

## JOB PROFILE: BUYER

### THE WORK

As a buyer you would be responsible for buying in the goods that your company sells, or the equipment and parts that your company needs to manufacture goods.

Your duties would include:

- choosing products
- assessing bids from suppliers
- finding suppliers and negotiating prices
- making sure goods arrive on time and suppliers are paid
- presenting new ideas to senior management teams
- writing reports and helping to interpret sales forecasts
- recording and monitoring stock levels and analysing sales
- checking catalogues or attending trade fairs and demonstrations to research new products and suppliers.

In certain industries you would use specialist skills, for example in retail you would work closely with merchandisers to analyse consumer buying patterns. As a fashion buyer, you might

advise design teams about trends when new ranges are planned.

### HOURS AND ENVIRONMENT

Your standard working hours would be Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. You may sometimes have to work longer hours to meet deadlines. Flexible hours and part-time work may be available.

You would be office-based, but also travel widely to meet suppliers and attend trade fairs.

### SKILLS AND INTERESTS

- good spoken and written communication skills
- good mathematical skills, to work with figures and budgets
- the ability to analyse and assess information
- good organisational skills
- accuracy and attention to detail
- negotiating and networking skills
- good business sense
- the ability to work well as part of a team
- the ability to work under pressure and meet deadlines.

### ENTRY

To become a buyer you will have an advantage with a BTEC HNC/HND or degree in supply chain management, logistics or business studies. You may not always need a degree if you have relevant experience in retail, merchandising or business.

For some jobs, employers may prefer you to have specialist qualifications and technical knowledge in your particular industry, for example:

- an engineering degree for an engineering manufacturing company
- a degree in fashion buying or design for a fashion buying job.

Most employers will expect you to have or be working towards membership of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS). If you do not have an accredited degree in supply chain management, you can study for CIPS

professional qualifications while you are working as a buyer or trainee buyer.

You may be able to join some large companies as a trainee buyer through a management training scheme. You will usually need a degree (in any subject) to get onto a training scheme, although some employers will recruit people with A levels or similar qualifications.

It is also possible to start as a purchasing administrator or assistant in a company's buying department. You could then work your way up to assistant or junior buyer and then buyer as you gain experience and CIPS qualifications.

See the CIPS website for a list of accredited degrees and postgraduate courses, and more details about their qualifications and membership.

## TRAINING

You would be trained on the job, possibly through a structured graduate training scheme. You will also normally study for NVQs or professional qualifications from the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS).

You could work towards NVQ levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 in Supply Chain Management (previously known as Procurement), or you could study for CIPS qualifications including:

- Level 3 Certificate in Purchasing and Supply
- Level 4 Foundation Diploma in Purchasing and Supply
- Level 5 Advanced Diploma in Purchasing and Supply
- Level 6 Graduate Diploma, a degree-level qualification.

CIPS has also recently developed new Level 2 (introductory) and Level 7 (executive diploma) qualifications.

The Level 3 and 4 qualifications are suitable for purchasing administrators and people new to the industry. Most buyers aim to achieve the Level 6 Graduate Diploma.

You can study for CIPS qualifications part-time at local colleges and private training providers, or by distance learning. See the CIPS website for full details of entry requirements and where to study.

## OPPORTUNITIES

As well as the retail industry, there are many opportunities in the manufacturing and service industries. Many retail head offices are in London or the south east of England, but jobs are available all over the UK.

Jobs may be advertised in the local and national press, and trade magazines for your particular industry, and specialist recruitment agencies.

Promotion prospects in larger companies are good. Small firms have more limited prospects, so you may have to change employers to progress. You could also move into related areas such as distribution and logistics, merchandising, sales, marketing or management.

You may find the following links useful for job vacancies and further reading:

<http://www.supplymanagement.com>  
<http://www.drapersonline.com>  
<http://www.inretail.co.uk>  
<http://www.retailcareers.co.uk>  
<http://www.retail-week.com>  
<http://www.cips-gpa.com>

*We do not accept responsibility for the content of external sites.*

## ANNUAL INCOME

- Buying administrative assistants or assistant buyers may earn £12,000 to £20,000 a year.
- Experienced buyers can earn from £15,000 to £35,000 a year.
- Senior buyers and purchasing managers can earn £50,000 a year or more.

*Figures are intended as a guideline only.*

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **Skillsmart Retail**

Fourth Floor  
93 Newman Street  
London  
W1T 3EZ  
Tel: 0800 093 5001  
<http://www.skillsmartretail.com>

### **Skills for Logistics**

14 Warren Yard  
Warren Farm Office Village  
Stratford Road  
Milton Keynes  
MK12 5NW  
Tel: 0870 242 7314  
<http://www.skillsforlogistics.org>

### **Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS)**

Easton House  
Easton on the Hill  
Stamford  
Lincolnshire  
PE9 3NZ  
Tel: 01780 756777  
<http://www.cips.org>