How to Get a Job in...

Fashion Merchandising & Buying

Explanation:
Working in the fashion industry is a dream job for many people, and there is a wide range of careers in the fashion industry. Fashion merchandisers and buyers are responsible for forecasting fashion trends, selecting the products that a store will carry, developing relationships with suppliers, negotiating prices, and designing ways to market or display products. Merchandisers and buyers work in fast-paced environments centered on buying or selling large quantities of clothing, accessories, or home décor. The fashion industry is highly competitive, and it is vital to have plenty of information to successfully plan your career path.

Trends:
Fashion merchandising and buying are popular, competitive fields. The suffering economy has led to a decrease in retail sales, which has impacted the fashion industry. Fashion merchandising and buying jobs can be difficult to find. However, the retail industry in the U.S. employs over 14 million people, and students should be able to gain experience in retail that will prepare them to seek entry-level fashion merchandising and buying positions.

Education & Training Required:
The majority of fashion merchandisers and buyers have a college degree; some may even have graduate work. A degree specifically in fashion merchandising is rare, but related fields include marketing, general merchandising, advertising, and business. Some people who work in these areas of the fashion industry may have gone to fashion school or art school to learn design and merchandising. Having some retail experience in a fashion boutique can be helpful for starting a career as a buyer and may enable you to make better decisions when you become a buyer. Some department stores and fashion boutiques offer internships and training programs. Studying the fashion industry and pursuing some on-the-job training can surely help you to become a good buyer in the near future.

Earnings:
The following are median salaries from Salary.com. Salary figures will vary by size, type, reputation, and geographic location of employer.

Visual Merchandiser: $47,441
Merchandise Buyer: $83,674
Merchandise Buyer Assistant: $46,722
Buyer I: $45,453
Senior Merchandise Planner: $92,322

Tips for breaking in:
Many people start by gaining experience in retail and may move up to be a store manager or department manager. Opportunities outside of the retail store field include work in internet retail or catalogue. Working in the fashion industry takes a passion for fashion; candidates should have a broad understanding of the fashion industry and even specific product lines. Take the opportunity now to read fashion-related publications, such as the Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management, and keep abreast of fashion trends.

Associations:
American Apparel &Footwear Association (AAFA)
National Retail Federation (NRF)
Retail Advertising & Marketing Association of the NRF
International Association of Clothing Designers and Executives (IACDE)
Fashion Group International, Inc.
National Association of General Merchandise Representatives
National Association for Retail Merchandising Services

Types of Employers:
Retail businesses
Apparel manufacturers
Apparel manufacturers
Design and Manufacturing Firms

Example Employers:
Belk Inc. Lowe’s Companies, Inc.
Target Family Dollar Stores, Inc.

Sample Job Titles:
Store Manager
Department Manager
Manufacturer’s Representative
Visual Merchandiser
Product Development Trainee
Merchandising Assistant
Assistant Buyer
Advertising Specialist
Fashion Design Publicist
Fashion Writer
Market Researcher
Merchandise Manager
Purchasing Manager
Textile Merchandising Specialist
Marketing Representative
Merchandise Manager

Desirable qualities, interests, & skills:
• Excellent ability to communicate with clients and professional presentation skills
• Ability to handle fast-paced, deadline-drive work environment that may involve frequent travel
• Computer savvy with experience in Microsoft Office products, including Excel and Access.
• Strategic thinking, ability to stay on top of trends/forecast
• Creativity and flexibility

Websites:
Women’s Wear Daily, www.wwd.com
National Retail Federation, www.nrf.com
Retail Advertising & Marketing Association, www.rama-nrf.org
International Association of Clothing Designers and Executives, www.iacde.net
National Association General Merchandise Representatives, www.nagmr.com

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