

Plain Guide to Sales, Retail and Customer Service Work

This guide covers jobs that involve selling goods and services to customers, and dealing with customers' queries or problems. Retail businesses can be specialised, as in florists or antique shops, while supermarkets and department stores sell many different products. Sales representatives and executives sell their company's products and services, looking after existing customers or trying to find new ones. Call centre staff answer enquiries from customers by telephone or email.

In Yorkshire and the Humber in 2013, there were 57,053 people working in call centres, 93,534 in sales, and 179,053 in retail, according to the Annual Population Survey. But this does not include specialised roles such as accounts and IT professionals, as those working in these sectors cannot be distinguished in this survey. According to People 1st, there were 268,200 people working in retail in the region in 2011.

Typical job titles include:

Call Centre operator	Retail/sales assistant	Store manager
Checkout operator	Retail supervisor	Store owner
Customer services adviser	Sales/account executive	Telephone sales adviser
Retail buyer	Sale representative	
Retail merchandiser	Shelf filler	

Where are the jobs?

Retail

Shops of all kinds
Department stores
Supermarkets
Internet and mail order catalogue retailers

Sales

Manufacturers
Service providers

Call centres

Mail order companies
Financial institutions
IT helplines
Advisory services

Pay

Call or contact centre occupations	£12,402-£20,770+
Retail assistants	£10,203-£24,558
Retail supervisor	£13,688-£29,012
Retail managers	£14,821-£50,000
Sales executives	£17,382-£43,715+
Sales managers	£23,838-£78,393

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2013

Sales
jobs typically
feature a basic
salary plus
commission

The
largest numbers
of retail jobs are in
Leeds, followed by
Sheffield, Bradford
and York.

Job vacancies advertised online in Yorkshire and the Humber, 2014

Call or contact centre	17,850
Retail	15,606
Sales	26,834
Total	61,191

*Note that many retail jobs are not advertised online, so this is likely to be an underestimate
Labour Insight, Burning Glass Technologies 2015

In Yorkshire and the Humber, there were 23,420 retail outlets in 2014. 585 of these employed more than 50 people, while 18,775 employed fewer than 9. Although only 0.2% of businesses employ 250 or more people, they account for 68% of retail jobs.
UK Business Counts 2014/People 1st 2013.



Skills and personal qualities

People who like:

- Working with the public
- Selling
- Working in a team
- Using computerised tills
- Working under pressure
- Learning about products
- Displaying goods attractively
- Keeping records of stock and sales methods
- Responsibility

People who are:

- Good communicators
- Friendly and helpful
- Well presented
- Reliable and trustworthy
- Physically fit for moving stock
- Able to deal with enquiries or difficult customers
- Organised and accurate
- Numerate and able to deal with different payment
- Computer literate

Qualifications and training

Formal qualifications are not a requirement for many jobs in these sectors, although a good level of numeracy and literacy are generally needed.

Many management trainee schemes do ask for a degree.

Most retail training is work-based.

Courses are offered by the National Skills Academy for Retail, with regional centres at Leeds City College and The Source at Meadowhall, Sheffield. See www.people1st.co.uk.

Training in sales is often on-the-job, but sales qualifications are also offered by the Institute of Sales and Marketing Management, the Managing and Marketing Sales Association and the Chartered Institute of Marketing. See www.ismm.co.uk, www.mamsasbp.org.uk, www.cim.co.uk.

Training for call centre work is also generally work-based, with qualifications available at levels 2 and 3/4.

Current trends

In retail, recent years have seen retailers such as Comet and Phones4u enter administration as a result of the rapidly growing e-commerce market. In 2013 and 2014 online sales grew by 16.8% and 15.8%.

However, 2013 saw a 19% increase in the number of new enterprises in new retail shops.

65% of sales and customer service employers have reported applicants lacking in customer handling skills.

New technology increasingly plays an important role in retail. IT skills and awareness of social media channels are increasingly needed.

Forecast for Yorkshire and the Humber, sales and customer service 2012-2022

2012	2022	Net change	Replacement	Total vacancies
227,000	220,000	-5,000	79,000	75,000

Top 20 employers in Yorkshire and the Humber 2014-2015

Asda	319	Supermarkets
McDonald's Restaurants	297	Restaurants
Rentalcars.com	241	Vehicle rental
Sports Direct	229	Sports wear etc
Superdrug	164	Chemist
Carphone Warehouse Group	163	Telecoms
DEE SET Logistics	152	Agency - merchandising
Zachary Daniels	138	Agency
House of Fraser	137	Department store
Big Fish Little Fish	137	Agency
Aldi	122	Supermarkets
Travis Perkins	117	Builders/plumbers merchant
Provident Financial	117	Financial services
Lidl	108	Supermarket
Royal Bank of Scotland	107	Bank
William Hill	105	Bookmakers
R&L Home Enterprises	104	Retail catalogue
Ladbrokes	100	Bookmaker
Barclays	100	Bank
A for Appointments Ltd	97	Agency

Source: Labour Insight, Burning Glass Technologies 2015. Based on vacancies posted online, and including agencies which tend not to disclose the employers they recruit for.

Where to look for vacancies...

Local, regional and national papers

Shops often advertise in their windows or on job boards inside

Jobcentre Plus: search on <https://www.gov.uk/jobsearch>

Company websites

Agencies: look in the Yellow Pages or www.yell.com under 'recruitment consultants'

Websites such as:

www.retailchoice.com

www.retailmoves.com

www.graduateyorkshire.co.uk

www.simplysalesjobs.co.uk

www.retailweekjobs.com

www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/jobs

www.retailcareers.co.uk

www.inretail.co.uk



More information...

Sector Skills Council:

www.people1st.co.uk

National Careers Service:

<https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>

See 'job profiles' for information jobs in these sections

Further help...

National Careers Service advisers are available in your local area to provide information, advice and guidance on learning and work. See the website or call 0800 100 900.

