

Career Spotlight

Purchasing Agent

Purchasing agents are in charge of all buying for their company. They buy the raw materials, goods, and services their company needs to maintain operations. Purchasing agents, or buyers as they are sometimes called, see that their company has a sufficient supply of the materials it needs to operate. However, agents must avoid tying up too much of the company's money in supplies. Their job is to balance quality with cost to ensure that the best purchases are made. It is vital that purchasers stay up to date on overall market conditions and price trends that affect what they are buying. They use the latest pricing information available on the Internet to compute the price of items, the cost of handling and transportation for those items, and the cost of time spent by workers who unload the stock and fill out shipping paperwork.



EDUCATION

Most employers require their purchasing agents to have a degree in business, mathematics, economics, engineering or a related field (Bachelor's degree or higher), but a purchasing agent with a Master's degree will have additional opportunities. Many certification programs are also available, such as the CPM, CPP, and CPE.

WHEN MATH IS USED

The problem solving skills and analytical skills used in mathematics are an essential part of a career as a purchasing manager. Purchasing managers find that they are called on to solve problems, handle details, and coordinate many activities during intense work periods. They must also be comfortable handling complex data and have the ability to see the data from numerous perspectives.

POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

Purchasing agents typically work in wholesale trade and manufacturing industries, and some work in retail trade. Job opportunities are expected to increase 7% through the year 2018. Companies will be expanding their purchasing departments to accommodate greater product and service demand from customers. A bachelor's degree is highly recommended for obtaining a buyer position in an industry setting, whereas a master's degree in business or public administration is required for a position in a government agency.

FACTS

Typical tasks for purchasing agents include managing activities involved with obtaining goods and services, discussing price and schedule with vendors, and selecting products through examination and testing. Buyers must purchase items based on budget and market prospects. One desirable job for purchasing agents is that of a fashion buyer. Fashion buyers select and order apparel for retail stores. This path in the fashion industry is governed by talent, not connections, because the work of a fashion buyer can be evaluated based on the company's sales record.

CITATIONS

<http://careers.stateuniversity.com/pages/658/Purchasing-Agent.html>

<http://www.insidejobs.com/careers/fashion-buyer>

http://www.ehow.com/facts_5008043_job-description-purchasing-agent

http://www.ehow.com/how_5737292_become-purchasing-agent.html

Lambert, Stephen E., and Ruth J. DeCotis. Great Jobs for Math Majors. 2nd ed. New York City, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2006. 167-197. Print.

<http://dot-job-descriptions.careerplanner.com/PURCHASING-AGENT.cfm>

<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/business-and-financial/purchasing-managers-buyers-and-purchasing-agents.htm>

<http://www.personalitydesk.com/career-profile/buyer-or-purchasing-agent>

MATH REQUIRED

- College Algebra
- Trigonometry
- Calculus I and II
- Linear Algebra
- Numerical Analysis & Differential Equations
- Probability and Statistics

Low-end Salary: \$26,000/yr

Median Salary: \$47,680/yr

High-end Salary: \$79,710/yr