

Career Sheet: Sales Manager



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My name is Elizabeth, Swiss and USA dual citizen born in Taiwan and raised in Switzerland. I studied Materials Engineering (BSc) and Micro- and Nanosystems (MSc) at ETH Zurich in Switzerland, with a total of 3 abroad experiences in Germany, China, and Canada. After university, I joined Texas Instruments (TI) Switzerland as a technical sales representative (TSR) for industrial customers, and I also worked as an applications engineer. Later, I moved to China to start a new role as Sales Manager in the automotive sector.



OVERVIEW OF THE JOB

My job consists of working with customers and product development teams to identify the best electronic components to meet the requirements of new products, for example, next-generation electric vehicles. In other words, it involves identifying the best technical/commercial fit and collaborating to ensure future investments will meet customers' needs.



WHAT INSPIRED YOU

I discovered my passion for electronics towards the end of my bachelor's degree, when interning in the Quality department at Texas Instruments. I realised the relevance and future of electronics (semiconductors) in every aspect of our lives: from mobility to work or communication. I wanted to be a part of a field where I could see its impact on my life and society.



TYPICAL WORKING DAY

Every day is different, but the key parts are:

- 1) Discussing project requirements/timelines with customers and their overall goals for their projects.
- 2) Identifying the best solutions in the TI portfolio to meet the customers' requirements, evaluating the possibility to use new solutions in designs, giving feedback to customers for next-generation product development.
- 3) Evaluating commercial and supply chain aspects of the business and leveraging colleagues to extend their industry and technical understanding for a focus market.

In sum, in a daily basis, I check for Texas Instruments (TI) costumers, what are the technical and commercial requirements of their projects, and how can we help them meet their goals. For example, if a product needs to be smaller or thinner, how can we accommodate new electronic functionalities to this product?



STUDY & CAREER PATH

I decided to study materials engineering last minute (instead of economics) because I realised it would be easier to learn about business in my future job than to catch up on engineering skills and knowledge. I became strongly fascinated with electronics/semiconductors in the last year of my bachelor's degree, and I specialised in it during my master's.

During my internship in China, I felt very unsettled and overwhelmed for 80% of the time because everything was completely different from what I was previously familiar with. I only started to feel at ease at the very end. This transition gave me some energy and increased my courage and confidence to confront change and difficult situations. I learnt to keep going instead of letting frustration get the better of me.



KEY SKILLS

- **Systems Analysis:** the understanding of the different electronic functional blocks that are needed to build a product (for example, the seat motor or the electric charging system of a car).
- **Analytical Thinking/Problem Solving:** the understanding of the root cause of challenges and the ability to devise possible paths to solve them in the short and long term.
- **Business Analysis:** the understanding of what is driving the business today and where the key opportunities lie.
- **Social Skills:** the ability to find common ground with colleagues and customers that have different personalities and points of view.
- **Curiosity:** the capacity to keep track of all the news and innovations taking place in a very changing and fast-paced industry.
- **Adaptability and Accountability:** the ability to deliver on commitments and build trust in your work or your organisation's work.



CAREER PROSPECT

There are several opportunities, which can be separated into industries and roles:

Industries: for example, automotive industries or industrial equipment, where the main functions are enabled by electronics (robots, power tools, climate control, etc.), and industries adjacent to that business, such as supply chains, manufacturing, or chip design.

Roles:

- Customer-centric (sales, customer service, marketing, business development)
- Interface roles (project managers, program managers, applications managers)

- Adjacent roles: procurement or strategy teams, but also including technology consulting/management, involving some real-world experience.
- “Hidden Roles”: for instance, operations or data analysis roles. These jobs aim to design and build tools that can be used to analyse high volumes of data to identify business opportunities; that is, “how to use data to obtain meaningful conclusions.”



CHALLENGES

We face new and different challenges every day, but they can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Coordinating several tasks at the same time and following up on their progress, either internally or in relation to our customers.
- 2) Setting the right priorities to allocate time to the most rewarding tasks.
- 3) Finding ways to reach your goals through different means or people, and constantly adapting to the most convenient and necessary actions.

YOUR ADVICE TO STUDENTS

I would recommend students to embrace the learning process and opportunities STEM careers offer, although it could be stressful and hard sometimes. If you are interested in STEM, but you often think “it is very hard” or “it is not what people do”, why not give it a shot? There is much joy to be taken from all the opportunities STEM careers offer. In addition, and based on my personal experience, I would also recommend students to pay more attention to their programming classes and to invest more time in learning languages while they are studying. Both things would make their lives much easier.

YOUR ADVICE TO TEACHERS AND PARENTS

It is very important to challenge ourselves to question our own unconscious biases and how do we pass them to younger generations; the underlying thought “STEM is only for boys and nerds” must be challenged. In my case, my parents and teachers were crucial in encouraging my interest in STEM from an early age, rather than following the path set generations ago.