



Employment Outlook Report



**Team Member 1
Team Member 2
Jessica Fisher
Team Member 3**

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Abstract

Using interviews, job listings, and the Occupational Outlook Handbook, this report will dissect the methods and results for careers in product management, program evaluation, sales management, and technical writing. For each career path, members will divulge various aspects like responsibilities, education requirements, years of experience, and salary ranges in hopes that advisors and undergraduate directors will be equipped with statistics and relevant information to help prospective students identify career paths that align with their skills and interests.

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to highlight key information like responsibilities, education requirements, years of experience, and salary ranges for working as a product manager, program evaluator, sales manager, and technical writer. While statistical information and requirements of each career path were acquired from the Occupational Outlook Handbook, other resources like interviews and job listings provide authentic insight. The goal is that advisors and undergraduate directors will be equipped with statistics and relevant information to help prospective students identify career paths that align with their skills and interests.

Overview

Regardless of the industry, the education requirement, or the job itself, most careers require skills in building relationships, communicating and collaborating, exercising flexibility, and focusing on the audience, all of which are crucial in pursuing the career paths outlined below.

- Product Manager
- Program Evaluator
- Sales Manager
- Technical Writer

The goal of this report is that advisors and undergraduate directors will be equipped with statistics and relevant information to help prospective students identify career paths that align with their skills and interests.

Background

Product Manager

A product manager is a professional who defines a product's strategy, roadmap, features, and success. They help set goals and motivate the product team of engineers, designers, marketers, and researchers, with the primary concern of ensuring that a product launches and continues to do well in the market. They are responsible for developing a product, whether it is an application that makes consumers' lives easier or software that can improve business processes.¹

Though it is most prevalent in the technology sector, product management has been around since the 1930s. The idea began in the consumer goods sector at Procter & Gamble. The company's president, Neil McElroy, introduced the concept that every brand needs to have a dedicated manager responsible for all the aspects of its performance. From the 1950s through the 2000s, the field has grown and expanded into a big industry as technology and software continue to advance.² Figure 1 was created using ChatGPT and depicts a product manager.



Figure 1: A Product Manager Visual Depiction

¹ Mansour, Sherif. "Product Manager: The Role and Best Practices for Beginners." Atlassian, April 24, 2025. <https://www.atlassian.com/agile/product-management/product-manager>.

² Balaji, Arun. "The Evolution of Product Management: Past, Present, and Future." Institute of Product Leadership, November 29, 2024. <https://www.productleadership.com/blog/the-evolution-of-product-management-past-present-and-future/>.

Program Evaluator

A program evaluator plays a crucial role in helping businesses and organizations maximize the full potential of their programs. By conducting evaluations and assessments, program evaluators empower these entities to enhance effectiveness and drive meaningful change.

In the early 20th century, education reform led to some of the earliest formal evaluations, particularly concerning student testing and curriculum effectiveness. The field of evaluation gained substantial momentum during the 1960s and 1970s under President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society initiatives, which included programs like Head Start and Job Corps. These federally funded social initiatives (i.e., education, public health, and welfare) were required to undergo systematic evaluation, which fueled the demand for program evaluators.³

Figure 2 was created using ChatGPT and depicts a program evaluator.



Figure 2: A Program Evaluator Visual Depiction

The American Evaluation Association was founded in 1986.⁴ Since then, evaluation practices have expanded globally, especially in international development, public health, and education. Today, program evaluators work in diverse sectors, including government, nonprofits, philanthropy, education, and international organizations.

³ Peter H. Rossi, Mark W. Lipsey, and Howard E. Freeman, *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach*, 7th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004)

⁴ Kingsbury, Nancy (1986) "Coming Together: Evaluation Network and Evaluation Research Society Share Common Business Agendas at Evaluation '85 Leading to American Evaluation Association," *Sage Journals*: Vol. 7: Iss. 1, <https://doi.org/10.1177/109821408600700118>

Sales Manager

A sales manager leads and motivates a team to meet sales targets, develop strategies, and build customer relationships to drive revenue growth. They also analyze sales data, train staff, and coordinate with other departments to improve overall performance. A sales manager's role is to drive business growth by setting sales goals, developing strategies, managing team performance, and building strong relationships with clients.

Sales managers emerged in the early 20th century through structured sales practices influenced by scientific management. Their role expanded over time to include strategy, customer relations, and digital tools like Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software to boost performance and growth.⁵ Figure 3 was created using ChatGPT and depicts a sales manager.



Figure 3: A Sales Manager Visual Depiction

⁵ Taylor, Frederick W. *The Principles of Scientific Management*, 1911.
<https://resources.saylor.org/wwwresources/archived/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/HIST363-7.1.3-Frederick-W-Taylor.pdf>.

Technical Writer

The purpose of being a technical writer is to simplify complex information for a target audience. Whether it be a task, a concept, or the content itself, the goal is to produce an aid that will help the audience accomplish something. The type of visual aids and text-based aids that technical writers can create is endless. Figure 4 was created using ChatGPT and depicts a technical writer.

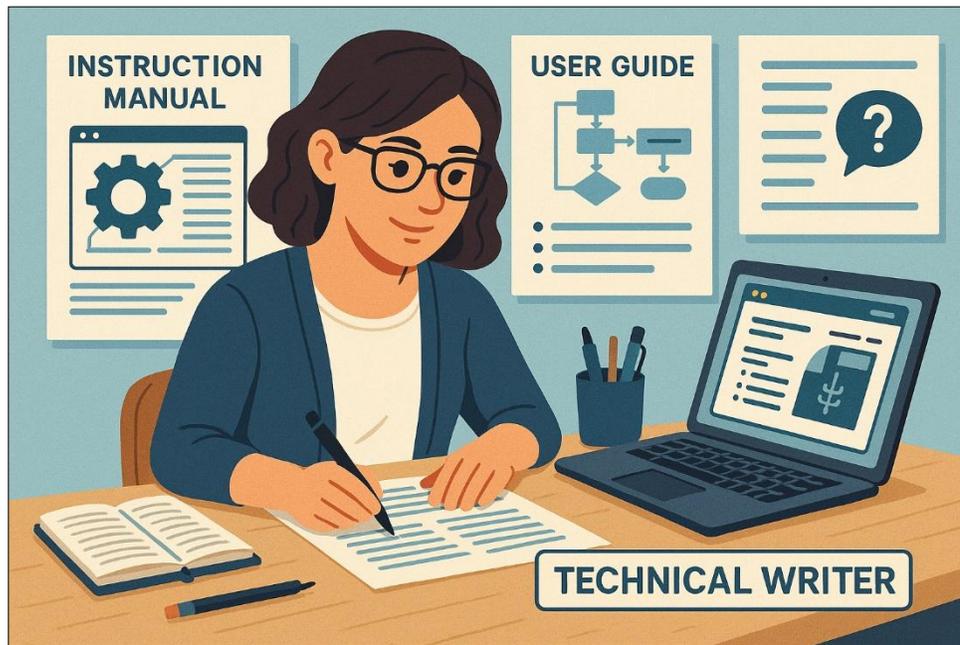


Figure 4: A Technical Writer Visual Depiction

Although it was not labeled as such, technical writing has been around since the 12th century. It wasn't until the wartime and the expansion of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields did it gain popularity. Over time, the writing style has shifted from a purely subject matter perspective to an audience-centered perspective.⁶

Surprisingly, the development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has shifted technical writing for the better. Technical writers can now use AI for tasks like those outlined below.

- Adjusting tone for different audiences
- Automating repetitive tasks
- Drafting outlines
- Synthesizing information

With this development, the fear of job security can be at the forefront of any writers' mind. However, many are confident that AI will not replace technical writers as they "bring a nuanced understanding of data and... add a touch of personalization."⁷

⁶ Brasher, Joseph (2020) "Outlining the Definitional History of Technical Writing Through Contemporary Scholarly Voices," Perpetua: The UAH Journal of Undergraduate Research: Vol. 5: Iss. 1, Article 1.

⁷ "How Does AI Impact Technical Writing | EDC Technical Writing Company." 2024. Essentialdata.com. February 13, 2024. <https://essentialdata.com/how-does-ai-impact-technical-writing/>.

Roadmap

The primary research for this report includes members interviewing four professionals in the career fields outlined below.

- Product Management
- Program Evaluation
- Sales Management
- Technical Writing

The secondary research includes reviewing job listings and the Occupational Outlook Handbook, each of which contained information about responsibilities, education requirements, years of experience, and salary ranges of each career.

- The **Methods** section will outline each member's process for collecting relevant data.
- The **Results** section will synthesize data retrieved from primary and secondary research.
- The **Summary** section will outline key takeaways from the report.
- The **Recommendations** section will provide recommendations to advisors and undergraduate directors regarding future student recruitment.

The goal is that advisors and undergraduate directors will be equipped with statistics and relevant information to help prospective students identify career paths that align with their skills and interests.

Methods

This section presents the methods used for obtaining information about product management, program evaluation, sales management, and technical writing careers using the primary and secondary resources outlined below.

- Interviews
- Job Listings
- Occupational Outlook Handbook

Interviews

Each member interviewed a professional in their desired career to gain an authentic glimpse into life as either a product manager, a program evaluator, a sales manager, or a technical writer. Two members interviewed their professional in-person, and the other two members interviewed their professional via Zoom.

Job Listings

Each member researched three job positions in their desired career, either in product management, program evaluation, sales management, or technical writing. Three members found all their jobs on Indeed, making up 75% of the results. One member used LinkedIn to find all their jobs, making up the remaining 25% of the results. From the research, each member noted information about the categories outlined below.

- Common responsibilities
- Required education
- Required experience
- Key skills

Occupational Outlook Handbook

Each member researched their desired career through the U.S. Bureau of Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook to gain knowledge about a variety of topics surrounding the field. Because the members wanted to explore similar categories for the secondary research to compare their accuracy, the relevant categories are outlined below.

- Job responsibilities
- Education and experience
- Salaries

Results

This section synthesizes and analyzes the findings from the primary and secondary resources detailed in the Methods sections.

Interviews

Questions

Each member created their own questions based on what information they were seeking from their professional. Coincidentally, 50% of members asked their professionals what skills or tools were essential for someone pursuing their career path. Other relevant questions that members asked their professionals include those outlined below.

- “If I want to pursue a job in big tech with Technical Communication as a master’s degree, how should I prepare?”
- “If you had the power to change one thing about your profession, what would it be and why?”
- “How have trends like remote and hybrid work impacted program evaluation practices and hiring?”
- “What’s the biggest misconception you hear about technical writers?”

Themes

Despite the different career paths each member chose, the central themes identified in the interviews include those outlined below.



Building Relationships

Building relationships gains trust from professional personnel, which keeps in line with what Sarah Michael, a Technical Writer for Exxon Mobil, said: “the best advice I’d give to any technical writer is building relationships with people.”⁸ Similarly, Sid Lindholm, a retired Sales Manager for Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, stated the most significant theme is building authentic relationships; success centers on understanding and serving others.⁹



Communicating and Collaborating

Communication and collaboration go hand-in-hand. For example, Sarah Michael stated that being flexible is pertinent when communicating and working with a Subject Matter Expert (SME). Her documentation process involves presenting the SME with several communication options that best suit their preferences. Additionally, communication is crucial in the oil field as she states that ride alongs, a process of riding with the SME to the job site to test a finalized draft of a procedural document, give a different perspective as the documents are usually created in an office but will be used in the field. Without maintaining communication with the SME and collaborating with multiple, relevant parties, success would be harder to obtain.

⁸ Sarah Michael (Technical Writer at Exxon Mobil) in discussion with Jessica Fisher, June 2025.

⁹ Sid Lindholm (retired Sales Manager at Green Mountain Coffee Roasters) in discussion with Team Member 3, June 2025.

Exercising Flexibility

Flexibility is pivotal for any profession, so when Team Member 1 asked Syreeta Skelton-Wilson, a Senior Research Science Manager at ICF, to give advice for emerging program evaluators, Syreeta “encouraged new evaluators to stay informed about changes in the field...”¹⁰

In keeping with changes in the field, AI requires every professional to be flexible as it intertwines itself into everyday operations. The primary focus of Team Member 2s’ interview with Jasmine Kyles, a Product Manager at Amazon Web Services, is related to AI. A major finding he discovered in his interview was to stay informed about what’s happening in the field as things can shift quickly and to “keep learning...don’t be afraid to learn and play with these [AI] tools and see what the capabilities are.”¹¹



Focusing on the Audience

Lastly, focusing on the audience is what a job is about. In sales, one would think receiving the money is the end goal; however, Sid Lindholm said “it’s not really about selling but about letting other people enjoy themselves.” From a writing perspective, Sarah Michael tries to put herself in the audience’s shoes to understand the knowledge gap.

Further, Syreeta Skelton-Wilson emphasized the importance of clear and effective communication in program evaluation. Clear communication can make evaluation findings broadly accessible. This can be achieved by tailoring communication to different industry standards and job contexts. Syreeta encouraged people to “generalize that [communication] outside of the evaluation context, so that it speaks [...] in languages that other people can understand.”

¹⁰ Syreeta Skelton-Wilson (Senior Research Science Manager at ICF) in discussion with Team Member 1, June 2025.

¹¹ Jasmine Kyles (Product Manager at Amazon Web Services) in discussion with Team Member 2, June 2025.

Job Listings

The purpose of this section is to outline the common responsibilities, required education, required experience, and key skills associated with professions in product management, program evaluation, sales management, and technical writing. The main sources used to synthesize this data include Indeed and LinkedIn.

Common Responsibilities

While some professions specialize in specific responsibilities, like a technical writer writes and edits documents, that's not to say that responsibilities are exclusive for specific professions. Responsibilities for product management, program evaluation, sales management, and technical writing career paths can vary as outlined in Table 1 below.

Responsibilities	Product Manager	Program Evaluator	Sales Manager	Technical Writer
Research, write, and edit documents	✓	✓	✓	✓
Create eLearning modules	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓
Collaborate with SMEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Manage data	✓	✓	✓	✓
Manage projects and programs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Evaluate programs and effectiveness	✓	✓	✓	N/A
Focus on customer support and satisfaction	✓	✓	✓	✓
Design plans, policies, and specifications	✓	N/A	✓	N/A

Table 1: Job Listing – Common Career Responsibilities

Required Education

From the 12 jobs identified in the secondary research, the members found that employers prefer candidates to have a postsecondary degree when seeking jobs in product management, program evaluation, sales management, or technical writing.

Findings indicate that 50% of employers *require* candidates to have at least a bachelor's degree while 8.3% of employers *prefer* candidates with a bachelor's degree. Additionally, 8.3% of employers prefer candidates with a graduate degree. The remaining 33.3% of employers did not specify any degree requirements, as outlined in Figure 5 below.

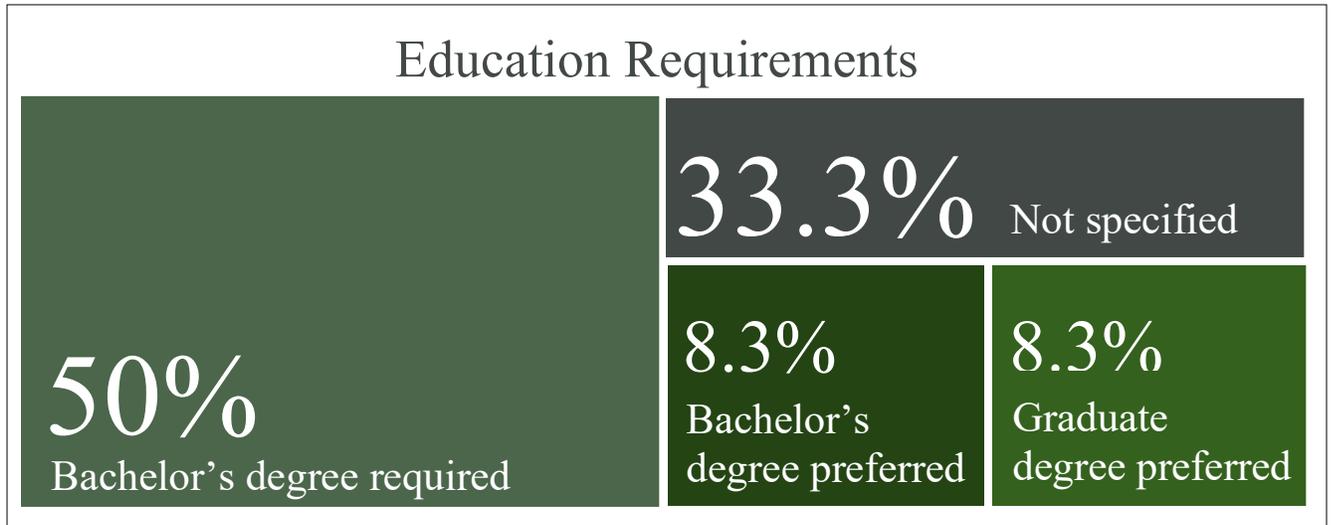


Figure 5: Employers' Postsecondary Preferences

To pursue careers in product management, program evaluation, sales management, and technical writing, job seekers should focus on academic disciplines relevant to their chosen fields. For positions in these fields, there is generally more flexibility regarding candidates' academic backgrounds as employers often prioritize relevant work experience over specific degree requirements.

In contrast, pursuing a career in technical writing typically requires individuals to obtain education and training in communication or writing-related fields, such as English or technical writing. Based on the job listings, the specific academic discipline recommendations are outlined in Figure 6 below.

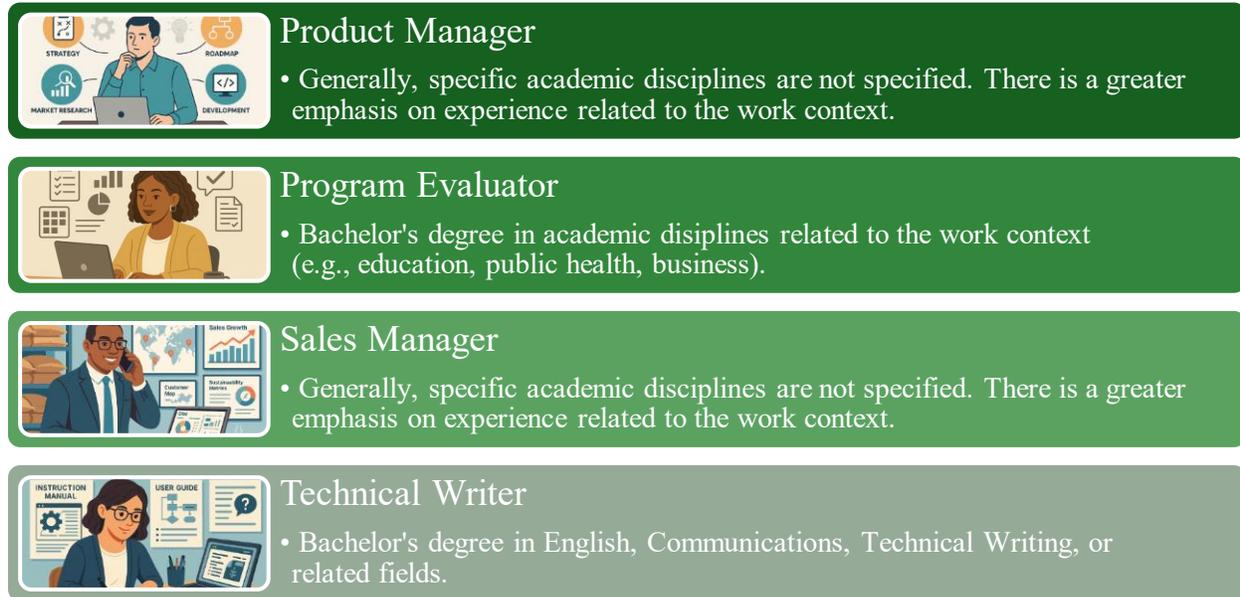


Figure 6: Academic Discipline Recommendations

Required Experience

For all positions, prior experience relevant to the job is required. Findings indicate that most positions (42%) require candidates to have 3–4 years of experience, followed by 5+ years (33%), 1–2 years (17%), and 10+ years (8%). The required years of experience per position is outlined in Figure 7 below.



Figure 7: Required Years of Experience

Key Skills

Skills vary between different career paths; however, across the board, product managers, program evaluators, sales managers, and technical writers require job candidates to have strong communication and collaboration skills. For example, a product manager needs to work effectively across various functions with a diverse team. Similarly, a program evaluator must communicate clearly with interest holders and foster collaboration. A sales manager is expected to engage customers and effectively convey the brand's story. Additionally, technical writers are required to collaborate closely with SMEs, as outlined in Table 2 below.

	In-demand skills	Product Manager	Program Evaluator	Sales Manager	Technical Writer
Soft Skills	Communication	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Collaboration	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hard Skills	Documentation	✓	✓	N/A	✓
	Authoring Tools	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓
	Data Analysis	✓	✓	✓	N/A
	Strategic Planning	✓	N/A	✓	N/A

Table 2: In-demand skills

Each career path has specialized skills that employers often seek. For product managers, program evaluators, and sales managers, it is essential to possess analytical skills. Furthermore, documentation is important for product managers, program evaluators, and technical writers. Additionally, product managers and sales managers share similarities, particularly in their ability to engage in strategic planning.

Occupational Outlook Handbook

The purpose of this section is to outline the job responsibilities, education and experience, and salaries associated with professions in product management, program evaluation, sales management, and technical writing. The U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook was used to collect data.¹²

Job Responsibilities

The roles of product managers, program evaluators, sales managers, and technical writers support different aspects of an organization. The typical responsibilities that each profession performs are outlined in Table 3 below.

Careers	Responsibilities
Product Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set goals. • Define success metrics. • Motivate engineering teams. • Understand user’s needs. • Monitor market competition.
Program Evaluator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess program effectiveness, efficiency, and value. • Design evaluations. • Gather and analyze data. • Provide insights into decision-making.
Sales Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate logistics. • Manage regional sales teams. • Negotiate retail contracts. • Work with market/product development.
Technical Writer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the audience. • Collaborate with SMEs. • Simplify complex processes into user-friendly documentation.

Table 3: Occupational Outlook Handbook – Common Career Responsibilities

¹² “Occupational Outlook Handbook Home”, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, July 18, 2025, <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/>.

Education and Experience

Students interested in gaining the specialized education and training necessary for career paths in product management, program evaluation, sales management, and technical writing may refer to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, which highlights various academic disciplines that can equip students with the preferred education and experience for their desired careers, as outlined in Figure 8 below.



Figure 8: Occupational Outlook Handbook Academic Discipline Recommendations

Salaries

As outlined in Figure 9 below, the comparative salary ranges for careers in product management, program evaluation, sales management, and technical writing vary between entry, average, and senior levels.

- Product managers show a wide salary range, beginning at \$70K–\$80K for entry positions, averaging around \$110K, and reaching up to \$200K for senior roles.
- Program evaluators earn an average of \$95K, with salaries ranging from \$55K to \$130K. The variation depends on factors such as experience, the scope of programs assessed, and the type of organization (e.g., nonprofit, government, or private sector).
- Sales managers have industry-dependent earnings. Those in wholesale or manufacturing earn between \$66K and \$74K, while those in technical or scientific fields average \$100K.
- Technical writers earn an average of \$91K, with salaries ranging from \$54K (lowest 10%) to \$130K (top 10%). This spread reflects the diversity of writing tasks and industries they serve from basic documentation to complex technical manuals in engineering, software, or healthcare.



Figure 9: Career Salary Ranges

Conclusion

Summary

Using interviews, job listings, and the Occupational Outlook Handbook, this report explored the methods and results for careers in product management, program evaluation, sales management, and technical writing. Primary research encompassed an interview, and the questions ranged from how AI is impacting the industry to essential tools needed for the desired career. From there, four themes emerged:

- Building relationships
- Communicating and collaborating
- Exercising flexibility
- Focusing on the audience

Secondary research encompassed job listings and the Occupational Outlook Handbook, which proved similar regarding responsibilities, education requirements, years of experience, and salaries.

Recommendations

When recruiting prospective students to pursue careers in product management, program evaluation, sales management, or technical writing, advisors and undergraduate directors can recommend students pursue fellowships or internships to bolster their resumes and gain experience.

Additionally, students can benefit from practicing their soft skills like critical thinking, problem solving, and building relationships, all of which they may achieve during their coursework.

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