
NAVIGATING THE BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATION LABYRINTH

There's a beauty to the business administration field in that all industries require it in some capacity. Are you interested in healthcare? You don't need medical school—hospitals need business administrators, too. Have you invested in the nonprofit world? Or do you want experience at a large corporation? Or a small local company? Your own company?

Every employer needs some business acumen and (most likely) holds space within their organization for business administrators, the generalists of business, who study topics like marketing, finance, accounting, and project management in school.

Those with a business administration degree and managerial and administrative skills will see consistent demand from employers. Business administration is a top five major for employment. Among other business fields, 54.5% of employers intend to hire specifically from the business administration pool.

But even if employment is plentiful, the job is flexible. So, let's explore ten of the most flexible options within business administration. If your toolbox includes in-

terpersonal and leadership skills with a mind for business needs, consider shaping your career with one of these business administration opportunities ...

ACCOUNT MANAGER

Assertive communicators are best suited for the relationship-based account manager role. In fact, despite its categorization as a "business" position, many who study communications shift into account management.

When a business gains a new account (a term for a client or customer), someone needs to manage the relationship skillfully. That's where account managers come in. They maintain and further develop these relationships to generate revenue.

Those are the basics, but thanks to its flexibility, your life as an account manager can look however you choose. With countless remote opportunities at companies of all sizes, a career in account management could lead you anywhere. You could secure another year's business from an account while securing your satisfaction, taking calls from beautiful, exciting locations—locations of your choosing. Live life on the road or in bed in your pajamas and build a career capitalizing on your communication skills.

With the world's ubiquitous need for account management, it's not just flexible in where you can work; you also can find freedom in choosing opportunities within countless industries. If you have a particular interest in specific fields, you'll have the chance to discover your niche wherever you please.

Here's a hyper-specific hypothetical: Imagine you grew up in the textile manufacturing industry. A grandparent could muse about their job in textiles and how it changed over the years. Or a parent would leave out their Textile World magazines (they worked as an accountant for a textile company). Your sibling may have moved off to New York to study sustainable fashion, and they share everything in the industry as it happens.

Over time, you gather knowledge of the industry despite having yet to work in it. So, you find a job that capitalizes on this, one flexible enough to decide to live farther from the office. You quickly search for a list of textile suppliers and come across a historical, top domestic textile manufacturer, Leigh Fibers, in Wellford, South Carolina. Another quick search reveals it's your lucky day—one of their

account management roles has opened up. It's a hybrid position, so you can live in Greenville's beautiful, bike-friendly city and commute only a few days a week. Your day-to-day involves discussing textile subjects with buyers, something you're knowledgeable and interested in while living exactly where you want to be.

While not likely your story, that's the benefit of a flexible role necessary across industries. You can replace textile manufacturing with any relevant experience and still find a need for your niche. You can break into your career with previous knowledge beyond official education or learn in new areas, from tech to travel. Filter your search for a job that is flexible and wherever you like. Pick a city, and an account management job will be waiting, one that may even allow you to work entirely remotely or while traveling the world. As an account manager, you control your satisfaction with work.

BUSINESS ANALYST

Critical skills for this role are easy to identify. Many personality tests will indicate them. And one of those skills is analytical thinking. While that is a business analyst's trait, problem-solving is its function. Consider the versatile, stimulating, and dynamic opportunity of business analysis if you're a thinker at heart and a problem solver in practice or if the idea of a high-paying, flexible career attracts you.

In action, a business analyst identifies problems of organizational efficiency: Where are they spending too much money, and how can they generate more? They are the architects of improved policies and procedures.

Like account managers, business analysts are open to all industries. However, they interact with various internal stakeholders, engaging in projects across multiple departments. So, this career might be a better option for those wanting to touch many projects with various teams.

With the opportunity to collect wide-ranging experiences, this career also allows for flexibility in changing roles or companies. Even if you start your business analyst career at a typical nine-to-five, you can leverage the experience you have gained to break into freelance consulting or create your own company.

Note that this role is not the same as business *process* analysis. Business process analysts typically work in the field. They're the executors of the business process, focused on making the changes that business analysts may have recommended. The business process analyst has a less flexible career.

Business analysis is also distinct from data analysis. Data analysts' hands get dirtier in the data, presenting insights instead of solutions. A career in business analysis offers a bounty of flexibility. Switch between projects, even industries, as you please. Work in a remote or hybrid setting. Even work outside of the typical nine-to-five schedule. And someday, sooner than you think, work for yourself. Can you imagine the work-life balance you can achieve when *you're* the boss?

Business Analyst	Business Process Analyst	Data Analyst
Analyze business needs to solve problems/improve processes	Execute solutions and analyze the performance of processes	Source, collect, and then present insights from the data
Flexible	Less flexible	Flexible

CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

I wouldn't skip this section if I were you—you might be pleasantly surprised by a career in customer service. No, it doesn't sound like the sexiest position, but you can engineer your job to keep you at the steering wheel of your life, not your employer.

Today, customer service representatives aren't just laboring in a call center. They're traveling the world, addressing customer needs by phone, email, or live chat. They're working flexible hours, taking shifts at different times of day and night to accommodate other gigs and goals. They're working part-time or full-time, temp or permanent. They're growing in their roles and finding additional opportunities within the expanding field of CX (customer experience). People with all backgrounds are finding organizations or causes they're passionate about and filling roles at those companies to help their mission—while prioritizing their livelihood.

When looking at all the career's benefits, consider its low entry barrier, typically a high school diploma or GED with strong interpersonal communication skills

and experience collaborating with customers. There are also certifications you can acquire to stand out as a candidate.

If you have a higher education level, don't let this low barrier stop you. Despite what you may have heard, you should take advantage of this opportunity if you've acquired higher education. Remember—your objective is to find a career you can count on to satisfy your needs and desires, not one that matches your diploma or previous resumes. Suppose you're a people person looking for a quick, perhaps dramatic, shift in your career and life. Why not pursue an opportunity that fits who you are and how you want to spend your time?

But let's rewind. What exactly is a customer service representative?

Simply put, a customer service representative is the front line of customer communication. They answer questions, address needs, resolve problems, and, when done well, leave a distinct and positive impression on potential, current, or previous customers, boosting goodwill across all industries. Top industries for customer service representatives include retail, insurance, and business support. But beyond this list, even the youngest startups must field new customer correspondence.

Whether you expect to or not, if you can handle (or even prefer) every day to be different, if you can manage consistent communication with others (both positive and negative), and if you are open to building your daily schedule around *you*, you may be the world's next customer service representative.

And if so, the flexibility that comes with this career means you're about to experience a unique freedom in your daily life.

HUMAN RESOURCES

If you're coming from a traditional career, Human Resources has impacted you. Their department has helped manage your payroll and benefits, recruited and acquired talent, spearheaded employee relations, led training, and handled sensitive workplace disputes. Essentially, they've been tasked with supporting you throughout your employment.

Businesses need HR. Let's explore how you might fulfill that need on your terms.

You might fit that need if you pride yourself on your empathetic nature and leadership skills. You may see yourself as someone who can resolve conflicts. You're an active listener and naturally organized. Or, you're simply passionate about building a positive workplace culture in a flexible setting.

Whatever combination of skills and goals you have, a career in HR means the opportunity to choose from any industry, in any sector, both part-time and full-time. If there are more than ten employees, expect a business to need HR specialists.

Because most existing businesses need HR, you have control over which of the many specialties and companies you would like to pursue. And because most existing businesses offer unique working conditions, odds are the suitable flexibility fit is out there, too.

You might land at a remote company that allows flexibility in your day-to-day, supporting coworkers from afar. Or, if you value the camaraderie of an in-person working environment, you might choose an on-site position. Either way, dig deeper into the variety of jobs, functions, and areas of expertise you could work within as a generalist or specialist.

- **Recruitment:** Source top talent, conduct interviews, and collaborate with hiring managers to build a skilled and diverse workforce to contribute to the company's success.
- **Training:** Design and implement training programs that empower employees, foster professional development and contribute to the growth and success of the organization.

- **Compensation/Benefits:** Analyze, design, and administer competitive reward systems, ensuring that employees are fairly compensated and receive comprehensive benefits.
- **Employee Relations:** Foster a positive working environment and address office tensions, conflicts, and abuses.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):** Develop policies, practices, and initiatives that celebrate diversity, promote equity, and cultivate an inclusive atmosphere.

A career in HR is a flexible avenue to shape cultures, empower individuals, and drive positive change. From sourcing talent to fostering growth and championing inclusivity, HR offers diverse opportunities to make a meaningful impact—on your terms.

ONLINE ENTREPRENEUR

Starting a business might excite you or terrify you—or both. While it sounds daunting, people are opting into online entrepreneurship every day to enjoy flexibility in work and control their work-life balance. They synergize their business skills, interests, passions, creativity, and work ethic to build something new.

Online entrepreneurship sounds vague for a reason. It is an umbrella of routes to be your boss. You choose your starting point, finish line, and everything in between. Opportunities rain down for the online entrepreneur with countless business models to choose from, niches to explore, and markets to exploit.

Consider the possibilities in eCommerce. Generally, when selling a product or service, you have four options for a business model: Business to Consumer (or Direct to Consumer if delivered to the customer without intermediaries—your most likely avenue and the one we will focus on), Business to Business, Consumer to Consumer, and Consumer to Business—the latter two rise as technology advances and the content creator economy soars.

Direct to Consumer (D2C)	Customers order products on the brand's website or app and receive them in the mail (or digitally if relevant)	AllBirds, Dollar Shave Club, Bombas
Business to Business (B2B)	A business provides another business with a product	Amazon Business, Salesforce, Shopify
Consumer to Consumer (C2C)	Consumers' peers are the customers	Products sold on Facebook Marketplace, OfferUp, Etsy
Consumer to Business (C2B)	Businesses purchase from the consumer	Paid influencers, reviewers, photographers

You can apply these models to your young business in a flexible and remote setting. You can even be flexible with what you're selling. No item is too niche, and no inventory is too varied.

Within eCommerce, there is a rapidly growing practice called drop shipping. In 2022, it was an estimated \$226 billion market. Dropshipping is a way to sell merchandise online without stocking up on inventory at the start of your venture, so you don't have to touch your savings account to get going. You are the seller, while a third party fulfills your orders as they come. Dropshipping is evidence that in a post-2020 world, more and more low-barrier online business models will develop.

But if eCommerce is not where your heart lies, don't worry. There are plenty of other opportunities for all the self-starters looking to supplement their income or invest fully in a new career.

If you're a social media connoisseur, why not jump into profitable content creation? You can build your audience with no more than a phone and an idea. Once you've established yourself, get paid by platforms or brands seeking influencer marketing.

These are most certainly not the only opportunities within online entrepreneurship. These are jumping-off points. So, jump and let your imagination soar, exploring how you can build something of your own to build the life you seek.

OPERATIONS MANAGER

Operations management is like scratching an itch for those who can spot inefficiency from a mile away. They ideate improvements and solve complex problems

with enthusiasm. Being a real agent of change within an organization is a fulfilling feeling. If the words "optimize," "fine-tune," "strategy," "organization," and "precision" excite you rather than daunt you, it may be time to search for a career in operations, where you will make critical decisions and lead the way to make tangible changes.

If this sounds like a good fit, but if you've never dipped your toe in business operations, let's review the role of operations within an organization. One exciting aspect of working in operations is its involvement in smoothing out a business' day-to-day, their bread and butter. And every day, enterprises utilize set processes to manage their products or services. Operations encompasses and impacts how organizations use these processes and how well they are executed, from supply chain management to customer service. They keep the party going, the business running, and the stakeholders happy.

To become an operations manager, first evaluate your education. The role typically requires a university degree in business administration, management, related fields, or specialized fields like supply chain management. Next, choose an industry—one you're interested in or have prior knowledge of (passion and experience make for great interview topics). Then, select what works for you. Hybrid? Remote? Flexible hours? Regular hours? Filter available jobs, and there's assuredly an option that fits your needs. Operations management is a consistent business need across countless sectors. It's flexible yet stable. It's a universal need with the opportunity to specialize.

If operations encompass a business' day-to-day, what does the day-to-day of an operations manager look like?

If you work at home, you may wake up and have coffee while checking your email and messaging your team for updates. Then, you could meet with your team to address everyone's challenges, taking the call wherever you please. You could then take a leisurely walk with your dog and head back home to continue your day, checking project timelines and answering questions from stakeholders piling up in your inbox. Luckily, you can answer these questions from your couch.

Before you know it, it's time for lunch, so you go to a cafe and grab a snack and another coffee to prepare for a development and training session with your staff.

Of course, you scheduled this session when you and your team were all available, whether your team members have kids to pick up from school, a doctor's appointment, or any other need for flexibility.

You have a break now, so head to the back porch to paint—your newest hobby. It relaxes you and lets you focus on what you must do next. Since you concentrate best at night, you wait until after dinner to devise a plan for long-term projects, assess current operations' efficiency, and find improvement areas to present to stakeholders next week.

At your own pace, you have helped a company reach its business goals while prioritizing your own.

PROJECT MANAGER

In this labyrinth of flexible business careers, operations, and project management are pivotal in driving organizational success. If operations managers compose smooth, efficient workflows, then project managers orchestrate specific initiatives with defined timelines and deliverables within those workflows. Project management is the structured execution of a project with set goals rather than continuously optimizing processes.

A "project" could include anything from intricate research and development to the collaborative creation of marketing materials. Each project, no matter what the end goal, must begin and end. A project manager helps initiate the beginning of the project and leads it through to the final deliverable. That's a lot of responsibility! But that also means it's an opportunity for meaningful impact.

Consider this example timeline:

First, a project is introduced. As a project manager, you would help define the scope, goals, and deliverables, establishing the communication channels for those involved. You may assess the project's feasibility and risks. You outline the steps to get from day one to the final deliverable.

In doing so, you'd use your elite planning skills to detail each task and determine the timeline, creating a schedule and preparing necessary resources, including

funds, personnel, and supplies. You'd watch for potential roadblocks and prepare to dismantle them.

Then, you'd get into the nitty gritty, taking the role of leader, motivating and managing your team effectively as they execute the plan. You're the source of solutions to problems and conflicts that arise. As the plan is executed, you spend time assessing its progress, comparing it to your plan using KPIs (key performance indicators). You lead meetings to give and receive updates, with delays being your responsibility to resolve.

When your team reaches the finish line, you check the quality of the deliverables and confirm stakeholders' approval. You also review the project as a whole: What went smoothly? What was the challenge? Who or what contributed to its success? Where are the areas of improvement? And, most satisfyingly, how are you going to celebrate?

It's a lot of responsibility, but it's also a lot of hands-on impact on a company. Finding the proper outlet for your project management skills can be very fulfilling. Consider full-time, freelance, or consulting roles if that impact drives you. You can live project to project with the flexibility to manage teams remotely, across time zones, whenever or wherever you work most effectively. Different companies will offer different work settings and parameters. Still, project-based work provides a high potential for flexibility depending on your team's work style.

Managing an organization's projects can be the avenue to manage your life, time, goals, and happiness.

REAL ESTATE AGENT

You would not be alone if you were to transition into real estate. In the U.S., there was a 60% jump in people obtaining their licenses between 2020 and 2021. And for good reason! Not only were people desperately seeking financial freedom in a time of fear and scarcity, but they were also attracted by the notion of an incredibly flexible career with no income cap and a self-determined workload. It comes with its challenges, but if you think you have what it takes to represent sellers and buyers of real estate, you are in for a highly personalized career.