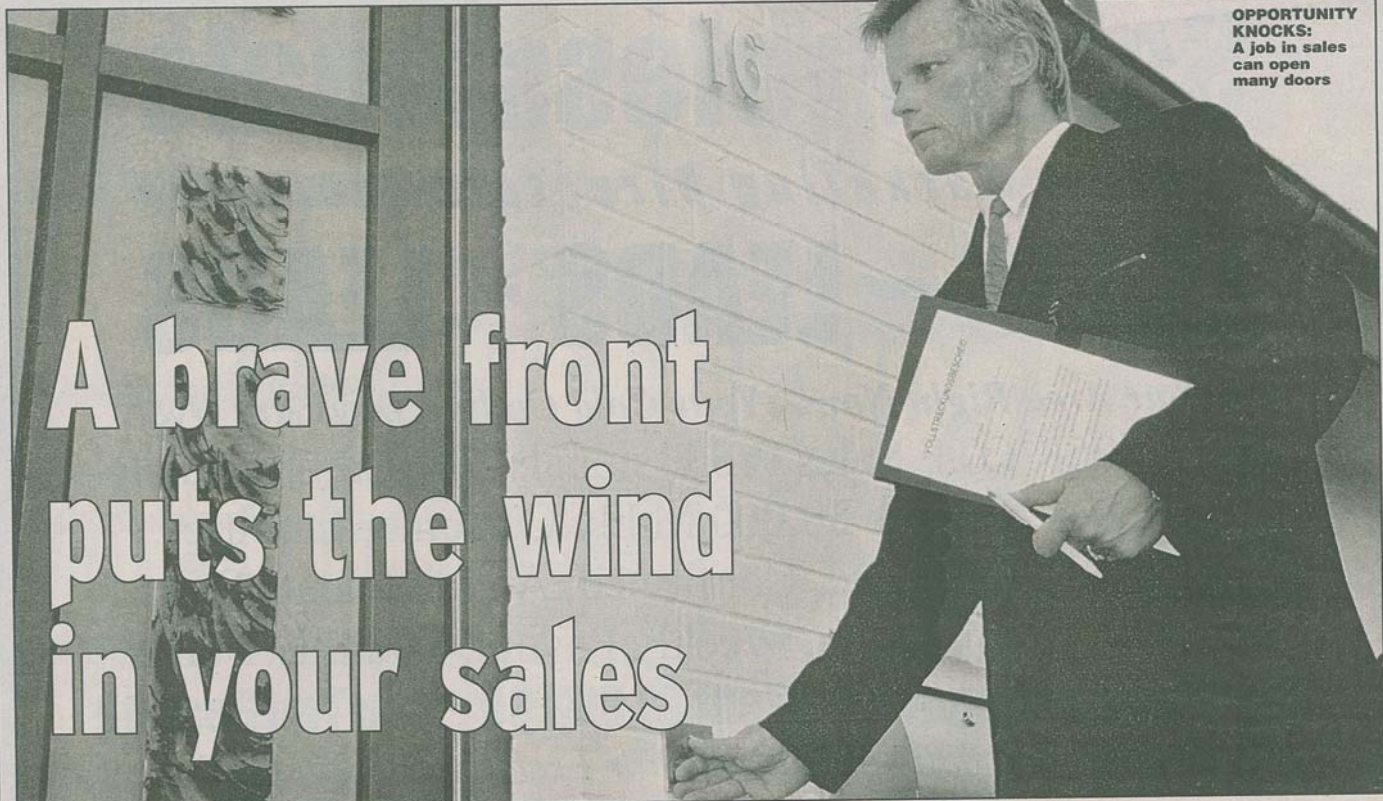


Careers

DAILY EXPRESS



OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS:
A job in sales can open many doors

A brave front puts the wind in your sales

SALES is one profession where you are judged almost exclusively by your results. The high pressure, target-driven environment may not suit the faint-hearted but, for those who thrive on a challenge and remain unfazed by failure, it offers pay and career prospects on a par with most other sectors.

Encompassing a variety of jobs across all industries, from finance to technical sales, roles can range from telesales representative – making sales by telephone – to key account management – talking to major clients about long-term development and bringing other team members into the selling process.

Service Innovation Group (SIG) recruits sales staff to handle a portfolio of client accounts, devising and delivering sales, promotions and

Working in the target-driven world of sales can prove to be something of a rollercoaster ride, with feelings of rejection from unsuccessful pitches counteracted by the elation of closing a deal. But as **KATIE JAMES** discovers, it is the extremes that, for many people, make it such a rewarding career...

merchandising campaigns to the consumer on their behalf.

The company is currently recruiting field sales staff based in venues such as supermarkets and shopping centres around the UK.

Head of sales and marketing recruitment Ena Viera-French said: "This is a very tough sales environment, where you can expect a high number of knockbacks. It would therefore appeal to people with experience in that type of direct sales environment."

Candidates need to be outgoing, resilient in the face of rejections and have excellent product knowledge, for which product or service-specific training is essential.

With SIG's current campaign, on behalf of utilities firm EDF, field sales candidates undertake a four-day induction course, which covers sales training, company training and includes two full days of product

training. Candidates are then asked to sit an exam, which they have to pass.

"It is absolutely crucial that sales personnel are familiar with all aspects of the product," says Ms Viera-French.

"Customers need reassurance about what they are buying – that is key to winning sales."

Success in sales requires more than just good communication skills and an outgoing personality.

Rob Barham, chief executive of TACK International, a leading provider of sales and sales management training, says:

"Whether you're a telephone account manager or a global account manager, you'll need curiosity to find out what a customer wants, empathy to identify with their issues, creativity to develop the appropriate solution, and resilience to handle the obvious rejection in the job. Above all, though,

I'd say the quality that will always stand you in good stead, whatever your sales role, is bravery."

Sales skills are also hugely transferable. Mina Galtta, head of recruitment at Eurotel, which provides telecommunications systems for businesses, said: "If you have the ability to sell, it doesn't matter what the product or services are, you'll be able to sell it."

"For example, our products include hi-tech IT telecommunications systems, but you don't need specific IT sales experience to be successful."

He says that Eurotel's field sales team have a particularly challenging task, selling to the small-to-medium sized enterprise market.

"Customers in that market tend to be so busy with the day-to-day running of their businesses, they don't have time to stop and think about the finer points of their telecommunications requirements,

even though their business may rely on it," he adds. "As a result they can be a little more hard-headed than their counterparts in larger firms when it comes to selling to them."

Hours vary depending on the sales environment. Direct sales, either door-to-door or in venues with high volumes of potential customers, will most likely involve evening and weekend work. But the financial rewards can be high.

At SIG, staff are paid a basic £11,000 salary, plus commission, which can take their pay as high as £32,000.

"It is hard work and you have to be upbeat, even when things are not going as well as you'd like," says Mr Galtta. "But having previously worked in field sales myself, I would say it is the most rewarding and enjoyable job in the world."

● INFORMATION:

Eurotel: 01422 864 000/
www.eurotel.com
SIG: 0208 457 6400/
www.sig-europe.co.uk
TACK International:
www.tack.co.uk
Direct Marketing Association:
www.dma.org.uk



ALTERNATIVE ROUTE:
AstraZeneca employee
Caroline Mullen

INSIDE KNOWLEDGE PROVES PRICELESS

SOME areas of sales require specialist knowledge as well as good sales skills.

Graduates in pharmaceutical sciences often find sales opportunities with drug companies such as AstraZeneca and GlaxoSmithKline, working with a range of clients that include GPs, hospital specialists and other healthcare professionals. Pharmaceutical sales professionals are also

required to pass exams in anatomy and physiology, pharmacology and product-specific subjects, set by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI), and abide by their code of ethics.

Caroline Mullen, 25, a biology graduate from Manchester Metropolitan University, joined AstraZeneca as a medical representative because it gave her the opportunity to use her science

background in a commercial environment. "Working in a lab does nothing for me," she said.

Initially she joined AstraZeneca as a personal assistant.

"I knew that I wanted to work in the pharmaceutical industry and that gave me the chance to research the jobs on offer. I spoke to a lot of sales reps, who let me shadow them, so I knew it was what I wanted to do," she added.

"I had never viewed myself as a salesperson but I realised

quickly that I could just be myself and use the skills I had been taught. I didn't have to be the pushy stereotype that some people imagine; the most important part of selling is listening."

Caroline's clients include hospital doctors and GPs.

She said: "When you see a customer make a decision based on the information you have given to them, you know that you have indirectly impacted on someone's life."