

How to Move to a New Industry in Sales

November 7, 2023



Career changes are common in the sales landscape. Over the years, your experiences in the sales landscape can gradually guide you towards new positions, complementary roles, and even different industries. In fact, this is one of the reasons sales careers are so enticing.

The skills you develop as a sales professional can easily be transferred into other marketplaces and environments (like customer success), without the need for much additional training.

However, pivoting to a new role, or a new industry, isn't as simple as just applying for roles that match your interests. If you want to ensure your career change delivers the right opportunities and outcomes, you need to take a strategic approach.

Changing Industries as a Sales Professional

In every industry, career changes happen more often than you might realize. [Studies show](#) that the average person between the age of 18 and 34 changes careers between 5-8 times. However, changing careers can be a daunting prospect, particularly if you're moving to an entirely new industry.

When your career path takes you to a new sector, such as the technology or healthcare landscape, even if you have [existing sales skills](#) you can use in your role, there are challenges to overcome.

You need to learn about a new target market, and understand the priorities and pain points that drive sales in your new industry. There are new sales processes and methodologies to learn, as well as a new demand to learn about products and services you may never have encountered before.

However, as marketplaces change, and customer trends evolve, the sales landscape does provide a lot of flexibility to job seekers. The key to success is following the right plan.

Step 1: Defining Your Core Skills and Values

To take the next step in your career path, and switch to an industry that better aligns with your goals and priorities, you need to invest in some self-reflection. Start by identifying your areas of expertise. For instance, are you extremely good at building rapport with executive level clients, and developing the relationships necessary to enhance each customer's lifetime value?

Are you brilliant at [demonstrating emotional intelligence](#), and earning the trust of customers making difficult purchasing decisions? Your skills will help you to identify industries where you might be more effective. For instance, if you're great at building relationships, a sales career in the tech or software industry, reliant on recurring subscriptions might be suitable for you.

Next, think about your values and interests. Which sectors are your passionate about? Choosing an industry that interests you, such as healthcare, or technology, will guide you towards a sales career that feels more fulfilling and engaging.

Step 2: Learn about Your New Industry

Once you've determined which industries can benefit from your current skills, and which sectors you feel the most passionate about, dive into research. Learn as much as you can about the sales processes and strategies used in that landscape. For instance, in the software space, [account based marketing](#) is a common way to increase sales win rates.

Find out what kind of customers the businesses in your chosen industry focus on, and what their pain points, goals, and preferences are. Identify key industry trends and challenges. For instance, in the communications space, you might need to learn more about generative AI, and how its influencing the development of communication and contact center software.

You can join industry forums, follow thought leaders online, and even read books, listen to podcasts, or watch videos to expand your knowledge in a specific sector.

Step 3: Define Opportunities for Learning and Improvement

As a sales professional, you're likely to have a number of transferrable skills which can be useful in any new industry you choose to pursue. Your sales experience in everything from cold calling to [social selling](#) can transcend industry borders. However, there may be other skills you need to develop before you can effectively move into a new industry.

Take the time to identify prospective companies you might want to work for, and learn about their product and service offerings. This will give you an insight into potential skills you may need to develop to become more effective in a new role. For instance, you might have to learn how to use new software and technology

to drive your sales strategies in certain spaces.

You might also find that companies in your new industry prioritize sales professionals with knowledge of specific methodologies, such as account-based selling. Reviewing job descriptions shared by businesses and comparing them to your own resume will help here.

Step 4: Invest in Upskilling Opportunities

Once you've identified the gaps in your resume, the next step is to look for effective ways to fill them. There are many different routes you can explore here. One option is to reach out to thought leaders and other experts in your chosen industry, to learn from their experiences. Finding a mentor who can guide you through the transition into a new industry can be extremely valuable.

It not only gives you behind-the-scenes knowledge and insights to work with, it also ensures you have some of the support you need to navigate a difficult sales career migration. Other options include attending events and seminars connected to your industry, so you can learn from speakers and innovators in your chosen space.

You can also take online courses, attend classes, and [subscribe to community environments](#), like the Hardskill Exchange, where you can easily find coaches and relevant skill-building opportunities.

Step 5: Updating your Professional Brand and Resume

Now it's time to update your professional brand, to ensure you can 'sell yourself' to the employers in the industry you want to serve. Once again, it helps to look at job descriptions from relevant companies in your niche to find out what kind of skills and abilities employers are interested in.

Update your resume to focus on the skills and attributes most relevant to the sales career you want. For instance, if you want to work in the technology sales landscape, highlighting your experience with various types of software and hardware can be useful. It can also be helpful to draw attention to your ability to build relationships with consumers, and the results you've achieved in the past.

Professional resume writers and similar experts can help you enhance your resume and cover letter to make them more appealing to the businesses you want to work for. Aside from enhancing your resume and cover letter, remember to consider other aspects of your professional brand, such as your social media presence. Collecting LinkedIn endorsements, and showcasing your skills with certifications from courses online can help to make you a more valuable candidate.

Step 6: Constantly Expand your Network

No matter what you want to accomplish in your sales career, few things are more important than developing a comprehensive network. Connecting with thought leaders, innovators, and other sales professionals in your chosen industry is an excellent way to open the door to new opportunities.

Just as you can find 'inroads' into potential companies for sales strategies by connecting with champions and executives, you can access more sales jobs with the right network. Your network will help you to track down opportunities you might not find on your own. There are even forums and groups available on channels like LinkedIn that can give you access to jobs that might not be listed on other hiring channels.

Developing your network won't just make it easier to find the sales job you want in your new industry. It also ensures you can constantly learn from a wide range of industry professionals, and stay up to date on changes in your chosen sector.

Step 7: Invest in Lifelong Learning

Finally, one important thing to remember if you're moving to a new industry in sales, is that once you've gotten the job you want, the work doesn't stop. The best sales professionals know that if they want to stay relevant and productive, in any field, they need to commit to lifelong learning.

This means following influencers and thought leaders online, so you never fall behind on changing market trends, customer expectations, and opportunities. It also means working to consistently improve your transferrable sales skills, from [cold calling](#) and emailing to social selling.

A commitment to lifelong learning will make you a more valuable resource to any company you choose to work with, and open the door for new opportunities and promotions. It also ensures you'll have a better opportunity to transition into new industries and roles in the future, by giving you valuable skills that apply to any sector.

Moving into a New Industry in your Sales Career

The world of sales is dynamic and ever-evolving. In this landscape, professionals have endless opportunities to explore new roles, shift into different industries, and serve a wide range of companies. However, if you want to ensure you can easily transition into different avenues throughout your sales career, you need to take the right approach.

Make career decisions carefully, based on a deep understanding of your priorities, skills, and goals. Invest in developing your network, so you can open the door to new roles when they emerge, and stay in-tune with the changing marketplace.

Most importantly, commit to constantly developing and expanding your skillset, so you can thrive in any sales role, no matter which industry you serve.

Commit to developing the transferrable skills you need to succeed in any industry today, by joining the [Hard Skill Exchange](#), for access to coaches, development opportunities, and new connections.??