

Sales-So What's the Hype?

By Hayley Myles

When you think of the word sales, do you picture a loud, aggressive person who does not have the word "NO!!!" in their vocabulary? Do the words pushy and persistent seem like pre-requisites for this career? Perhaps the sales industry is not a career you have considered. I know what you are thinking and I too had the same misconceptions. After uncovering the truth about sales, I seriously suggest taking a second look! The industry is rocking and the sky is truly the limit for motivated people. The sales industry currently employs approximately 35 million Americans and its light speed growth means that the industry is always in need of new talent. Set aside those stereotypes and open your mind to the endless possibilities and tremendous excitement a sales career can offer you! And to you, the engineering and computer science majors, keep reading. There are even opportunities in sales for you!

The latest trends in the industry

First things first, sales is not what it used to be due to four trends that have had a serious impact on the industry.

In the past, closing the deal has been the priority with salespeople. While finalizing the deal today is definitely a key component, selling is changing from being a deal-oriented business to becoming more service-oriented. Salespeople give off a sense that they like to help people and their pleasing personalities make it easier for their clients to talk to them, says Michael Reagan, CEO of the National Association of Sales Professionals (NASP). It turns out that the best sales people are in fact the best listeners. Selling today is based on

developing relationships and building trust with clients. Another trend has been the demand for a higher level of education and for certified salespeople. Sales candidates typically now have university degrees or college diplomas, says Reagan. "Companies want students with specific training," says Victoria Panzer, a sales professor at the University of South Florida. To accommodate this trend, many post-secondary institutions have incorporated the industry's fundamental knowledge and skills into courses such as "Introduction to Sales". These kinds of courses can be very beneficial to students who have already chosen this career path. "Sales careers take a lot more business knowledge than in the past," says sales consultant, Bob Ayer from REA Performance Consultants Inc.

The third noticeable trend has been the vast number of sales-related jobs that have been incorporated into

industries that never had them before. For example, four rapidly growing sectors that are in need of more salespeople are the cultural, information technology, financial, and pharmaceutical industries. The recent explosion of Internet and dot-com companies has created an abundance of appealing sales-related jobs. "Our economy is sales and marketing-driven today and sales is the best way to learn the many facets of the way business works," says Reagan.

The final trend in the sales industry has been the increase in professionalism. With highly qualified applicants and better training methods, sales careers are far more valued and recognized by society. Evidence of this is the not-for-profit NASP organization whose purpose is to "upgrade the career status of individuals working in the sales profession". NASP has even created certification programs whereby members must pass a sales competency examination to become a certified professional SalesPerson™. The Sales Network is another way for college and university stu-

