

Steps to become a marketer

There's not a single, definitive path to any job field. Marketing comes from people with all kinds of backgrounds — journalism, psychology, and more. Below is a mapped-out career path, as it's the most straightforward way to jump into a marketing job.

Education

If you're serious about a long-term marketing career primed for growth and variety, a bachelor's degree is the way to go. Four-year programs teach you the skills and competencies needed to join and excel in the competitive, fast-paced landscape that is the marketing world. They can help with public speaking, creative problem-solving, logistics, sales, and analytics.

The following degree programs can lead to a career in marketing:

- Marketing
- Management
- Business
- Economics
- Psychology
- Communications
- Public Relations
- Journalism

Nowadays, it doesn't matter as much what you major in as it does where you go to school or what you get involved in. Organizations like the American Marketing Association, National Association of Sales Professionals, or Pi Sigma Epsilon (a co-ed marketing fraternity) can help you get connected outside the classroom and off-campus.

Some marketers choose to extend (or return to) their schooling by pursuing a Master of Business Administration (MBA) or graduate degree in marketing. Both programs offer in-depth studies of marketing, but they differ in education specifics and structure.

MBA programs focus on the humanity of business, such as people management, organizational behavior, and leadership. Graduate marketing programs study consumer behavior, changes in the domestic and international marketplace, and growing digital trends.

You can combine these programs, of course, but their cost and completion time can be an issue for most students.

While we can't tell you if graduate school is the right choice for you, we can encourage you to research your options for career success. Here's a great article from U.S. News to help you figure out if an MBA or master's program is for you.

Internships and Co-ops

While a degree (or three) may not be in the cards for you, an internship or co-op most certainly should. There's no better education than real-life experience, and internships allow you to learn on the go while you're still learning in the classroom.

Marketing internships are valuable because they help you determine what kind of marketing you want to do. Do you like the creative side of marketing, or do you like working with numbers and analytics? Does promoting a single product excite you, or would you prefer to work on overall brand awareness?

Marketing departments have lots of moving parts, and internships and co-ops help you determine exactly which projects and promotions you'd like to join.

Lastly, internships are valuable currency in today's job market. Think about it: Thousands of students graduate each year and enter the workforce. That's not even considering how many workers are changing their minds and careers to pursue marketing jobs.

With some real-life experience under your belt, you automatically become a highly desirable candidate to employers. Some internships can lead to full-time jobs, too.

Many educational institutions offer internships through their business or communications departments, so if you're still in college, start there. Universities worldwide hold valuable relationships with local businesses that will hire students while still in school.

If going through your college or university isn't an option, sites like WayUp and Chegg Internships can help you find open positions. Idealist is an internship site that focuses on nonprofit roles, and Global Experiences helps you find international opportunities.

And, of course, you can always find open internships through LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and Indeed.

Skills and Aptitudes

Surgeons possess incredible patience and stability, psychologists are fantastic listeners, and chefs have excellent memory. Like any other professional role, great marketers tend to carry a particular set of skills. These can be skills you're born with or skills you develop and fine-tune through schooling and real-life practice.

Either way, the following skills and aptitudes are typically required to excel in any marketing role:

- **Creativity.** Whether you're writing a business plan or a campaign brief, being able to creatively spell out your vision is a must in the marketing field. In today's world, grabbing consumers' attention isn't easy. Marketers have to constantly think up new ways to attract their audience and entice them to make a purchase — great marketers are creative.
- **Problem-solving.** Imagine the conundrum marketers faced when DVR came out and commercials became futile. What about the overwhelming switch to mobile versus desktop? These trends in the marketplace forever changed the way businesses sell, and marketers were on the front lines of those shifts, huddling and figuring out how to solve new problems that came their way. Great marketers are problem-solvers.
- **Passion for numbers.** Even the most right-brained marketers have a passion for numbers and ROI. How else do companies know that their promotional efforts are working? Whether they're tracking retweets, click-throughs, or video views, marketers live and breathe metrics. Great marketers are analytical so they can prove the value of their work.
- **Curiosity.** The marketing landscape is ever-changing, and opportunities arise every day for businesses to promote their products in new and exciting ways. But marketers wouldn't be able to seize these opportunities if they don't continually ask, "What if?" Great marketers stay curious and are lifelong learners.