

## Car Salesperson Career Path Exploration

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### Introduction

This article provides factual information for those interested in a career as a car salesperson. The given information about the job specifications, such as duties and benefits, may prove beneficial in helping those interested decide if this career is right for them. The following information about the car salesperson career will be presented in the following order: responsibilities, how to become one, pay and benefits, job outlook, and an interview with someone currently working in this field.

### Responsibilities of a Car Salesperson

According to Shelly Field (2009, p. 158), who has written six books in the *Career Opportunities* series, car salespeople work at car dealerships where their main task is to help customers choose the vehicle that best suits their needs and desires. They must meet with their customers to learn about their expectations for their new vehicle (Field, 2009, p. 158). Then, car salespeople show customers potential car options, which may include joining the customers on a test drive (Field, 2009, p. 158). Those in this profession must disclose the price to their customers and persuade customers to think the price is a good deal (Field, 2009, p. 158; Phelps, 2019a). Car salesperson Thomas Phelps (2019a) says they also try to sell extra vehicle features. Field (2009, p. 159) explains that once a customer has purchased a vehicle, the car salesperson must complete paperwork, verify that sales agreements or contracts were completed properly, and ensure the vehicle is ready for purchase. Car salespeople tend to work long hours (Phelps, 2019a). Some may work for 12 to 14 hours a day while waiting for customers during most of that time (Phelps, 2019a).

### How to Become a Car Salesperson

As stated by Field (2009, p. 158), educational and experiential requirements for car salespeople vary depending on the dealership. Jayne Thompson (2018), a contributor for the *Houston Chronicle*, explains that a high school diploma or minimum GED is typically enough education. Some employers may prefer those with a college degree or previous experience in automotive sales, but other employers will not prefer those (Field, 2009, p. 159). Dealerships provide new employees with on-the-job training, and car salespeople can attend workshops, classes, or seminars about sales for additional training (Field, 2009, p. 159). Car salespeople must complete background checks and have a clean driver's license before gaining employment (Jacobs, 2018; Field, 2009, p. 159).

As for qualities, Phelps (2019a) states that car salespeople need considerable knowledge of vehicles along with passion for the vehicles they sell. Communication skills are essential for persuading and negotiating with customers (Jones, 2018, p. 1; Phelps, 2019a). Matt Jones (2018,

p. 1), a former car salesperson currently working as a car advice editor, explains that listening skills are important because car salespeople need to properly understand their customers' needs and desires for their future vehicle. Because car salespeople deal with prices, they would benefit from having skills with numbers (Phelps, 2019a).

### **Pay and Benefits**

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), in May 2018, the median hourly pay for retail salespeople in the automobile industry was \$16.67. However, Field (2009, p. 159) explains that car salespeople's wages can vary drastically because they can be paid with a salary, commission, or a combination of both. Dealerships tend to use compensation plans, so car salespeople are encouraged to sell the most profitable vehicles (Phelps, 2019a). Those in the profession can earn higher wages depending on their hours, type of vehicles sold, and their ability to sell (Field, 2009, p. 159). A supplemental benefit may include opportunities to drive demo cars while off the job (Field, 2009, p. 159).

### **Job Outlook**

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), from 2018-2028, employment for retail sales employees in general will decrease 2 percent. However, the automobile industry should not be affected as much by this decrease (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019). Phelps (2019b) explains that there will continue to be a need for car salespeople as long as there is competition in the automotive industry.

### **Interview with K.T. Stonewall at Victory Honda of Muncie in Indiana**

K.T. Stonewall, pictured in Figure 1, has worked as a sales consultant at Victory Honda of Muncie for about 25 years. K.T. was interviewed by Calandra Weaver and Dr. Edward Lazaros on October 22, 2019. The interview questions along with K.T.'s responses are listed in the following sections:

Figure 1: K.T. stands next to a car inside Victory Honda of Muncie.



**1. What previous experience prepared you for this position?**

*“In life, we are always selling regardless if it is for an entry level job or with friends. Life in general prepared me for selling vehicles” (K.T. Stonewall, personal communication, October 22, 2019).*

**2. What does a typical work day look like for you?**

*“A typical work day is long! I am communicating with people on the car lot or over the phone or online. I am also involved with prospecting. Prospecting means reaching out to people whom you’ve sold cars to get referrals and reaching out to people in the community in general who may need to purchase a vehicle. I send out birthday texts to let customers know that I remember their day” (K.T. Stonewall, personal communication, October 22, 2019).* In Figure 2, K.T uses his cellular phone to follow up with his contacts, and he also uses a corded phone to call his contacts as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 2: K.T. uses his iPhone to call his contacts.



Figure 3: He also uses a corded phone for calling contacts.



**3. What is your favorite part about your daily work?**

*“Talking to people and interacting with people is the most fun. I enjoy talking to people and hearing their stories and learning about them. We live in a social society so people love to talk about themselves”* (K.T. Stonewall, personal communication, October 22, 2019).

**4. What are the main challenges you encounter with your daily work?**

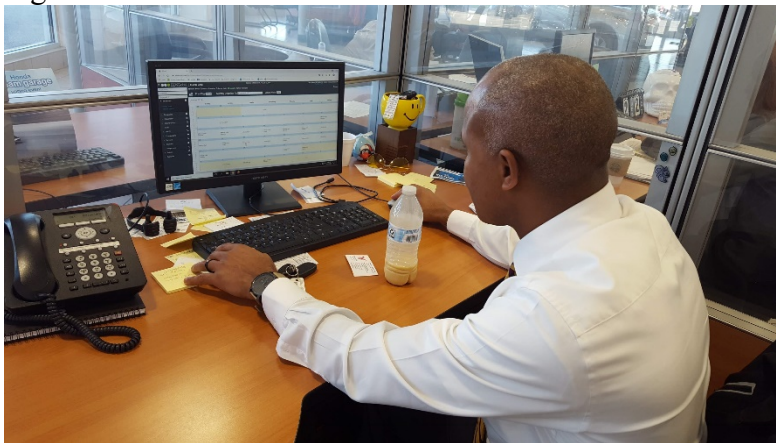
*“Time is the main challenge. We are here from 9:00AM until 8:00PM at night. The only holidays we have off are Thanksgiving and Christmas. The time commitment is the biggest challenge to this profession. Dealing with “No’s” as an objection are difficult also”* (K.T. Stonewall, personal communication, October 22, 2019).

**5. What kinds of fun technology do car salespeople get to use?**

*“I use my iPhone. Software can communicate with each other, so when I put something in the database, it transfers to my phone”* (K.T. Stonewall, personal communication, October 22, 2019). As displayed in Figure 4, K.T. uses their software to review the calendar of leads, prospects, and follow-ups. The calendar lists his daily duties, and K.T. reviews his notes on the contacts he needs to call.

*“I take notes on people’s cars, but I take notes on other things like their pets or children. I put these notes into Google calendar and under their contacts on my phone”* (K.T. Stonewall, personal communication, October 22, 2019).

Figure 4: This software shows him his who he needs to contact.



**6. What advice would you give someone who would like to get into this career?**

*“Be real natural. Selling today isn’t what people think it is. There’s very little push and selling information. People can find information about cars online. Be true to who you are as a person. Be genuine. They’ve already researched it, so now, they just need to be comfortable buying it from you”* (K.T. Stonewall, personal communication, October 22, 2019).

## Conclusions

Car salespeople aid customers in choosing their vehicles, so this position is best for those with effective communication and listening skills. It is also beneficial for those in the field to have knowledge and passion for the vehicles they sell. Despite the decrease in retail sales employment, there will still be a need for car salespeople. Minimal education is required, but those interested in becoming a car salesperson may want to gain previous experience in the automotive industry or attend workshops.

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