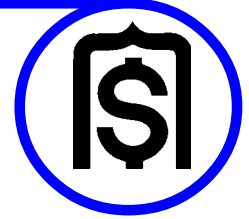


Product Demonstrators



Occupational Brief Title Codes:

- D.O.T.: 297.354-010
- G.O.E.: 08.02.05
- S.O.C.: 41-9011
- O*NET™: 41-9011.00
- N.A.I.C.S.: Any Industry
- H.O.C.: ESC

Occupational Subtitles:

- Salespersons-Demonstrators

Work Classification Based Related

D.O.T. Occupations:

- Fashion Models
- Knitting Demonstrators
- Painting Instructors
- Real Estate Guides
- Sales Representatives

Interests Based Related

G.O.E. Occupations:

- Auctioneers
- Fund-raisers
- Leasing Agents
- Manufacturers' Representatives
- Membership Solicitors
- Sales Representatives
- Telephone Solicitors
- Travel Agents

Skills Based Related

O*NET Occupations:

- Advertising Sales Agents
- Insurance Sales Agents
- Retail Salespersons
- Sales Representatives, Agricultural
- Sales Representatives, Instruments
- Sales Representatives, Mechanical Equipment and Supplies
- Sales Representatives, Medical

Noteworthy Quote:

"It is important for product demonstrators to be familiar with the product they are selling so that they can better market the product and answer customers' questions. The more they know about what they are selling, the more effectively they will sell it."

—A Member of The Direct Selling Association, Washington, D.C.

Product demonstrators (ˈprod-uct ˈdem-on-stra-tors) demonstrate products or merchandise and take orders from customers. They may work in an open market, in retail stores, or person to person in homes of potential customers.

Product demonstrators create public interest in buying products such as cosmetics, food items, and housewares. They may work with displays set up in stores, trade shows, fairs, conventions, or other locales open to the public. They wait for the buyers to come to them.

Product demonstrators help create a demand for goods. They show how a product or item works, explain its use, and describe its useful qualities.

Work Performed

Product demonstrators promote sales by showing products to customers. They work with an exhibit that displays and advertises the goods they are demonstrating. Often these goods are new products a company or store is introducing or promoting. In giving demonstrations they work from prepared scripts or outlines that emphasize the qualities and advantages of the products. They may also use graphic aids such as films, charts, slides, and brochures.

Product demonstrators may give samples to customers. If they are introducing a new cheese, for instance, they cut bite-size pieces of the cheese, insert toothpicks, and put them on a plate with crackers. As the shoppers walk by, the demonstrators greet them and invite them to sample the cheese. If the customers are interested, demonstrators suggest ways to serve the cheese, such as in snacks, in cooking, or in sandwiches. They may give customers a leaflet that tells about the product. Demonstrators answer questions about the ingredients in the cheese or the number of calories it has. If they do not know the answers, they make notes of questions and offer to mail the answers to the customers.

Cosmetic demonstrators show people how to apply makeup quickly and skillfully. They apply makeup on other demonstrators, store workers, willing customers, or themselves. As they work, they explain the advantages of the makeup.

Home appliance demonstrators show how to use appliances such as washers or dryers. If they show a vacuum cleaner, they may have several samples of floor coverings and some containers of the kinds of dirt in most homes. They show how well the vacuum cleaner picks up dirt, point out how easy it is to operate, and discuss how long the cleaner will last. They show how to use the attachments and may suggest that the customers themselves try the machine. They may take a cleaner apart to show its construction.

Demonstrators in stores may do some or all the sales work. They show products, take orders, take payments or make charges, and wrap the products. They stock and arrange shelves and cases and keep their department neat and clean. They may mark price tags and take inventory.

Some demonstrators at conventions work in booths or stalls set up in halls or trade centers. They show goods to store buyers, contractors, and others who may buy their products. If, for instance, they demonstrate paints, they show how easily

the paint flows, and how well it covers surfaces. They may have several samples showing how long the paint holds up under exposure to weather and other kinds of wear.

In a related field are *salespersons-demonstrators*. Some, working in an arrangement called a party plan, display and sell merchandise for guests gathered in the home of a person who serves as the party sponsor. They may sell health and beauty aids, jewelry, brushes, clothing, toys, kitchenware, books, encyclopedias, cosmetics, housekeeping and cleaning supplies, plastic ware, and grocery staples.

In this approach, party sponsors gather friends and neighbors in their home, and salespersons-demonstrators present products or merchandise to the group. This method allows salespersons to show products to many people at one time in a friendly, informal atmosphere. The host or hostess gets a discount for the use of the home and for assembling the potential customers.

To conduct a sales session, these salespersons first confer with the party sponsor to set up a date, time, and number of guests. On the prearranged day or evening they set up a display of sample merchandise. They meet guests and chat with them to establish a friendly and informal mood. They discuss items on display and demonstrate the uses of products. They may give a short talk on the products or line of goods and give guests catalogs or brochures that picture and describe the merchandise. They demonstrate the product and its uses and often give the guests small samples of the goods. They write orders and arrange for payments. They deliver the orders to the customers or to the party sponsor.

Sometimes these salespersons-demonstrators help the sponsors serve refreshments. They may talk with the guests to try to persuade them to serve as party sponsors by describing the benefits of sponsorship.

Salespersons-demonstrators keep records of their visits and sales so that they can anticipate their customers' needs. These sellers usually carry only a single product line. Some well-known names are Tupperware and Mary Kay Cosmetics. Since many of these products are consumable, they create repeat business for the demonstrators.

Working Conditions

Working conditions depend on where the demonstrators work and the kinds of products they show. Demonstrators in large retail stores work in pleasant surroundings. Other product demonstrators often work in temporary setups or stations. They may set up and tear down their demonstrations daily and transport the equipment and supplies. Occasionally these workers work out of doors in a plaza. Some demonstrators work at conventions where they show goods to wholesalers. Others may demonstrate products in industrial settings or in factories that are noisy and crowded with machinery.

Most product demonstrators work standing. They may operate equipment to show how it works, apply makeup to a customer, or prepare food at a stove.

Salespersons-demonstrators must transport their samples and merchandise to the homes of the party sponsors or to customers. They deliver the orders when they arrive.

Hours and Earnings

Retail store demonstrators may work full days or a few hours a day, perhaps during rush hours. Many work in blocks of time, which is an advantage for students or others who want part-time work.

Salespersons-demonstrators show their products in the homes of people. These demonstrators adjust their hours to suit their customers. They may work mornings, afternoons, or evenings. Most of these demonstrators have full-time jobs and work as salespersons-demonstrators only part time.

Earnings vary widely. Product demonstrators in small stores in small towns work out wage agreements with their employers. Most large stores pay minimum wages or higher. Stores with union contracts pay union scale or higher. Most union contracts and wage laws require that workers get time and a half for work more than forty hours.

The earnings of demonstrators also vary according to the products they sell. Earnings compare with those of salespersons who sell the same products. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in November 2004, product demonstrators earned an average of \$24,450 a year. Earnings ranged from a high of more than \$40,240 a year to a low of less than \$14,970 a year.

Most salespersons-demonstrators are independent contractors who work for a commission on sales, which may range from 10 percent to 40 percent of the suggested retail price of the item. Commissions and percentages vary with companies and with products. Salespersons-demonstrators often get bonuses or special prizes for outstanding sales records.

Education and Training

Employers prefer applicants with a high school diploma. High school subjects useful for this occupation include English, business, and mathematics. Foreign language skills are helpful. Employers may require that demonstrators for a specific line of products have special qualifications like creative cooking or other skills that can show a product to the best advantage.

Product demonstrators usually receive on-the-job training. Training is primarily product oriented because a demonstrator must be familiar with the product to demonstrate it properly. The length of training varies with the complexity of the product. Experience with the product or

familiarity with similar products may be required for demonstration of complex products, such as computers. During the training process, product demonstrators may be introduced to the manufacturer's corporate philosophy and preferred methods for dealing with customers.

Companies that conduct home sales through party plans offer training sessions and indoctrination conferences. New recruits may also learn the basics from experienced salespersons-demonstrators in their locality.

Licensing, Certification, Unions and Professional Societies

The Direct Selling Association (DSA) is the national trade association of the leading firms that manufacture and distribute goods and services sold directly to consumers. More than 150 companies are members of the association, including many well-known name brands. DSA offers various member resources such as research and publications, educational opportunities, and meetings, conferences, and seminars.

The National Retail Federation (NRF) is the world's largest retail trade association, with membership that comprises all retail formats and channels of distribution including department, speciality, discount, catalog, Internet, independent stores, chain restaurants and grocery stores as well as the industry's key trading partners of retail goods and services. NRF provides members with events and conferences, publications, and career resources. NRF also represents more than 100 state, national, and international retail associations.

In general, product demonstrators do not belong to a union. Most of these salespersons-demonstrators work under an agreement with suppliers from whom they buy their products for resale to consumers.

Personal Qualifications

Success in direct selling depends on poise, energy, assertiveness, and selling talent. Product demonstrators should have an outgoing personality that combines courtesy with pleasure in meeting and talking to others. They must be able to express themselves well. Salespersons must be well-groomed and neatly dressed. Demonstrators need patience to repeat the same sales talk over and over, and to answer the same questions from listeners. They need tact to deal with occasional rudeness.

Product demonstrators must have enthusiasm. If they seem bored with their goods, shoppers will feel the same and leave. People also resent false enthusiasm or a too-aggressive sales pitch. Consumers who sense that demonstrators are not sincere about the products will not believe what the product demonstrators tell them.

Occupations can be adapted for workers with disabilities. Persons should contact their school or employment counselors, their state office of vocational rehabilitation,

or their state department of labor to explore fully their individual needs and requirements as well as the requirements of the occupation.

Where Employed

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2004, about 89,570 product demonstrators worked throughout the United States. They work in stores or on the road, in cities, or in small towns. Stores in large cities most often need their services. Assignments at conventions or trade shows take place in large halls or centers in large cities.

Special demonstrators go where their customers are. Salespersons-demonstrators of household goods, books, toys, cosmetics, and other goods go to the homes of customers.

Employment Outlook

The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts employment for product demonstrators to grow faster than average through the year 2012. Job growth is due to the increase in the number of trade shows and greater use of demonstrators in department stores and various retail shops for instore promotions.

Job openings should be plentiful for product demonstrators. Employers may have difficulty finding qualified demonstrators who are willing to fill part-time, short-term positions. Product demonstration is considered a very effective marketing tool. New jobs should arise as firms devote a greater percentage of marketing budgets to product demonstration.

Entry Methods

Interested people should apply to the personnel offices of large stores or to companies that employ product demonstrators. Employment offices have job listings. Newspapers often have ads for these workers.

Professional societies often offer online career centers. The Direct Selling Association has a list of member companies. Job seekers should write to the Direct Selling Association for information on how to become a representative for one of these companies.

Advancement

Product demonstrators may make a career of this work, or they may advance to jobs in promotion or sales management. Successful demonstrators may enter retail sales. They may advance from sales work to become department buyers, merchandising managers, section managers, and store buyers or managers.

Demonstrators or salespersons-demonstrators in business for themselves, who show products in homes of potential buyers, can set their own limits. This kind of selling may offer a comfortable income to those with ambition and initiative.

A major asset for any individuals sincerely interested in advancement is the ability and initiative to learn new technologies and to use them to advantage in the pursuit of career goals. Product demonstrators, for instance, may acquire the knowledge and skills to demonstrate products on television shopping channels.

Some product demonstrators might be interested in entering a franchise operation. In this arrangement, the sponsoring company makes a partner of the franchisee, who buys a local branch or store of the company and shares the profits with the franchiser.

For Further Research

Direct Selling Association, 1667 K Street, NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20006-1660. Web site: www.dsa.org

National Retail Federation, 325 7th Street, NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20004-2808. Web site: www.nrf.com

Acknowledgments

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