

THE EASY WAY TO FIND SALES AGENTS IN THE UK

*Everything You Need to
Know to Get Started*

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www.salesagents.uk

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1. Selling Through Sales Agents – How it Works

Here's a quick overview that explains how the relationship works when businesses, like yours, sell their products and services through sales agents.

This chapter will give you an understanding of:

What types of businesses include sales agents in their sales strategy.

Who sales agents are.

What sales agents do.

How the relationship with sales agents works.

Businesses That Sell Through Sales Agents

Businesses that sell their products and services through self-employed sales agents are known as principals. They are usually manufacturers or service providers, but they can be any type of business that has something to sell.

When principals want to sell their products and services through a sales agent this is called an opportunity. Principals with opportunities for sales agents can be businesses of any size. They can be small businesses, even self-employed one-person businesses, large nationwide companies, and international organisations that have local sales agents in many different countries.

So as you can see, the range of principals is wide and varied, and the products and services they sell through sales agents are just as varied. The current opportunities advertised on our website include: clothing, technology, shipping services, lighting, indoor and outdoor ornaments, industrial machinery repair, printer services, tuna imports, DIY products, and specific sales such as glazing for the architectural and conservation sector.

Whatever your products and services, there will be sales agents in the UK that use our website and have experience of selling them. There are sales agents regularly visiting retail and business customers and selling the everyday products and services that keep these businesses going. And there are agents who sell for principals that work in very specific or technical fields.

Sales Agents: Who Are They

When you advertise your opportunity with Sales Agents UK it will be seen by sales agents actively selling in the UK. These sales agents are self-employed and either independent individuals, or working with other sales agents to form an agency. A sales agent is not an employed position.

They generally work on a commission only basis, which means they only get paid by principals when they make a sale. We'll talk more on this in the next chapter. They pay for everything they need to carry out their day to day sales role, transport, phone, computer, etc. They take these additional costs into account when calculating the commission that they want to earn from principals. Another difference between an

employed seller and a sales agent is that agents usually sell for more than one principal. They also have control over their sales actions rather than being directed by a principal.

To be successful a sales agent has to achieve consistent sales results, and part of how they achieve these results is by selecting and applying for opportunities that are right for them and their existing customers.

One of the best ways to attract the right sales agents is to write an advert that clearly describes your opportunity. Writing a good, clear advert that will attract the most suitable agents is not easy, it's a skill that comes with experience and many would-be principals have never had to learn this skill. One of the services we offer at Salesagents.uk is to write your advert for you based on the information that you give us, and what we can gather from your website and marketing material.

What Do Sales Agents Do?

A sales agent sells products and services for principals. They work on a commission only basis and only receive reward when they make a sale.

The agent gains an order from one of their customers and passes this order to the principal for it to be fulfilled. The principal pays an agreed amount of commission to the agent for the sale.

Later we will discuss contracts between principals and agents and look at what constitutes a sale.

A clear difference between a sales agent and other sales channels is that sales agents don't buy stock from you. A distributor or wholesaler may buy stock and then sell it on to end users at a profit, but a sales agent generates orders for your business to fulfill directly. The sales agreement is between you and the customer, not the sales agent.

The Relationship: Principals and Sales Agents

On the whole, sales agents and principals are looking for long term profitable relationships that will be a win-win for both parties.

A good way to start this relationship is to get everything agreed, and every eventuality covered, right at the start of the relationship. You let the agent know what you expect from this relationship, and ask them what they want from it. Then get it all agreed in a contract, more on this later.

A sales agent usually sells products and services from more than one principal. This is good, because as long as they are not already selling something in direct competition to what you sell, it means they will already have a portfolio of existing customers and contacts ready and waiting to see your products.

They gain the opportunity to offer what you sell to the customers.
You gain the opportunity to get what you sell in front of more customers.

Remember, this is a business relationship of equal partners, not an employee and boss situation. You want them to sell within your guidelines, and they want a fair reward for those sales.

Flexibility of the Relationship

One of the big positives about principal – agent relationships is the flexibility they offer.

You can design the opportunity specifically for your business needs and promote this opportunity to agents on the Salesagents.uk website. The opportunity must still be attractive to self-employed sales agents, and offer a reasonable commission for their work.

The agreement must still be within legislation, which offers protection to agents and principals.

Examples of different agent opportunities:

We have had principals that wanted agents to operate as account managers looking after sales from existing customers. Commission was paid on sales and it benefitted the agent to maintain and build relationships with the existing customer base, which is what the principal wanted.

Some principals have wanted agents to sell for them at the start of a business, or as they begin targeting the UK market, and expand the sales operation building an agency of agents that they managed and benefitted from.

You can see a full range of opportunities that are advertised on the website on our [Opportunities Page](#).

So don't worry if your needs are different to the standard sales agent model. As long as you can show that this is a win-win relationship, and agents can gain a reasonable commission from it, you should get a response from an advert promoted by Salesagents.uk.

Now you have an idea of how businesses and agents work together let's look at the potential benefits, to you as a principal, of selling through sales agents.

2. Benefits of Including Agents in Your Sales Strategy

In traditional sales models used by businesses with products and services to sell, the business would either employ a team of sales people to approach end users or suppliers, or sell through established distributors or wholesalers. Now there is a third option, one that for many businesses has many positive benefits over the old inflexible models.

Using self-employed sales agents alongside, or instead of, traditional employed sales representatives is becoming a popular option for businesses to consider. There are situations where a commercial sales agent is more cost effective and practical than an employed sales person.

Sales agents only get paid commission so they are top performing sales people that can work unsupervised, and are self-motivated because they rely on their sales results for their income. Below we look at different business types and give examples of where using commercial agents could be of benefit.

Businesses Wanting to Sell Internationally to the UK Market

A popular way for a business to benefit from independent sales agents is when selling internationally and trying to break in to a market in a country that is new to them.

Setting up an employed sales team in a new country requires a large initial outlay before any returns on investment are seen. An employed team may need managing, supporting, and coaching, to get profitable results. To support the sales teams you might need to hire additional staff and acquire premises in the country you are targeting. There can be travel costs for managers and trainers from the home head office, and then the day to day requirements to support the sales team, such as company cars, communications, payroll, human resources, and all the other administration associated with employed sales staff.

The above costs can be a big gamble, especially when you start a sales operation in a new country. When breaking into a marketplace new to your business you can never be sure it will work, or how long it will take to become profitable, so you want cost effective sales solutions and minimum outlay to increase return on investment.

Why Sales Agents May be the Answer

Having a sales strategy that uses sales agents to sell in your target country could be the best way forward and here's why:

Selling through sales agents will require some initial investment. Advertising and finding the best agents, training on your products and services, marketing support, and some additional management and support resources such as administration. This cost usually comes to a lot less than the costs associated with setting up an employed team.

Many sales agents will already have an existing customer or contact base ready to present your sales offers to, so it is reasonable in most cases to expect those first sales to be generated faster.

The best sales agents are self-motivated and organised. They manage their own time effectively and work well without supervision. If they don't have these attributes they won't last long working on a commission only basis. This means they don't require the same man-management time or supervisory structure that many employed salaried sales people need.

Selling to the UK market from abroad is one of the best reasons to look at adding sales agents to your sales strategy. To see how easy it is to promote your opportunities to UK sales agents see our page on [Finding Sales Agents](#).

One concern many international companies have when looking for sales agents in the UK, is being able to write a good advert in English. That's not a problem, because at Salesagents.uk when you use our Maximum Response Service we will write the advert for you using our experience of the UK sales agent sector.

UK SME's Using Independent Sales Agents

Small to medium size businesses can benefit by using self-employed sales agents to sell both products and services nationwide or locally to their business.

Self-employed agents work on a commission only basis, so you only pay for sales closed. While the rate of commission will be much higher than that paid to an employed sales person, you don't pay for company cars, laptops, and mobile phones. The big savings for small to medium businesses is on salaries. There are no salaries, no holiday pay, and no sick pay. You only pay for results

You may not need a full time seller working for you. Think of a sales agent as someone working to sell your products as well as those for several other non-competing businesses. It's like sharing a resource and only paying when you gain the benefit of a sale.

National Suppliers with Sales Needs in Remote Areas

In my career I've managed sales teams that covered the whole of the UK, and it was often difficult supporting and managing the activity of sales representatives based furthest from the office. These people often feel cut off and operate independently even though they are employed sales people. Treating them as part of a regional sales team can have logistical problems. Getting them to 1 day sales meetings and briefings can mean overnight stays, and long car journeys that eat into their selling time. You might want to consider having the services of an agent in the areas that are remote from your operations centre.

Another situation where it can be beneficial to include sales agents in your sales strategy is for geographical areas with a low number of prospects. It is often not cost effective to have a salaried sales person covering an area with too few prospects, or an area so large that they spend many hours in the car driving from one prospect to another. But because a sales agent can sell a wide range of products and services for different principals it can be profitable for them to sell your products in those areas.

I would recommend to sales organisations with national coverage that they look at the option of using sales agents in some areas of the country. They need minimal support, they work independently, they

don't need to be involved in all company meetings, and they are highly self-motivated as they only get paid on results.

Now you know the potential benefits of including sales agents in your sales strategy, let's look at how to find the best agents for your opportunity.

3. Define Your Sales Agent Requirements

Once you've decided that you want sales agents to sell for your business, you will want to get your advert for your opportunity online and promoted, and start getting lots of responses from interested sales agents that want to sell for you.

My advice, stop right there and ask yourself a question. Do you know exactly what you want sales agents, or agent, to do for your business? Can you answer these basic questions?

Who will the agents be targeting to make sales?

What products will they sell.

Will they be covering set geographical areas?

Will you be offering any support, e.g. marketing, sales leads, website?

Do you expect agents to need training?

These are just the basics that you need to know, not just to place an advert but also to discuss the opportunity with the sales agents that respond to it, and to form an agreement with the agents you select to work with.

In this chapter we will help you to answer all these questions, and more, and be fully prepared to place an effective advert that targets the right sales agents for your opportunity.

Who Will Agents Be Targeting?

Will the agents be selling to any of your existing customers?

If you sell products that are one-off sales, and there are no repeat orders, then the above question isn't needed. But if there are repeat orders for what you sell, for example consumables, do you want agents to deal with sales from your existing customers.

We recently advertised an opportunity for a self-employed sales agent to manage sales from only a company's existing customers. This is unusual, it's more of an account management role, but as I said in an earlier chapter, the sales agent option offers flexibility for your sales strategy.

Another consideration is when an agent acquires a new customer, do you want them to continue to sell to this new customer, or will that be done from your office. The answer to this question will have an impact on the agent's commission payments and they will be expecting higher rewards for all new customers than for sales to existing ones, whether they have acquired them or not.

A principal's first reaction to some of the questions in this chapter can be that things are getting complicated, but the same questions would have to be addressed if you were hiring employed sales people.

Who are your target market?

When principals are targeting the UK having sold their products in other countries they will have a good idea who sales agents should be targeting to get the best results. But if you are a new business have you thought about who will buy your products or services, who you should target as potential customers?

If you manufacture a product start by writing a list of people or businesses that will use what you make. Ask yourself, is it practical and, most effective, to sell directly to these end users?

If the answer's yes, then the list is your target market.

If the answer's no, then look at the next line up in the buying chain, e.g. wholesalers, retailers, etc.

Is it practical and effective to sell to these businesses?

And keep going until you find a target market for your products.

If you provide a service it's usually sold to the end users, and to identify this market you often need to look wider rather than up and down a buying chain. Obvious customers for your service will be easy to list, but are there others that you haven't thought about?

Do You want Agents with Existing Customers?

To an agent their existing customer contact list is valuable, it's from this list that they make their living. It may have taken years to build and they only want to present relevant and beneficial products and services to them. The above section, on defining your target market, will help you to give a clear description on your advert of the types of customers an agent should have on their list if responding to your opportunity.

When you have a clear understanding of who your customers are it will help you to select the best sales agents, selling in the right markets, with a relevant list of existing customers and contacts.

What products or Service Will Agents Sell for You?

Will sales agents be selling all the products or services you supply to customers? Maybe some of what you sell are better sold through other channels. Clearly state in your advert what the agents will be selling as they will look at your website and assume all the products will be included.

Geographical Sales Areas

Will your sales agents work in defined geographical sales areas?

This is a question you need to consider because there are alternatives to geographical sales areas, and one is not to have any restrictions at all.

In my 25 years of managing sales teams nothing caused more arguments and cries of foul play than sales areas. It should be simple, each sales person is given a sales area and they can only sell in that area. But then comes the complications.

Someone sells to a branch of an organization that also has branches in other sales areas. A sales person creeps across a boundary line to make a sale. One seller has an existing relationship with a prospect that

is on someone else's territory. A prospect gets invited across sales borders for a game of golf and signs the deal while on a different area than where the business resides. And I could give you many, many, more examples.

So before setting up sales areas ask yourself if that's the best way forward for your business. If it is, then define the areas and when you advertise with us for sales agents include in your advert the areas you want agents. If you want agents nationwide then state that in your advert and sort out the areas as you get responses to the advert.

Alternatives to Geographical Areas

If your product can be sold across many different markets, you might want to consider having agents from these different markets selling to their existing customers in their specialist market.

For products or services that are a quick sale you might not need sales areas of any kind and leave it up to the agents to go out and sell. This may work for sales offers where there are large numbers of prospects that will keep agents busy.

Effective Sales Areas

The location of sales agents must be taken into consideration when looking at sales areas. Although you are not paying them a salary for their time, and they are paying fuel and travelling costs not you, if they are having to travel unreasonable distances or through traffic blackspots just to get to where they can sell the relationship may not last long.

Don't cause Yourself a Problem for Later

A mistake some principals make is to give their first sales agents huge geographical sales areas. The business grows and the principal wants more sales agents. When the new sales agents start selling the huge areas of the original sales agents are cut down to make room for the new agents, and you then have very disgruntled sales agents threatening to end the relationship or take legal action.

Supporting Sales Agents

As a very general rule, there can be a direct correlation between the amount of sales support and the commission paid for sales.

The more support you give to a sales agent the easier, and quicker, they can close sales, so they should sell more.

If you don't give any support, and the agent is expected to action the complete sales process, from prospecting, cold calling, and making appointments, to presenting and closing the sale, then obviously this will take more work and a longer time span. It's quite reasonable for a sales agent to expect commission in line with the effort, and any additional costs, it takes to gain a sale.

There is nothing wrong with advertising an opportunity where the sales agent is expected to generate sales with no support from the principal. In our experience at Salesagents.uk the majority of principals want the agent to manage the complete sales cycle up to gaining an order. The reason we are including this topic is to make you aware of the options and to allow you to make the decision on whether to invest in support for agents.

Support You Could Give

The support a business can offer sales agents, and employed sales people as well, are mainly focused on the prospecting and appointment stages of the sales process.

Advertising to generate warm sales leads is the most obvious form of support. There are numerous marketing channels that can be used and some, such as social and business media, have costs which are minimal but do require staff time to manage and keep up to date.

Buying high quality prospect list for the relevant market sectors, which show decision makers and up to date contact details, can be a help to sales people looking for new prospects.

One of the most time consuming actions for field sales people is making cold calls for sales appointments. If you support your sales function by getting good appointments made for them, they will spend more time in front of customers making sales. On our website we have listed details of a sales lead generation service that we have used and can recommend, you can see more information at [Sales Lead Generation](#).

Customers expect businesses to have a website. They often judge a business trying to sell to them by the quality of their website. A good, up to date, website that looks professional will really help your sales people. A poor website, with out of date content, or that looks amateur, will work against your sales people. A poor website, in my opinion, is worse than no website.

If you will be supporting sales by any of the above methods, or in other ways we haven't covered, make sure you include this when you advertise your opportunity. It will help you to attract the best sales agents and get responses to your advert.

Training for Sales Agents

When a principal offers product training for sale agents they should include it in the opportunity advert. It shows commitment from the start and helps to build a relationship.

Will sales agents need training before they can effectively sell your products or services?

If they will, have you considered how you will provide the training. It may come up in the conversations you have with agents that respond to your advert, so it's best to be prepared.

Will agents need to be trained at your office, or can it be done online, or by other means. If they need to travel, or stay overnight, it's my opinion that the principal should cover the cost of this.

Now You Know What You Want

I hope the above questions and information have led to you fully understanding what your sales agent requirements are, and how they will operate when selling for you.

You should now have a list of information to include in your advert for your sales agent opportunity, or to pass to us at Salesagent.uk to write the advert for you. You will also have now enough information to confidently discuss your requirements with the agents that respond to your advert. This is important as those first conversations will be the start of your relationship with the agents.

Now you know what you want we can move to the next step and get your sales agent opportunity advert online and promoted to get it in front of as many agents as possible.

See the next chapter and follow the step by step instructions to get your opportunity advert published online in one working day.

4. How to Advertise for Sales Agents

In this chapter we give you a step-by-step guide on how to advertise your opportunity for sales agents.

If you've read the previous chapter you have a clear understanding of your sales agent requirements and that will help you now as we place your advert. It's a good idea to have open the page on the Salesagents.uk website where you enter the information about you, and the opportunity you want to advertise, and I'll talk you through the few steps to get started. Open the page [Find Sales Agents](#).

The 2 Ways You Can Advertise Your Opportunity

The first choice you are presented with is to select which of the 2 advert campaign services you want to use for your opportunity.

1. A basic advert
2. A promoted advert that gets in front of more sales agents.

Let me explain the 2 campaign services that we offer so you can make the right choice.

1. The basic Advert

If you select the Basic Advert Campaign, you write the advert for your opportunity based on your requirements for sales agents. You attach the text for the advert, your logo, and any images that you want us to use. You do this by clicking on the Browse. and the Select, buttons further down the page. We then publish your advert on the [Salesagent.uk Opportunities Page](#).

The cost of the Basic Advert option is £95.

Your Basic Advert will be seen by the sales agents that visit the opportunities pages of the website looking for new products and services to sell.

The advert will be published for 3 months and you can make changes to it at any time. Responses to your advert will come directly to you via the contact details you put on your advert.

2. The Maximum Response Campaign Service

When you select the Maximum Response Service we put your advert in front of more sales agents because:

- * We will write the advert for you based on the information you supply.
- * We will keep your advert on the front page of our opportunity section for 3 months.
- * We will promote your opportunity with paid adverts and premium listings on social and business media.
- * We will post details of your opportunity on blogs, media, sites, and various groups online.
- * We will feature your advert in our Newsletter which is sent to our database of UK sales agents.

To gain all these benefits, you simply send us some information on your company, products, marketplace, and your requirements for sales agents that you are looking to form a relationship with. You can also send us your logo and images you would like us to include. We then write your advert for you, publish it online, and promote it to quickly get it in front of more sales agents.

The costs for the Maximum Response Service is a one off payment of £275. No additional charges, no hidden extras.

Once you have selected the right service for you, follow the guide below to get your advert online.

Getting Your Advert Published Online

On the [Find Sales Agents Page](#) select either option 1. Basic Advert, or option 2. The Maximum Response Service.

Scroll down the page to the brief form that asks for contact details. The boxes marked with a red asterisk are required fields. Adding your phone number and website helps us to understand your business and contact you if required. We have a strict privacy policy and your details will never be sold on or used for other purposes.

Upload Your Advert Information

The next action on the form is to upload your advert information by clicking the Browse button and navigating to your documents.

If you have selected to have just the Basic Advert you should upload the complete advert text just as you want it publishing. You can see information on what should be included in an advert under the heading, How to Advertise Successfully, in the right column of the page.

If you have selected the Maximum Response Service, you should upload information that we can use to professionally write your advert for you. This should include:

- Brief information on your business and what you sell, include your website.
- What you are looking for from the sales agents you want to form a relationship with.
- What agents should have, e.g. experience, existing customers, contacts.
- The areas you are looking for agents to sell your products and services into.
- The contact number and email address agents should use to contact you.

We will use the above information to write an advert that fully explains your opportunity and gets agents to contact you.

If you prefer you can send us the advert information by email to post@salesagents.uk after you have made your payment.

Upload Images and Your Logo

The next step is to upload your business logo and any images that you want us to use for your advert. To do this you can click and drop files to the area marked Drop Files Here, or click the Select button and navigate to the files you want to send.

Your logo, or if you prefer an image, will be used on the [Opportunities Page](#) with a paragraph summarising your agent opportunity. This will then link to your full page advert on the website. Have a click around some of the adverts on the page and see how it all works.

Choose the Geographic Areas

Under the next heading, Which ad campaign do you want, select either the basic advert or the Maximum Response Service and you will see a list of areas of the UK.

The list associated with the Basic Advert allows you to select up to 3 areas of the UK that your advert will appear in when specific areas are searched by sales agents. You can select the National Agency if your advert is for agents across the UK.

Selecting the Maximum Response Advert allows you to choose as many individual UK areas as you wish, or all the areas of the UK.

Making a Payment

Choose one of the 3 payment methods and click to Start Your search for UK Sales Agents. Each of the 3 payment methods explains what to do as you make the payment. If you have any problems with processing the payment, please contact us on post@salesagents.uk.

What Happens Next

Once we have received your information, and the payment, we will have your advert published online in one working day. Even if we are writing the advert for you we aim to get your advert online and start promoting it the next day. We will send you a link so that you can see your published advert, and you can tell us if you require any changes making.

Responses to your advert that come via the Salesagents.uk website will go directly to you. Your advert stays on the website for 3 months. It's common for principals to find the sales agents they require before the end of the 3 months' timescale and if this happens you can let us know and we'll stop the advert.

No matter how good the advert is, and how much we promote your opportunity, we can't guarantee you will get the responses you want. One reason adverts don't get good responses is that sales agents either don't want what you sell, or they already sell a similar product or service to the one you are advertising. For example, a principal may have an excellent product that is better than any of its competitors. But if that is just one product and sales agents in that sector already have suppliers that sell complete ranges of that type of product, agents will stay with their current principal.

Not all products and services are successful in the market place, and that's true when offering what you sell to sales agents. Sales agents visiting our website, and receiving promoted adverts from us, have to make decisions on whether they want to add the advertised products and services to their sales list. Sometimes an advertisement is not successful simply because agents don't see it as a valuable addition to their sales list.

But, the great majority of advertisements are successful and they get good responses from agents. In the next chapter we look at what to do when you get these responses with tips on how to select sales agents to work with you and your business.

5. Selecting Sales Agents

Although we've titled this chapter, Selecting Sales Agents, it has to be remembered that it's a two-way process and as you are selecting the best sales agents from the responses you get to your advert, they are also deciding whether they want to form a relationship with your business and sell your products.

Let's start with you and some tips on selecting sales agents.

Matching Your Requirements

Back in chapter 3 you created a list of your requirements and how you will work with sales agents. You used this list to help you to place your advert. Now you can use the same list to see if the agents that respond to your advert meet your requirements.

The selection process is very similar to the one you would use when hiring an employee. You have a job description, and a list of attributes, skills, and experience that the applicants should have. These can be separated into two categories, essential and preferred. When a sales agent makes contact with you it will quickly become apparent whether they meet your essential requirements. The agents that do meet your requirements can then be considered by further analysis of their experience, skills, and attributes, until you have a shortlist of the most suitable.

The Final Selection

We would advise that you meet with an agent before entering into an agreement with them. If you are based in another country that is not always possible, but with today's technology an online interview using Skype or other services is easy to set up.

When you get to the point where you are considering an agent, or a shortlist of agents, to enter into a relationship with, it is always a good idea to go back to your list of requirements and have one last check on how well they meet those requirements. When you created that list every item was added for a reason, it was something you wanted an agent to have or be able to do. During the selection process, principals can sometimes lose sight of their original needs and wants of an agent and get swayed by a well written CV, or a charismatic interview.

The Requirements of the Agent

The further into the selection process you get the more it can become a negotiation, and that can be a good thing. It's better to discover what the sales agent wants early in the selection process rather than right at the end and just before you enter into an agreement.

We've put together some points you might want to discuss and keep in mind when you talk with potential agents. These tips are from both perspectives, the principal and the agent.

Tips and Points for Discussion

Through Sales Agents UK we have personally spoken with hundreds (possibly thousands) of independent agents who make their living by representing and selling for different principals.

What characterises most sales agents is that they are fearless sales professionals and entrepreneurs. Many agents impress us tremendously and we have, through countless dialogues with agents, formed a good picture of what they look for when considering agencies. We would like to share with you 5 areas you should consider when you have a dialogue with a potential agent.

Commission & Terms

To an independent agent without a regular base salary and associated social benefits, commission and terms will naturally be very important.

One of the most common questions we get from principals is, how much should we offer in commission to agents. Our answer is always "as much as possible" or "what your margins permits." It goes without saying that agents who sell on commission should have the opportunity to earn more than ordinary employees. Remember, they cover many of the costs that a business would cover for an employed seller.

However, it is absolutely impossible to give a specific commission rate as it is entirely dependent on product, industry, and market.

We also find that most principals want to offer good commission to agents.

This might seem contradictory but we also recommend agents not to be too greedy. Remember that principals allow you to work for other companies simultaneously, which an employee would never be given the chance to do.

Skilled agents often look beyond the actual commission rate for opportunities with recurring commissions. Some principals just want to give commissions on new sales, and then take over the customer relationship and all future earnings from the customer. If there are no exceptional good reasons for doing it that way this does not come across as attractive to professional sales agents. If it is a product or service sold once, and there are no future revenues, it is of course acceptable to give only a one off commission payment.

Another point related to economic conditions is, whether the principal makes it clear that they will cover the costs of any training, trade shows, or sales meetings outside the agent's district. This says something about how serious the principal is in supporting agents.

Sales History and USP's

How will you, as a principal, show evidence to a sales agent of expected sales results and commission? Do you have sales agents already, and if so how do they perform? If you don't have sales agents, can the company show sales results from hired employees?

These are perfectly legitimate questions that you should expect from sales agents.

If you have a well-established company, you can probably demonstrate existing sales results that can give an agent confidence that your products/services are something that sells in the market. For a relatively new company, it is difficult to prove specific sales results. In this case think about what you can do to give a new sales agent confidence in your business and products. No sales agent wants to spend their time testing the market at their costs.

Does the product have Unique Selling Points in comparison to competing products? If the unique selling points are strong enough they could offset the lack of documented sales results.

Exclusivity

Some agents can be very demanding when it comes to exclusivity of their sales area.

If they take over an existing client portfolio it obviously has a value from day one. But if the market is completely new, and there are no existing customers in the area, it is debatable how much the exclusivity of the sales area will be important in the initial phase.

If they require exclusivity from the beginning, you may want to have a clause in the agreement stating that they need to achieve a certain level of sales or they lose that exclusivity. So if they do not achieve the sales budget the exclusivity is worth nothing. And if they achieve the budget they have sufficiently strong cards to play to get exclusivity anyway, and the principal will have little reason to look for other agents in the area.

An alternative is that exclusivity is given after a trial period if the agent delivers specific revenue targets. This is a good solution for both parties and can be wiser than to agree exclusivity from day one.

There are also principals that do not provide exclusivity and they have professional sales agents who are just fine without it. As long as the conditions and terms are identical for the agents it can be argued that they should focus on building their client base and not be too fearful of a couple of competitors.

Exclusivity is often more meaningful the more targeted the market niche. There is not room for many agents selling special components for nuclear power plants in the UK, but there is room for a lot of agents that sell products to SMEs or retailers.

If you agree exclusivity and agency rights in your area, be careful to ensure that the contract is entirely clear on what it entails. We have come across some concrete examples where agents in our database have contractual exclusivity in their area, but then later discovered that retailers still get to buy goods directly from the principal. One possible excuse from the principal's side will be that the retailer is part of a chain and the sale technically was made somewhere (their HQ) else even if the goods are sold in the agent's area.

The Principals Finances and Business Ethics

If a principal is on the verge of bankruptcy it is not a company that it is appropriate for a sales agent to start working for. Expect agents to do some research about the financial situation of the company before entering into a business relationship.

Agents will also look for evidence of company reliability and customer reviews and feedback. Even companies with net profits are not always ethical. Do you have authentic testimonials from clients and also other agents?

Sales Material and Support

Agents will ask how you will help them to succeed?

We discussed support in chapter 3 and during the selection process it's good to show what you will do to support the actions of the agent. Sales agents are an extension of the company and not somebody to just be left to their own devices. The principals that are truly interested in succeeding with sales agents realise this and work with agents to produce results.

Some companies that have advertised via Salesagents.uk are also working actively to find specific customer leads to give to their agents. It is no coincidence that these also are the companies that experience tremendous success with their network of agents, and sales agents thrive working on their behalf. You can see more on [lead generation for sales agents](#).

6. The Contract

Most relationships between principals and sales agents run smoothly and are very successful for both parties. But if things go wrong those agreements made with just a hand shake don't mean anything.

In any long term relationship there can be problems, and the principal – agent relationship is no different. Some problems are caused by one person having a different understanding of something that was agreed. Others come about when there is a change, implemented by the agent or principal, or a change outside of your control for example in the market or by your customers or competitors.

The best way to avoid problems is to have everything written down and signed at the start of your relationship in the form of a contract.

Purpose of a Contract

A contract is a written document, signed by both parties, that states the terms and conditions of how you work together, and what happens if you part company.

Its purpose is to be reference point for any disagreements on any part of the agent – principal relationship and roles, so it makes sense to get every eventuality into the contract.

How can the relationship be terminated by either party?

Are there minimum sales performance levels that must be achieved?

Is there sales support being given by the principal?

How about the other products and services the agents sell, are they competing with yours?

Have you offered an exclusive sales area, are there conditions relating to its exclusivity?

For some of the above questions, and other areas of the business relationship, there is legislation in the UK and EU that must be taken into account, that's one of the reasons we recommend getting qualified legal advice on sales agent contracts.

You wouldn't take on an employee without a contract, even if it wasn't a legal requirement, so why would you get into a relationship with sales agents without having a proper contract in place. We always recommend that principals and agents have an agreed contract for their relationship, and we advise getting one drawn up by a qualified legal advisor. Yes, there is a cost involved, but if problems do arise the cost will be a good investment, think of it as an insurance policy.

There may be points relating to your business and its processes that are unique to you and that you will want to include in the contract. One of the most important points is discussed next.

What is a Sale?

It sounds like a simple question that's easy to answer, but a sale can be something different to each principal and it should be clearly defined.

Here's some examples to get you thinking about what your definition of a sale should be.

If you go into a shop and buy a product, the sale is usually said to be made when you pay the shop assistant for the purchase. But what about a sales agent selling to the shopkeeper, when is their sale made and when can they claim commission?

Will you be paying your sales agents commission when they bring you a signed order? This is done in some businesses and works well until an order is delivered but not paid for or cancelled by the buyer. Then the principal may try to claw back the commission from the agent, but this process must be discussed and agreed and ideally be included in the contract.

Some businesses define a sale as being when the order is paid for, or when it is delivered. Sales people used to collect cheques from customers as they ordered but this isn't as common nowadays. For repeat sales, or when selling a service, commission sometimes commences after the first fulfillment.

Think about how you define a sale for your business and when you will pay commission, and make sure you have an agreement signed by you and the agent. The ideal sale and commission scheme will be fair to both sides and encourage profitable sales and long term success.

Legal Advice for Sales Agents

You may have your own legal advisors that can help you create a contract for your sales agents. If you don't and would like advice on any matter related to the principal – agent relationship you can see how to get that advice at [Legal Advice for Principals](#)

Disclaimer: Salesagents.uk does not offer legal advice. We recommend all agents and principals obtain qualified legal advice when entering into a business relationship.

7. Tips to Avoid Scams

The vast majority of people using the Salesagents.uk website are honest and reputable sales agents looking for new opportunities to sell products on behalf of principals. But like all other online businesses and communities there are a small number of people trying to make money with false claims and promises, and in very rare cases operating illegal scams.

So here's some tips and advice to businesses looking for sales agents or distributors that will help to avoid the online scammers and the small number of dishonest people looking to take advantage of honourable business people.

Most scammers online are looking for an upfront payment from the victim. They will give what sounds like a genuine reason why you should make a payment to them. They will make false promises of benefits that you will gain in the future in return for the upfront payment being made now.

I would always be wary of anyone asking for an upfront payment, an administration fee, or a retainer. What exactly is it that you are paying for? If you have the products or services available to sell, and if they have the customers, is there a real need for you to pay them before a sales order has been received and verified.

A Typical Example of an Online Scam

Here's an example of a recent case where businesses were asked to make upfront payments of £250 as a retainer. An email in response to businesses looking for agents in the UK included the line:

'We charge an upfront retainer fee of £250 which is refunded after the first commission payment is made, or after 30 days if we fail to generate any orders - this is all covered by our company agreement.'

This sounds like a blatant scam to get people to send £250 and all you will get afterwards is bad luck stories and excuses but still never see your money again, or any sales orders. Why would they want £250 and then pay it back after 30 days or when a commission payment is received?

They say they will pay it back whether sales are made or not, so why do they want your money for 30 days?

As with most scams of this kind there is also the promise of something in return but nothing definite:

'I am also currently working with 3 new start up city centre night spots who I think would take your services from the off as it will help them massively when they launch in the next few weeks.'

Unfortunately, a couple of people made the payments of £250 in good faith but no sales or refunds were received and they are now looking to take action against the individual concerned.

Pointers to Avoid Scams

Here are some pointers to look out for if you receive a similar email:

In other information that was sent with the email the marketing literature had the wrong postcode for the business address.

A quick check on Google found nothing relating to the alleged business and there is no website.

A search on the email sender shows a LinkedIn account with no recent activity.

On the sender's CV he states the business was only started this year.

There is no listing for the business on BT Phone book or Yell.com.

How to Avoid Online Scams

No website advertising your sales agent opportunities can research or check all the people who have access to the adverts. It's just like when businesses used to advertise in newspapers and magazines. Your advert is there to be seen by anyone who looks at that page.

All replies to your adverts go directly to you so that you can make the decision on who to take to the next stage of application. You can take steps to ensure the person you are considering matches up to their claims, just as you would with an employed position, by asking for references, researching online, and asking questions on their past experience and career to date.

Requests for Payments

If you are requested to make a payment as a retainer I strongly suggest you look at what you gain from this payment and when you will get that benefit. You should also consider if this is a good way to start a mutually beneficial business relationship. At worst this could be a scam, at best the risks and liability if anything goes wrong are being put on you.

Claims for Expenses

At the start of a relationship there may be expenses which it may be reasonable for you to pay in relation to things like travel or training.

To lessen any risk, I would advise that rather than send any monies to the agent that you arrange the travel and accommodation and pay directly.

As I said at the start, the vast majority of people online are honest and professional, but there will always be a minority that look to make easy money without working for it. Take precautions and do research before making any financial commitments, and always ask yourself if it feels right, are you taking all the risks, and if unsure ask more questions until you are satisfied with the answers.

8. A Quick and Easy Way to find Sales Agents

We hope you have found this book informative and helpful when deciding how you will find sales agents for your business.

Our aim at Saleagents.uk is to offer a quick and easy service that gets your advert published online the next working day, and responses coming in soon after.

We take each ad seriously and work on it until you're satisfied.

Your sales opportunity will be seen by the members of our exclusive social network for sales professionals. And if you choose our Maximum Response advert we'll send word of your opportunity to those we think are likely to be an especially profitable match.

We aggressively market Salesagents.uk as the premiere portal for British sales and business opportunities.

Our exclusive database is bursting at the seams with all kinds of independent sales agents – dealers, sales agents, trade agents, retailers, distributors, vendors, franchisees and freelance consultants.

Sales Agents UK offers a much more targeted audience than other – less keenly focused – online venues.

If you have any questions about finding sales agents please feel free to contact us at post@salesagents.uk

The Authors

Stephen Craine and Lars Hellestrae run the Salesagent.uk website and take an active role in the day to day function of finding sales agents in the UK for principals.

Salesagents.uk only line of business is connecting British and international companies with sales agents in the UK.

Stephen Craine

Stephen has been involved in sales related work for over 25 years, first as a salesman, then managing and training sales teams, and as a head of sales and marketing. His passion for sales, and especially sales training that works, can be seen on his website appropriately titled [Proven Sales Training](#).

Now, as part of the team at Salesagents.uk, he uses his wealth of experience and knowledge of sales and marketing in the UK to help with the writing of opportunity adverts for the website. Stephen can be contacted at Stephen@salesagents.uk.

Lars Hellestrae

As the name indicate Lars is Norwegian. He has worked in sales since 2001 and specifically with sales agents since 2007. He runs a similar concept to Salesagents.uk in Norway – and is also in a position to help principals with finding sales agents in continental Europe. If you're company are interested in sales agents in other countries he is a good person to talk to. On Salesagents.uk he is responsible for web development and various other related tasks. Lars can be contacted on lars@salesagents.uk.