

Buying, Selling and Related Work

Do you think of yourself as a 'people person', someone who'd enjoy providing information and advice to people looking to buy a product or service? Or, maybe you'd prefer to negotiate with suppliers to get the best deal for your company or employer?

If either option applies, then this career area may be a good choice. Whether you are dealing with customers or suppliers you need to have good communication skills, a confident and positive outlook, and the ability to deal with complaints while you are busy.

The buying, selling and related work industry is one of the biggest employers in Scotland. The retail sector alone remains Scotland's largest private sector employer, with some 245,000 jobs, and is one of the largest contributors to the economy.

What areas can I work in?

As buying and selling affects most types of business, a wide variety of careers are available. Jobs and courses are split into three sectors: buying; call centres; and retail and sales.

This doesn't include careers in warehousing – you'll find those in the career area ['Transport and Distribution'](#).

To see the routes to getting into each of these sectors, take a look at our [Career Pathway](#).

What kind of companies can I work for?

Of the huge range of companies to work for, possible employers include:

- retail stores and outlets
- local authority and public services, including the Civil Service and National Health Service
- call centres for businesses such as banks, insurance companies, utility firms and supermarkets
- construction and manufacturing
- medical sales companies and pharmaceuticals.

What's the job market like?

According to the Scottish Retail Consortium, the Scottish retail industry is going through a period of transformational change. Factors such as the popularity of online shopping (which has been slowing) and increased business rates for retail units, has meant the decline of shop numbers and in-store sales for the past four years. However, they predict that jobs will be fewer, yet better, over the next decade, with 100,000 new jobs across the UK which didn't exist 5 years ago.

There are almost 6,120 call centres in the UK (compared to 6,175 in the previous year) with 780,000 agent positions (compared with 772,500 in the previous year). It is predicted that over the next 4 years the UK contact centre industry will shed over 33,000 jobs, and close 295 call centres. This is attributed to automated digital channels (with 31% of UK contact centres reporting the intention to implement artificial intelligence in the next 12

months), self service and the ongoing expected effects of Brexit.

There are lots of ways into these jobs. You can start straight from school with few or no qualifications, where you can work your way up to a senior position, such as retail manager. Many employers provide the opportunity to work towards vocational qualifications on the job to help with promotion. There are Modern Apprenticeship frameworks for both retail and procurement.

Facts and figures

- The retail industry remains the UK's largest private sector employer, with around 2.9 million employees, with a turnover of over £260 billion a year in sales.
- 13% of new Scottish businesses are retailers.
- The retail and distribution sector has the most contact centres at 12%, but the finance sector has the most agent positions at 18%.
- The finance industry remains the largest employer of call centres, with over 235,000 jobs in this sector.
- There are currently 108,553 people employed as retail assistants in Scotland, which is predicted to fall by 0.5% by 2025.

Want to find out more?

You can find out more about training and qualifications in Scotland on the [Scottish Retail Consortium](#) website.

Sources

- Employment by Occupation (Jan 2019 - Dec 2019), Nomis Labour Market Profile (May 2020)
- Retail Industry Sector Guide, April 2020 – [Career Transition Partnership](#)
- Scottish Retail, Key Facts and Figures (2019), Scottish Retail Consortium
- UK Contact Centres: 2020-2024, The State of the Industry and Technology Penetration (17th Edition), [Contact Babel](#) (December 2019)