Career Spotlight

Purchasing Agent

Purchasing agents are in charge of all buying for their company. They buy the raw materials, goods, and services their company needs to maintain operations. Purchasing agents, or buyers as they are sometimes called, see that their company has a sufficient supply of the materials it needs to operate. However, agents must avoid tying up too much of the company's money in supplies. Their job is to balance quality with cost to ensure that the best purchases are made. It is vital that purchasers stay up to date on overall market conditions and price trends that affect what they are buying. They use the latest pricing information available on the Internet to compute the price of items, the cost of handling and transportation for those items, and the cost of time spent by workers who unload the stock and fill out shipping paperwork.

EDUCATION

Most employers require their purchasing agents to have a degree in business, mathematics, economics, engineering or a related field (Bachelor's degree or higher), but a purchasing agent with a Master's degree will have additional opportunities. Many certification programs are also available, such as the CPM, CPP, and CPE.

WHEN MATH IS USED

The problem solving skills and analytical skills used in mathematics are an essential part of a career as a purchasing manager. Purchasing managers find that they are called on to solve problems, handle details, and coordinate many activities during intense work periods. They must also be comfortable handling complex data and have the ability to see the data from numerous perspectives.

POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

It is good to know that this field is very competitive, so it wouldn't hurt to gain any competitive advantage available to you, such as a Master's degree.

FACTS

There is a great demand for psychometricians. "It's a good day to be a psychometrician," Gary Cook, an education researcher at the University of Wisconsin, said. "There's a limited set of people who are qualified."

CITATIONS

http://careers.stateuniversity.com/pages/658/Purchasing-Agent.html
http://swz.salary.com/salarywizard/layouthtmls/swzl_compresult_
http://www.ehow.com/facts_5008043_job-description-purchasing-agent.
http://www.ehow.com/how_5737292_become-purchasing-agent.html
Lambert, Stephen E., and Ruth J. DeCotis. Great Jobs for Math Majors. 2nd ed. New York City, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2006. 167-197. Print.
http://www.bls.gov/ooh/business-and-financial/purchasing-managers-buyers-and-purchasing-agents.htm#tab-2

MATH REQUIRED

- College Algebra
- Trigonometry
- Calculus I and II
- Linear Algebra
- Numerical Analysis & Differential Equations
- Probability and Statistics

Low-end Salary: $34,110/yr
Median Salary: $538,360/yr
High-end Salary: $105,610/yr

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