

Tack Shop Assistant Manager ◀

BRIEFLY: Retail sales jobs may seem similar, but selling something we personally like is easiest. Cindy, for example, has worked with horses since she was a child. So she can steer her tack shop customers to appropriate saddles, effective nutritional supplements, and well-fitting riding clothes. She also can suggest solutions to their animals' problems.

Cindy Helps With Horse Problems

An Information Magnet

As a young girl, Cindy rode horses, mucked horse stalls, belonged to Future Farmers of America (FFA), and hoped to be a large animal veterinarian. After she convinced her dad to let her have a wild horse that had been abused by its owner, she and her dad patiently cared for Angel until her wounds healed. Then they succeeded in breaking her for riding. Angel was Cindy's pet for years.

Cindy never made it to veterinary school, but she still helps horses. As assistant manager of



► Cindy sets two saddles side by side so her customer can compare differences in width.

Dover Saddlery in Hockessin, Del., she sells saddles, saddle pads, blankets, vitamins, and nutritional supplements for horses. For their owners, she carries riding clothing. The store also stocks buckets, pitchforks, and other equine equipment.

In high school, she was a magnet for any information on animals and farming. "My dad would bring in my horse to give my equine science class a hands-on experience. Being able to touch and feel my horse helped us learn about equine anatomy and physiology."

While still in school, Cindy became pregnant. But, with support from her parents and her school and her own strength and determination, she gave birth to a daughter, whom she "wanted very much," and graduated a year early. "I'm very proud of that accomplishment," she says.

During the next five years, Cindy also had a son. But, when her relationship with the children's father failed, she took a job at Denny's. "I am so appreciative for the support my mom gave me," she says. "She worked full time but still watched my kids while I worked nights. I napped when they napped during the days."

At Denny's, she hit it off with the restaurant's cook, who was divorced and caring for his son. They married and added a daughter to the family. Her husband had a talent for turning around small failing restaurants. A friend helped him finance his own restaurant. "I have great memories of that time," she remarks. "My husband and I co-managed the place. The kids helped or played in the back, and we were always together."

FOR THE RECORD



Cindy
Assistant Manager
Dover Saddlery
Delaware

EDUCATION

- ▶ Graduate of William Penn High School, New Castle, Del. Favorite subject—science. Favorite activities—riding and showing horses and participating in Future Farmers of America (FFA).

WORK HISTORY

- ▶ Waitperson, Denny's, New Castle, Del., for five years after high school.
- ▶ Waitperson, Allison's Restaurant, Newark, Del., four years. Left to open business.
- ▶ Owner/manager, Hot Spot, Wilmington, Del., two years. Sold the business.
- ▶ Manager, Petsmart, Hockessin, Del., six years. Chose not to relocate when store closed.

JOB BENEFITS

- ▶ Favorite—medical insurance.
- ▶ Others—bonuses, profit-sharing; leaves of absence; paid vacations and holidays; paid sick leave; uniforms.

CLOSE-UP

- ▶ *"Many people will allow you to ride their horses in exchange for mucking stalls, feeding and grooming horses, and helping with maintenance."*
- ▶ *"In this business, we are dealing with a customer's 'family member,' which they take very seriously."*
- ▶ *"I love my job, especially not having to work outside on cold mornings, but I'd enjoy having more time for my family and not having a schedule. I'd like to be a free-lance assistant for veterinarians or blacksmiths. I would also enjoy owning another restaurant. It would be a family affair. My husband would be the chef and my kids and I would manage the business and help with customers."*

After they sold the business, Cindy became a manager at Petsmart. During her six years there, she earned advanced equine studies certification. When the store closed, she was offered a job in another store but declined because it was too far from her home. Meanwhile, Dover Saddlery moved into the former Petsmart location. The manager was a friend who asked Cindy to join the staff because she knew so much about horses.

As assistant manager, Cindy prepares the store for business each day and helps to keep it clean and orderly. She enters inventory data into the computer and controls how much product is stocked. She runs reports, makes bank deposits, and schedules product pickups and deliveries. She also hires staff. "Our staff members are good people who are capable, responsible, and professional," she notes. "I've only had to fire a few."

She and the other employees attend local equestrian events "to build awareness of our store. People who know me stop to ask questions about the store, our products, and animal care. Because of my experience and expertise," she adds, "I have also built a good reputation with customers."

When assisting them in the store, Cindy knows the right questions to ask them about their animals. "Sometimes," she admits, "I want to jump in with a judgment about what they are doing, but I know that would only insult their intelligence and turn them away." Instead, she listens carefully and then finds a gentle but positive way to educate the customer.

Reclassifies Jump Systems

Yesterday, Cindy arrived at the store at 8 a.m. She counted cash in the four registers to make sure each contained the correct amount. Next, she confirmed that the amount of money in the safe equaled the previous evening's count. She also reviewed paperwork. "The manager, who closes the store, leaves various sales reports and the previous day's receipts," she explains. "I verify their accuracy and file the reports. Every three days, I send the reports to the home office."

Checking e-mail and phone messages followed. The warehouse had e-mailed, asking if she had a dressage jacket in a specific size. She responded that she did; then pulled it from the rack to be packed and shipped later.

She also had a phone message from the warehouse about an incorrect shipment from a manufacturer. “We were supposed to receive one 12-piece and two four-piece stacking-block jump systems, used to elevate the bar in jumping practice,” she explains. “Instead, they had sent three four-piece systems.” Based on the warehouse’s response, Cindy entered the items into her computerized inventory system as if she had received the order correctly. Then, she removed the 12-piece system from inventory and added the extra four-piece system.

Introduces Bite-Tamer

Afterward, she verified merchandise listed on an invoice from the warehouse. “I double-checked that each item had actually been received and was in stock or on the shelf. If items are missing, I call the warehouse to notify them of the incomplete shipment.” Cindy observed that missing items were all hazardous materials (HAZMAT), such as fly spray and liniment. “Even though I must report incomplete shipments to the warehouse,” she says, “I didn’t call about the HAZMAT products because I know they are shipped separately.”

By now, her staff and the store manager had arrived. Cindy brought out a new product, a bite-tamer, for them to inspect. “It’s used to stop a horse from biting,” she explains. “Discussing products helps us stay familiar with our inventory, especially new items.”

On the sales floor, she offered assistance to a woman in the saddle display area. By questioning her, Cindy learned her horse’s height, weight, and personality and that the horse had shown discomfort on trail rides. “My concern is primarily for an animal’s overall health,” she points out. “From her description of the horse’s behavior, I suspected it might have Lyme disease. Having had the same fears, the woman had already had him tested for it. Results were negative.”

The customer had brought in her close contact saddle and a drawing of her horse’s shape. She thought the space between the saddle’s curved pommel and the horse’s withers wasn’t large enough. But, instead of selecting another close contact saddle, Cindy showed the woman an all-purpose saddle, saying, “Humor me. I want to show you something.”

Placing a saddle pad on a stand replicating a horse’s back, she set the close contact saddle on top to duplicate the problem. She added a therapeutic pad under the saddle pad, but the problem remained. Then, she exchanged the woman’s saddle with a correctly sized all-purpose saddle, and the space between the withers and the pommel increased significantly. The customer was impressed, but Cindy suggested that she also discuss the problem with a saddle-maker who comes to the store every weekend. “The woman asked if she could bring her horse, and I strongly encouraged her to do so.”



► As she passes by a riding-clothes display, Cindy stops to straighten a dressage coat.

As the customer left, Cindy noticed another customer returning a horse blanket. “We give people the benefit of the doubt on returns,” she says. “However, this customer has a habit of returning items in well-used condition.” So she eased herself into the conversation and reminded the customer of the store’s policy on returns.

In between helping customers, she straightened merchandise. A woman stepped out of the dressing room to view her riding breeches in the mirror and complained loudly about the fit. Cindy chatted briefly with her, noted the brand of pants she had on, and asked her size. Then, she brought three pairs by different manufacturers to the dressing room and asked the customer to let her know if she wanted others.

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A newer employee needed help with a customer who couldn't find a specific antifungal ointment. "I knew we didn't carry that brand," Cindy says. "But I compared ingredients listed on the customer's empty container to other antifungal ointments and suggested one that was identical."

Another customer asked about vitamin supplements to improve the outer shell on her horse's hooves. Asking an employee to help the woman in the dressing room, Cindy then discussed the hoof problem. "Horses tend to stomp their feet to move flies," she explains. "Dry, hot weather plus the stomping may cause the hooves to peel and flake." She recommended a supplement that enhances the growth of the hoof wall.

At 4, part-time employees arrived to work until the store's 9 p.m. closing, and Cindy went home. "I have a horse, a pony, two dogs, and one cat," she says. "I take care of my animals, come to work and help others take care of theirs, and then go home and take care of mine again."

Her husband manages a restaurant. Sundays are a special time for them and their children. "We are all so busy most of the week, but, no matter what, on Sunday, we meet at dinnertime to have a meal together. Even my son comes home from college to eat with us."

DATA FILE

Tack Shop Assistant Manager

O*NET:41-1011.00 D.O.T.:185.167-046 HC:ESR GOE:11.11.05

WORK DESCRIPTION

Manages daily operations of tack shop—hires and fires employees; schedules employees; opens store; counts cash in registers; makes sure money in safe equals reported sales; assists customers in selection of merchandise; handles customer complaints; enters merchandise received into computer inventory records; introduces new products to staff; consults with manager, home office, and warehouse personnel; schedules product pickups and deliveries; verifies accuracy of merchandise shipments; makes bank deposits; answers customers' and employees' questions; helps keep store clean and orderly; promotes store at equine events; fills in for absent employees.

WORKING CONDITIONS

In shop office, receiving and shipping area, and on sales floor. Constant interaction with employees, upper management, and customers may cause some stress. May have to work long hours. Risk of muscle strain or injury when lifting heavy merchandise.

PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT

Tack shops; pet stores; equine clothing and equipment manufacturing companies.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Liking for horses; patience; verbal ability; confidence; ability to deal with all types of people; sales ability; tact; responsibility; supervisory ability; integrity; dependability; organization; detail-mindedness; honesty.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Training or experience with horses, computer literacy, and office skills necessary. Certification in equine science helpful.

JOB OUTLOOK

Declining (-2% or lower).

Bright!

SALARY RANGE

\$19.05 per hour, \$39,630 or more a year, depending on experience and size and location of company.

U.S. median wage

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

Horse Groom
Farrier
Large Animal Veterinarian

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The subject of this biography is not available to answer personal inquiries. For more information addresses are current as of publication date.

Ask a guidance counselor or career counselor about business management and merchandising training programs at vocational/technical schools.

National Retail Federation Foundation
<https://nrf.com/insights/careers-and-leadership>

DECA
<http://www.deca.org/>

American Business Women's Association
Web Site: <http://www.abwa.org>

American Management Association
<http://www.amanet.org/>

To find information about similar careers, see *Voc-BiosOnline's Pathways* index and *Cluster* listing, an encyclopedia, or books on careers found in your library, career center, or counseling or placement office. Look up the following words:

Agriculture, Animals, Equestrian, Equine, Horse, Saddle, Saddlery, Sales, Tack. Also see the Agriculture and Marketing and Distribution Careers clusters.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Visit a tack shop and talk to managers and other employees there about the work they do. Get a part-time job in such a shop or at a stable, ranch, or farm. Take care of your own horse or volunteer at a stable in exchange for riding privileges. Learn everything you can about horse care and equipment. Join FFA and 4-H clubs and participate in horse projects. Take courses in agriculture, biology, bookkeeping, chemistry, computers, English, general math, marketing, health, general science, and speech.

LIFESTYLE IMPLICATIONS

Tack shop managers usually work evening, weekend, and holidays hours. This may interfere with leisure activities.

Persons are portrayed herein without regard to race, sex, or religious background. Careers discussed are to be considered acceptable for either sex. **Bright outlook careers are expected to grow rapidly in the next few years or are new and emerging occupations.**

Tack Shop Assistant Manager. "Cindy Helps With Horsey Problems." *VocBiosOnline*. Sauk Centre: Vocational Biographies. Web.