

STEM CAREERS AND SKILLS OF THE FUTURE

The STEM Alliance proposes a series of online events (webinars and chat discussions) and career sheets that aim to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers with role models. Representatives from companies – partners of the STEM Alliance – are invited to give online presentations to inform teachers about possible careers in their companies. Based on content picked up from the webinar and drawing on the experience of STEM experts, the STEM Alliance will then create a career sheet for the specific career profile presented in the online event. The career sheet will serve as an awareness-raising tool for teachers and career guidance officers, as well as providing valuable information for the companies' own awareness-raising campaigns.

The following document contains suggestions of the questions that can be highlighted during webinars and chats. Moreover, the answers provided by professionals will be transformed into the career sheets – short articles that will be published on the STEM Alliance website and will be accessible by teachers.

Please do keep in mind that the information in this career sheet relates closely to the context of the professional whose experience the career profile is based on. STEM professions, studies and challenges vary between countries and industry sectors.

Commercial Manager

Questions

What is this profile about?

A Commercial Manager position is a leadership position for experienced members of a specific STEM industry, because you need to have an extensive knowledge of the field you are working in. A Commercial Manager manages a unit of a business and all its activities. In this position, you are responsible for a wide range of tasks that ensure that the company operates smoothly and efficiently. You oversee all activities in your business unit and you manage your own team. You must work to keep the company's clients and employees happy and to bring new clients on board. Please keep in mind that the title of the position is highly interchangeable across industries

What does a typical working day look like?

The tasks of a Commercial Manager guarantee that every day looks different, because managing a business unit comes with a wide variety of tasks and responsibilities. You are coordinating a team, so the first thing you have to do is to check that everything is running smoothly in the office. A Commercial Manager is responsible for acquiring new clients, keeping old clients and exploring ways to expand. Therefore, you negotiate with clients, review offers, brainstorm with your team and keep up-to-date on the latest innovations. You also spend time reviewing contracts, financial reports and the activities of your team. As a Commercial Manager,

you always have the advantage that you can delegate tasks to your team members – this way not all tasks take up your time, but you are still responsible for their results. To manage your team, you update the company rules from time to time, you distribute activities and oversee that everyone is working as you expect them to. This position is likely to include overtime: you might have a dinner meeting with a new client; you might have to travel to another country to negotiate about a product.

How much and what does one needs to study?

For this position, you need at least an undergraduate degree, but more likely also a Master's degree. Commercial Managers often come from a finance, business administration or marketing background, but you can also rise to this position from a STEM background if the company you work at is in the STEM field. In this case, you might have to complete an MBA later on in your career. It is important for students aiming to become a Commercial Manager to have an affiliation with both engineering and commercial activities. In addition, you will need years of work experience for this high-level position.

What are the key skills needed?

This position requires outstanding communication and negotiation skills as well as a good sense of business and commerce. You need to be flexible, but organised, have good project management skills and a thorough knowledge of your industry. This managerial position requires great leadership and organisational skills. Strategic development and an analytical mind-set can also help you fill this position successfully.

What are the possible places of employment?

Every large company that operates commercial business, in almost any field, might look for Commercial Managers.

This is a job for you, if...

- *you want to move up the ladder in a business administration direction*
- *you have a business and growth-oriented mind-set*
- *you like to work under pressure and deadlines*
- *you enjoy coordinating a team*
- *you enjoy liaising with many different stakeholders*

A Commercial Manager should be:

- *a good negotiator*
- *an analytical and strategic thinker*
- *organised*
- *a problem-solver*
- *a motivator*
- *flexible*

What are the challenges of this job?

This job comes with a large range of responsibilities, both towards your business and towards your team. You find that many different tasks, problems and challenges might come up at the same time, which could become stressful. You are expected to coordinate the needs of different

stakeholders, while also optimising your results. This position is often not a regular nine-to-five job, so you will have to be flexible and be able to balance the large workload with your personal life.

Advice to teachers and parents:

Encourage your students to pursue STEM education, because when they master their industry, they will get opportunities to climb the ladder and fill positions like this one, possibly with a Master of Business Administration (MBA) training, exciting professional development opportunities, travelling and great financial compensation. It is a great prospect to aspire to!

More information:

This information is based on content picked up from the webinar [STEM careers and skills of the future – engineer careers in the petrochemical industry](#) of 7 February 2018 and drawing on the experience of the expert Jochem Meijknecht, Commercial Manager at [LyondellBasell](#), who spoke during this online event.

Learn more (links to the external resources/webpages related to the career profile):

<https://hiring.monster.co.uk/hr/hr-best-practices/recruiting-hiring-advice/job-descriptions/commercial-manager-job-description.aspx>

The article is written by *Monster for Employers*.

<http://www.rics.org/be/news/news-insight/comment/from-qs-to-commercial-manager-whats-the-difference/>

The article is published on *RICS*.

<https://commitmentmatters.com/2015/12/09/what-does-a-commercial-manager-do/>

<https://commitmentmatters.com/2015/12/08/there-are-too-few-contract-and-commercial-managers-and-thats-a-problem/>

These articles are written by *Tim Cummins*, published on his blog *Commitment Matters*.

<https://www.careerstructure.com/careers-advice/profiles/commercial-manager>

This article is published on *Career Structure*.

<https://support.iaccm.com/support/solutions/articles/9000059134-the-definition-of-commercial-management-and-a-commercial-manager>

This article is published on the website of *IACCM*.