

# WID - Career Blueprint Series - Sales

[00:00:00] Welcome. My name is Andrew Baron. This is Well... It Depends!, the podcast for I address financial decisions that can't be answered with a simple yes or no. This episode of, Well... It Depends! will continue our career blueprint series. We discuss some of the goals, challenges, and tradeoffs that different professions exhibit over a career.

Today we're talking about people who work in sales. But before we begin, a short disclaimer. This is being recorded on November 7th, 2025. The contents of this podcast are strictly for informational purposes only. Nothing said should be taken as [00:01:00] investment, tax, or legal advice. It is important to consult with a professional before making any financial decisions as to strategies discussed may not be suitable for you specifically.

Getting into it. Today we're talking about sales professionals. Why do people choose this career? Sales is one of the few careers where your income is directly tied to your output. In most careers, you earn more by waiting for promotions or obtaining degrees in sales.

If you perform, you get paid. People choose sales for a few big reasons. There is a high upside of income between commissions and bonuses. There's a low barrier to entry as you can enter the field without obtaining advanced degrees. Performance matters much more than your tenure. There is no ceiling to how hard you [00:02:00] can work or how much you can make. Sales rewards people who are competitive, resilient, and good at communicating.

Now, let's look at some of the trade-offs, and there are some pretty big ones. There can be major income volatility. Some months are great, balanced out by terrible months. Some industries have \$0 base salaries, which really makes a feast or famine lifestyle. You are likely under high scrutiny from management and measured constantly and expected to perform.

These factors lead to high burnout and turnover. It is a career where value is based on what you did this quarter, not what you did last year. Now let's look at the financial picture by stage of career. Early career, think twenties. These salaries are often on \$50 K plus commission except in \$0 industries.

A lot of learning with prospecting, cold [00:03:00] outreach and learning to handle objections. There can be real financial danger if you spend like every month will be a big commission month. Thirties and forties. Account executives

and territory managers often earn six figures. While top performers can make millions per year, in some industries. Lifestyle creep can be a serious risk, as your spending can grow with commissions.

This is likely your peak earning period, so savings rates should be north of 20%. Late career, fifties and sixties. If you've lasted this long, many have transitioned into leadership roles such as sales manager or VP of sales. Others stay on as individual contributors because the pay can be higher.

Travel and stress may become bigger considerations than money for some people. Now, let's look at some examples. Example one, Jason, the closer. Jason [00:04:00] started out as a rep earning \$50,000, but by his early thirties, he becomes an account executive earning more than \$450,000 in several strong years. He upgrades this lifestyle to match a luxury car and expensive rent and fun vacations.

But when quota is tightened and he misses a few quarters in a row, his income drops and he struggles to adjust. The lesson here is that high income doesn't automatically become wealth. Example two, Michelle the Saver. Michelle starts in medical device sales at 26 and quickly starts earning more than 200 K consistently, but she saves aggressively and uses her bonus to pay on her mortgage early and invest consistently by 45.

She's financially independent. Lesson here is that peak earnings are temporary. Try and take advantage while you can. Example [00:05:00] three, Trevor, the stabilizer. Trevor moves from direct selling into sales management in his fifties. His income dips slightly, but his stress and the travel demands decrease dramatically.

He maxes out his retirement accounts and finally has more time to spend at home. Lesson here is that it's okay to trade income or stability. Now let's look at some of the key planning levers for sales professionals. Build an emergency fund the income volatility from the industry, demands a larger cushion.

Try and automate retirement savings during your strong months. Avoid lifestyle creep following every commission check, especially if they increase year over year. Understand your compensation plan, the base salary versus commission, and all of the metrics that help you get paid. Save aggressively in your peak years careers with high [00:06:00] variable compensation, such as sales rarely stay at peak earning forever.

To recap, so how should a salesperson save? Well... It Depends! It depends on your commission structure, what industry you're in, how consistently you can convert income into investments. Sales can build wealth quickly, but burn out just as fast. The key is assuming that your best earning years will not last forever.