

Sales promotion account executive

Job Description

A sales promotion account executive is involved in devising, developing and implementing ideas for promotional marketing campaigns. They ensure the smooth running of a campaign and coordinate the diverse activities that contribute to it. Sales promotion aims to increase sales or usage of products and services by providing additional incentives. It typically targets consumers, channel marketing partners and a company's own employees. Strategies include:

- competitions;
- free samples/gifts;
- in-store displays;
- money-off coupons;
- price promotions;
- money refunds;
- sales incentives;
- token collection;
- point of sales displays.

These incentives reach the consumer in a variety of ways, such as in retail outlets, at events and exhibitions, through direct mail, press advertising, websites, text messaging and other new media.

Typical Work Activities

Sales promotion account executives are key players in the organisation of promotional marketing campaigns. It is their responsibility to:

- ensure that the work proceeds according to plan;
- keep everybody involved in the campaign informed and up to date;
- provide central administrative support to the team.

Account executive is the normal entry-level position for new graduates. Tasks typically include:

- reporting to the account manager;
- briefing other agency staff, such as creative teams and production departments;
- liaising with clients, other agency staff and external suppliers of goods and services;
- researching ideas, clients and markets;
- attending meetings and sharing ideas at brainstorming sessions, reporting back details of discussions;
- monitoring the progress of work and producing status reports;
- writing and proof-reading copy;
- compiling budgets;
- costing supplies and projects;
- preparing and checking invoices and bills;
- maintaining information on projects and clients;
- assisting in the preparation of presentations to clients;
- carrying out a variety of administrative tasks.

Work Conditions

- Range of typical starting salaries: £18,000 to £23,000. Starting salaries for graduate trainees may be slightly lower outside London, but will usually increase within a year (salary data collected Feb 08).
- Range of typical salaries at account manager level, which most graduates attain in two to three years: £23,000 - £35,000 (salary data collected Feb 08).
- Salaries for account directors are around £40,000 - £57,000. It is possible that a graduate could reach this level within ten years (salary data collected Feb 08).
- Some posts attract a car allowance.
- This is not a nine to five job. A normal working day may end at 6 or 7pm and extra hours are common, especially when preparing to pitch to clients. The role may also involve working at weekends.
- While the work of a junior sales promotion account executive is largely office-based, it may involve visits to clients, printers and suppliers and attendance at events.
- Self-employment is commonly possible after several years' experience. Freelance staff are also increasingly used by agencies.
- A number of agencies offer flexible working arrangements to those with family responsibilities.
- Opportunities are available throughout the country. There are large agencies in all major cities and many small regional employers.
- Dress code depends on the agency, but is frequently informal or smart-casual in the office. Smart business dress may be required when meeting clients, or attending events.
- The necessity for travel within a working day increases with seniority.

Entry Requirements

Sales promotion work is open to all graduates, but a degree in the following subjects may increase your chances:

- marketing;
- business/management;
- economics;
- psychology;
- English.

Similarly, although this area of work is available to all Diplomates, an HND/foundation degree in the following subjects may improve your employment chances:

- marketing;
- business studies.

Many agencies run graduate training schemes but are willing to recruit Diplomates with the right background and personal qualities. Although HND/foundation degree entry may be at a lower level than for graduates (e.g. junior sales promotion executive level) subsequent opportunities for career development are the same.

Entry without a degree/HND/foundation degree is sometimes possible, but it may be at a junior level.

A pre-entry postgraduate qualification, particularly in marketing or business-related subjects, may prove helpful.

Many employers stress that enthusiasm, commitment and business awareness are more important than specific degrees and experience. But due to competition in the field, practice in promotional work, sales or customer service may be useful.

Candidates will need to show evidence of the following:

- good communication, both oral and written;
- good organisational ability;
- self-confidence;
- a willingness to take on routine administrative tasks;
- the ability to relate well to other people.
- a streetwise outlook.

The Marketing Communications Consultants Association (www.mcca.org.uk) operates a scheme to recruit graduates on behalf of member agencies (see their website for more details).

It is illegal for employers to discriminate against candidates on the grounds of age, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or religious faith. For more information on equality and diversity in the job market see Handling Discrimination (www.prospects.ac.uk/links/discrimination).

Training

The Institute of Sales Promotion (ISP) (www.isp.org.uk) offers various courses, including the ISP Diploma in Promotional Marketing and ISP Certificate in Promotional Marketing.

The diploma provides an in-depth introduction to all aspects of promotional marketing and gives candidates the basic foundation knowledge that is necessary to:

- appreciate the role of promotional marketing in the marketing mix
- plan, instigate and manage effective promotional marketing concepts;
- brief and coordinate the elements and suppliers involved in promotional marketing campaigns.

The course runs for four and a half months and assessment is in the form of a set of detailed questions, a set brief which requires a response and a multiple-choice questionnaire. The ISP offers a series of optional evening seminars and tutorial days to support diploma students. Candidates should be able to dedicate a total of around 60 hours to the course. Most agencies will expect account executives to obtain the Diploma through part-time study.

The ISP Certificate in Promotional Marketing is an introductory course that many agencies use as part of their training programme for new staff. The course helps candidates to converse and negotiate with clients, suppliers and other departments. Candidates attend two five-hour seminars and assessment is the form of in-depth questions and multiple-choice questionnaires. Candidates should expect to spend around 30 hours working on the course.

Graduates who enter sales promotion through the Marketing Communications Consultants Association (www.mcca.org.uk) graduate scheme attend a one-week induction programme covering the role of an agency and an account handler, the management of a sales promotion campaign, and skills such as presentation and negotiation.

Large agencies also provide in-house training and mentoring for new account executives.

Integrated agencies often expect sales promotion account executives to gain an understanding of other below-the-line areas (e.g. direct marketing, sponsorship) and often send executives on appropriate courses, such as those offered by The Institute of Direct Marketing (IDM) (www.theidm.co.uk).

Career Development

A typical path for a sales promotion account executive looking to progress their career might be to move to senior account executive, then on to account manager, followed by account director.

A qualification from The Institute of Sales Promotion (ISP) (www.isp.org.uk) may enhance the chances of career development, but performance and success in the job determine promotion prospects.

Sales promotion is a fast-paced business and progression to more senior roles may be rapid; it is not unusual to reach account director level in under ten years.

Further promotion beyond account director is possible. This could be to more senior strategic posts, such as group account director, or to board-level roles. However, as opportunities at this level are comparatively restricted, some account directors may move between agencies or, as frequently happens, choose to set up their own agency.

It may also be possible to move to client-side work as a number of large, fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies have openings for sales promotion managers.

Typical Employers

The Institute of Sales Promotion (ISP) (www.isp.org.uk) reports that there are over 300 sales promotion agencies in the UK, with smaller numbers of voucher suppliers and motivation agencies. However, traditional marketing disciplines, such as branding, advertising and sales promotion have blurred and few agencies now specialise exclusively in sales promotion. Traditional above-the-line advertising agencies (those specialising in television, radio, outdoor and cinema advertising) may also have a below-the-line/sales promotion division.

Most sales promotion account executives work in integrated marketing communications agencies, which offer clients a range of below-the-line services, especially sales promotion, direct marketing and new media. Some agencies will have a stronger focus on sales promotion than on other areas, but there is considerable overlap between these activities. An awareness of the whole spectrum of marketing communications tools is necessary in order to provide a comprehensive service to clients.

Direct mail is currently the number one medium for taking promotions to market. New media is making a significant impact on direct marketing techniques and sales promotion account executives may find themselves working in companies which employ the latest digital and data currencies such as:

- microsites;
- email virals;
- click-throughs;
- interactive TV;
- SMS and email with permission.

Opportunities also exist in client-side work with a number of large, fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies.

Sources of Vacancies

- Marketing Week (www.marketingweek.co.uk) (includes a Promotions and Incentives supplement in March and September of each year);
- Marketing (www.brandrepublic.com/marketing/);
- The Guardian (www.guardian.co.uk) (Mondays and Saturdays);
- Campaign (www.brandrepublic.com/campaign/);
- Revolution (www.brandrepublic.com/revolution/);
- Brand Republic Jobs (jobs.brandrepublic.com).

Recruitment agencies specialising in marketing and media, such as Pathfinders (www.pathfindersrecruitment.com) and Major Players (www.majorplayers.co.uk), can also be useful sources of vacancies.

Related Occupations

- Advertising account executive
- Marketing executive
- Media buyer
- Media planner
- Sales executive
- Sales manager

Information Sources

Bibliography

AGCAS and Graduate Prospects products are available from higher education careers services.

AGCAS Publications

[Advertising, Marketing and PR Sector](#), AGCAS Sector Briefing

[Handling Discrimination](#), AGCAS Information Booklet

[Options with Business Studies](#), AGCAS Options Series

[Options with Economics](#), AGCAS Options Series

Other Publications

[Campaign](#), Haymarket Publishing Ltd, Weekly

[The Guardian](#), Guardian Newspapers Ltd, Daily

[Marketing Week](#), Centaur Media plc, Weekly

[Marketing](#), Haymarket Publishing Ltd, Weekly

[Promotions and Incentives](#), Haymarket Publishing Ltd

[Revolution](#), Haymarket Publishing Ltd, Monthly

Websites

Brand Republic Jobs, jobs.brandrepublic.com

Major Players, www.majorplayers.co.uk

Pathfinders, www.pathfindersrecruitment.com

Sales Promotion, www.salespromo.co.uk

Addresses

Direct Marketing Association, DMA House, 70 Margaret Street, London W1W 8SS Tel: 020 7291 3300 URL:

www.dma.org.uk

The Institute of Direct Marketing (IDM), 1 Park Rd, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0AR Tel: 020 8977 5705 URL:

www.theidm.co.uk

The Institute of Sales Promotion (ISP), Arena House, 66-68 Pentonville Road, Islington, London N1 9HS

Tel: 020 7837 5340 URL: www.isp.org.uk

Marketing Communications Consultants Association, 4 New Quebec Street, London W1H 7RF Tel: 020 7535 3550 URL:

www.mcca.org.uk