

Career Opportunities in Trade and Commerce

Trade policy is becoming an important issue to more businesses in the United States as the barriers to trade and capital movement decline and foreign markets become more interconnected with US markets. With the growth of regional trade blocks and increased membership in international trade organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the impact of US and foreign trade policy on the success of businesses in the United States will continue to increase. Trade policy directly affects virtually all industries.

Trade policy and promotion includes a variety of activities including analysis of markets, increasing attendance at trade events, identifying agents and distributors, and disseminating information on export financing. Additional activities include representing business interests with officials of foreign governments, national government agencies, international organizations, and trade missions; identifying joint venture partners; researching development projects; and understanding foreign standards, testing, and certification requirements.

Career Paths and Entry Salaries

Entry-level titles include project coordinator, research assistant, government relations assistant, economic analyst, public relations specialist, and trade policy associate. A student with a graduate degree can expect a salary of \$38,000 –\$45,000, but professionals in the field emphasize that experience is key to both monetary and professional advancement.

Communication between business and government is critical given that US government policies directly affect a company's international business. Government policies and legislation can affect international tariffs, non-tariff trade barriers, export financing, export license and control requirements, counter-trade, and technology transfer. Therefore, people who have held positions in the public sector have experience critical to a firm's international activities. Export promotion at the Department of Commerce, export licensing at the State Department, and trade finance at the Department of Treasury are but a few examples of public sector work that would be considered desirable. The legislative branch also provides a setting for graduates seeking to develop knowledge valuable to global corporations. An individual who understands how government works and how to influence policy to the business sector's advantage is a particularly attractive candidate.

In the private sector, graduates will spend a considerable amount of time monitoring government activities to identify policies that could affect their organization and try to influence those policies. Again, a solid understanding of government procedures and intimate knowledge of key issues surrounding your business or industry is essential, as is the ability to research and analyze markets trends and political developments, both nationally and internationally. Inside knowledge of the federal government would be a great asset to any business seeking to influence trade policy.

Qualifications Necessary to Enter the Field

- Superior oral and written communication skills, especially in persuasion
- Ability to speak and present publicly
- Knowledge of the government process
- Intimate knowledge of current trade policy and regulations
- Functional expertise in areas such as international finance, political risk management, economics, strategic planning, or marketing

- Foreign area expertise
- Demonstrated foreign language proficiency
- Flexibility and ability to learn new concepts quickly
- Excellent quantitative and qualitative skills
- Strong economics background
- Demonstrated research and analysis in the field

Sample Group of Employers

Federal Government:

- Department of Commerce, www.doc.gov/
- Department of the Treasury, www.treasury.gov/
- Export-Import Bank of the United States, www.sba.gov/
- Foreign Agricultural Service, USDA, www.fas.usda.gov/
- Office of the US Trade Representative, www.ustr.gov/
- Overseas Private Investment Corporation, www.opic.gov/
- Trade Information Center, www.trade.gov/td/tic/
- US Commercial Service, www.trade.gov/cs
- US International Trade Commission, www.usitc.gov/

Private Sector:

- AT&T, www.att.com
- Eastman Kodak, www.kodak.com/
- ExxonMobil, www.exxonmobil.com/
- IBM, www.ibm.com/
- Johnson & Johnson, www.johnsonandjohnson.com
- Motorola, www.motorola.com/
- Northrop Grumman Corporation, www.northropgrumman.com/
- Pepsi-Cola International, www.pepsico.com/
- Procter & Gamble, www.pg.com/

Professional Organizations

- Alliance of Automobile manufacturers, <http://www.autoalliance.org>
- International Trade Association/International Real Estate Institute
- International Chamber of Commerce, <http://www.iccwbo.org/>
- United States Chamber of Commerce, <http://www.uschamber.org>

Resources for More Information

Associations/Websites:

- Federal Trade Commission, www.ftc.gov
- US Trade Representative, www.ustr.gov

- Federation of International Trade Associations, www.fita.org/index.html
- National Foreign Trade Council, www.nftc.org/
- US Chamber of Commerce, www.uschamber.com/
- US Council for International Business, www.uscib.org/
- US Small Business Association, www.sba.gov/
- Elliott School eRecruiting, <http://elliott.gwu.edu/~elliott/>
- Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, www.autoalliance.org/
- International Trade Association/International Real Estate Institute,
- International Chamber of Commerce, www.iccwbo.org/
- United States Chamber of Commerce, www.uschamber.org

Directories

The U.S. Trade Assistance Directory introduces thousands of exporters to the service providers they need for assistance in sales, marketing, finance, shipping, insurance, translation, travel and other essential services.

Publications

- Annual Report of the Foreign-Trade Zones Board
- Foreign trade zones (FTZs) are the U.S. form of free trade zones. They are licensed by the Commerce Department's Foreign-Trade Zones Board and operate under the supervision of the Customs Service. This 64th annual report contains details of the board's activities during fiscal year 2002 (October 1, 2001 through September 30, 2002).

Careers in International Business, Edward Joseph Halloran, McGraw-Hill (2003) – in career library