Career Opportunities in
TRADE POLICY + PROMOTION

Description of the Field
Trade policy is becoming an important issue to more businesses in the United States as the barriers to trade and capital movement decline and foreign markets become increasingly interconnected with US markets. With the growth of regional trade blocks and increased membership in international trade organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the impact of US and foreign trade policy on the success of businesses in the United States will continue to increase. Trade policy directly affects virtually all industries.

Trade policy and promotion include a variety of activities such as analyzing markets, increasing attendance at trade events, identifying agents and distributors, and disseminating information on export financing. Additional activities include representing business interests to foreign government officials, national government agencies, international organizations, and trade missions; identifying joint venture partners; researching development projects; and understanding foreign standards, testing, and certification requirements.

Career Paths
Professionals in the field emphasize that experience is key to both monetary and professional advancement.

Communication between businesses and the government is critical, given that US government policies directly affect a company’s international business. Government policies and legislation can affect international tariffs, non-tariff trade barriers, export financing, export licensing and control requirements, counter-trade, and technology transfer. Therefore, people who have held positions in the public sector have experience critical to a firm’s international activities. Export promotion at the Department of Commerce, export licensing at the State Department, and trade finance at the Department of the Treasury are but a few examples of public sector work that would be considered desirable. The legislative branch also provides a setting for graduates seeking to develop knowledge valuable to global corporations. One who understands both how government works and how to influence policy to the business sector’s advantage is a particularly attractive candidate.

In the private sector, graduates will spend a considerable amount of time monitoring government activities to identify policies that could affect their organization and then trying to influence those policies.

ENTRY-LEVEL TITLES

- Project Coordinator
- Research Assistant
- Government Relations Assistant
- Economic Analyst
- Public Relations Specialist
- Trade Policy Associate

QUALIFICATIONS TO ENTER THE FIELD

- Superior oral and written communication skills, especially in persuasion
- Ability to present and speak publicly
- Knowledge of the government process
- Intimate knowledge of current trade policy and regulations
- Functional expertise in areas such as international finance, political risk management, economics, strategic planning, or marketing
Again, a solid understanding of government procedures and an intimate knowledge of key issues surrounding one’s business or industry is essential, as is the ability to research and analyze market trends and political developments, both nationally and internationally. Inside knowledge of the federal government would be a great asset to any business seeking to influence trade policy.

Sample Group of Employers

ASSOCIATIONS
- CATO Institute, Trade Policy - www.cato.org/research/trade-policy
- Federation of International Trade Associations - www.fita.org
- Global Public Policy Institute - www.gippi.net
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy - www.iatp.org
- International Chamber of Commerce - www.iccwbo.org
- National Federation of Independent Business - www.nfib.com
- National Foreign Trade Council - www.nftc.org
- US Chamber of Commerce - www.uschamber.com
- Washington International Trade Association - www.wita.org
- Women in International Trade - www.wiit.org
- World Trade Point Federation - www.tradepoint.org

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
- Department of Commerce - www.commerce.gov
- Department of State Trade Policy and Programs - www.state.gov
- Department of the Treasury - www.treasury.gov
- Office of the US Trade Representative - www.ustr.gov
- Overseas Private Investment Corporation - www.opic.gov
- Trade Information Center - www.export.gov

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS
- International Monetary Fund, Trade - www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/imfwto.htm
- World Trade Organization - www.wto.org

QUALIFICATIONS TO ENTER THE FIELD (CONTINUED)

+ Foreign area expertise
+ Demonstrated foreign language proficiency
+ Flexibility and ability to learn new concepts quickly
+ Excellent quantitative and qualitative skills
+ Strong economics background
+ Demonstrated research and analysis in the field

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Future Challenges of the Profession

Some of the issues facing trade policy professionals in the future include the United States’ global trade deficit, especially with China, and what the effects will be with the American market increasingly saving rather than spending its earnings. The United States would face additional challenges as new free trade agreements develop with Colombia, South Korea, and others. In addition, the spread of the internet throughout the world, with improved speeds in developed nations and internet-accessible mobile phones in emerging markets, will continue to present new opportunities and challenges for those in the trade policy field.