

Careers in the Supply Chain

BUYER

National Occupational Classification Code – 1225

Alternative Titles:

- contract management officer
- contracts officer
- material management officer
- procurement officer
- purchaser, purchasing agent
- purchasing officer, supply officer



Industry Description

Buyers purchase general and specialized equipment, materials and business services for use or for further processing by their establishment.

General Job Description

Buyers may be directly involved in purchasing and expediting the delivery of goods.

Job Functions

Buyers' duties and responsibilities vary from one position to another but, in general, purchasing agents:

- Consult with other departments in the organization to determine what goods and services are needed.
- Develop strategic purchasing programs that consolidate company spending for specific commodities.
- Oversee the process of issuing requests for information and proposals, and tendering contracts to ensure that the process is fair, competitive, legal and provides best value for the organization.
- Analyze proposals or tenders.
- Purchase the right quality and quantity, at the right time and price, from the best possible source.
- Administer contracts for the supply of goods, services and space.
- Trace shipments, follow up undelivered goods, and resolve problems and disputes.
- Arrange the payment of duty and freight charges.
- Prepare and administer budgets and contracts.

In smaller organizations, purchasing agents may be directly involved in purchasing and expediting the delivery of goods. Buyers usually ask suppliers for quotations in writing or call for public tenders, sometimes using local newspapers or the Internet to advertise them. The basic criterion in awarding a tender is to obtain the maximum value for the money spent as well as satisfy all specifications and requests. Errors can be very costly to the organization.

In larger organizations, experienced buyers may:

- Supervise buyers, purchasing clerks or expeditors who review schedule shipments from suppliers and ensure deliveries are made on time and according to contracts.
- Develop negotiation strategies and lead teams in supplier negotiations for goods or services.
- Implement processes that facilitate employee access to goods and services and reduce administrative costs.
- Analyze commodity vendor data and forecast trends.
- Recommend and implement approved purchasing policies and procedures.
- Develop and implement supplier performance management strategies.
- Administer purchasing card programs.

Physical Demands Analysis

Buyers work in an office environment. Travel, meeting deadlines or taking inventory may require working longer, irregular hours.

Position Expectations

Essential Skills	
Reading Text	3
Document Use	3
Computation	2
Writing	3
Oral Communication	3
Thinking Skills	2
Working with Others	3
Computers	2
Continuous Learning	2

Scale: 0 = n/a, 1 = minimal, 2 = moderate, 3 = high

Salary Range

Visit Working in Canada, at <http://workingincanada.gc.ca/welcome.do?lang=en>, to get current information about this position, including salary information.

Pre-employment Skills

There are a variety of ways to become a purchasing agent. In the past, high school graduates have started in entry-level positions such as purchasing clerk, expeditor or junior buyer, or worked in departments where stock is processed (e.g., stores or shipping/receiving). However, most employers prefer to hire applicants who have post-secondary education in business administration/commerce, supply chain management or economics, particularly for positions that involve cost analysis, legal issues and contract administration.

A number of employers provide training on the job for newly hired purchasing agents. Computer skills and familiarity with commonly used word processing, spreadsheet and database programs, and other technology used in e-commerce and for ordering is a definite asset.

Courses in purchasing, buying and finance are offered by the Extension or Continuing Education divisions of universities, colleges and technical institutes and are definite assets for advancement. Individuals who have a university degree or college or technical institute diploma with courses in business administration or commerce may be able to start at a higher level and advance more quickly.

Some industries prefer to hire purchasing agents who have related background knowledge. For example, a chemical company might require purchasing agents in the company to have a diploma or degree in chemistry.

Individuals who have a university degree or college or technical-institute diploma with courses in business administration or commerce may be able to start at a higher level and advance more quickly. Those with management aspirations would be advised to also seek a professional designation in supply chain management, such as the Supply Chain Management Professional (SCMP)* from the Purchasing Management Association of Canada or the Certified Public Buyer certificate of the Universal Public Procurement Certification Council.

*Certified Supply Chain Management Professional (CSCMP) in Ontario.

Find information about supply chain-related educational offerings across Canada in the CSCSC's education compendium, at <http://www.supplychaincanada.org/en/education-information>.

Career Levels/Years of Experience

Career Levels	Position	Average Experience	
		From	To
7	Vice President	7 years	10 years+
6	Director	5 years +	6 years
5	Manager	4 years +	5 years+
4	Manager Trainee	3 years +	4 years
3	Coordinator/Supervisor	2 years+	3 years
2	Supervisor Trainee	2 years	3 years
1	Buyer	1 year	2 years

References

- NOC (National Occupational Classification Codes), Government of Canada – <http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2011/Welcome.aspx>
- Essential Skills – <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/index.shtml>