportunities?

- Sales workers with demonstrated leadership and a strong track record may advance into managerial positions. Others may choose to start their own business.

#### How many sales representatives openings are there?

- Sales positions (both in terms of availability and earning potential) are very vulnerable to changes in the economy.
- Local demand in sales occupations is strong and projected to grow. The PA Department of Labor and Industry estimates that there are approximately 91,000 sales workers in Allegheny County. As the chart below shows, more than half of these positions (50,000) are categorized as retail sales.

**Sales Occupations by Total Employment  
Allegheny County**



Source: PA Dept. of Labor & Industry, Center for Workforce Information & Analysis

- 302 local sales jobs were posted on the Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink website ([www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com](http://www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com)) between January 2005 and August 2005.

## FOCUS: Sales Occupations

### How can I obtain a sales occupation?

- While education and training requirements vary by type of sales occupation, there are several common characteristics that successful salespersons tend to possess including: an outgoing, assertive personality; an ability to work independently; knowledge and expertise about the products or services they are selling; strong communication skills and an ability to explain how the product or service meets the customer's needs; persistence and an ability to handle rejection; a focus on ensuring customer satisfaction; an ability to work under pressure and meet sales targets; strong organizational skills.
- In addition, most sales positions entail face-to-face interaction with customers and employers seek individuals with a neat and professional appearance.
- Most non-retail sales positions require a post secondary degree. Some employers (especially for services sales positions like advertising and financial services, and for wholesale and manufacturing sales positions) require a postsecondary degree appropriate to the company such as in business, marketing, finance, economics, biology, engineering, or electronics.
- Positions that require postsecondary degrees may be attainable with a high school diploma combined with a proven sales record and/or prior training.
- In Pennsylvania, insurance agents, real estate agents and brokers, and securities sales representatives require licenses. They may also obtain voluntary certifications from professional organizations to bolster their credentials.
- On-the-job-training is common for sales positions. Formal, intensive training sessions are more common in larger firms. This training generally aims to acquaint individuals with the company and its policies, the products or services, and effective selling techniques.

### How do I find out about sales jobs?

- **Pittsburgh/Allegheny County CareerLink** has job postings for sales positions (contact 1-866-317-JOBS or visit [www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com](http://www.careerlinkpittsburgh.com) to learn more).
- Many employers use local newspapers or online search engines to advertise sales openings.

### Where can I get training locally?

*While individuals with diverse educational backgrounds can successfully pursue sales careers, the following local training programs prepare individuals in business and marketing.*

- **Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC)** — 412-237-2511, [www.ccac.edu](http://www.ccac.edu). A 2-year associate degree in business or marketing management.
- **Duff's Business Institute** — 412-261-4520, [www.duffs-institute.com](http://www.duffs-institute.com). A 2-year associate degree in business including instruction in marketing.
- **Duquesne University** — 412-396-6000, [www.duq.edu](http://www.duq.edu). A bachelor degree in business administration offering a marketing concentration.
- **ICM School of Business and Medical Careers** — 1-800-441-5222, [www.icmschool.com](http://www.icmschool.com). A 15-month business administration management degree offering a marketing focus.
- **International Academy of Design and Technology** — 412-391-4197, [www.iadtpitt.edu](http://www.iadtpitt.edu). An 18-month associate degree in business administration.
- **Penn State McKeesport** — 412-675-9010, [www.mk.psu.edu](http://www.mk.psu.edu). A 4-year degree in business administration with the option of a concentration in marketing.
- **Pittsburgh Technical Institute** — 1-800-784-9675, [www.pti.edu](http://www.pti.edu). A 24-month associate degree in business administration or marketing.
- **Point Park University** — 412-392-3430, [www.pointpark.edu](http://www.pointpark.edu). A 2-year associate and a 4-year bachelor degree in business management with the option of a marketing concentration.
- **Robert Morris University** — 1-800-762-0097, [www.rmu.edu](http://www.rmu.edu). A 4-year bachelor degree in business administration with the option of a marketing concentration.
- **University of Pittsburgh** — 412-383-7300, [www.cba.pitt.edu](http://www.cba.pitt.edu). A 4-year bachelor degree in business administration with the option of a marketing major.
- **Western School of Health and Business** — 1-800-333-6607, [www.westernschoolpitt.com](http://www.westernschoolpitt.com). A 15-month associate degree program in business administration with a sales and marketing concentration.

### Remember...

Labor markets are affected by economic, social, and institutional factors that are difficult to predict. No one can forecast perfectly how many jobs will be available, or whether there will be too many or too few workers to fill those jobs. The reality is that employment is never a guarantee, even for individuals who pursue training in demand occupations.

The Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board (TRWIB) is charged with promoting a coordinated and accountable employment and training system for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Responsibilities include setting and monitoring local performance standards, chartering CareerLink comprehensive and community centers that provide a range of services to jobseekers and employers, and certifying qualified training providers. Board members are appointed by Mayor Tom Murphy (City of Pittsburgh) and Chief Executive Dan Onorato (Allegheny County).

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Phone: 412-552-7090 | Fax: 412-552-7091 | Internet: [www.trwib.org](http://www.trwib.org)

Chairperson: Gregory G. Greenleaf | Chief Executive Officer: Ronald D. Painter | Editor: Theodora J. Finn  
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