



**EUROPEAN
RENTAL
ASSOCIATION**



JOB POSITIONS PROFILING



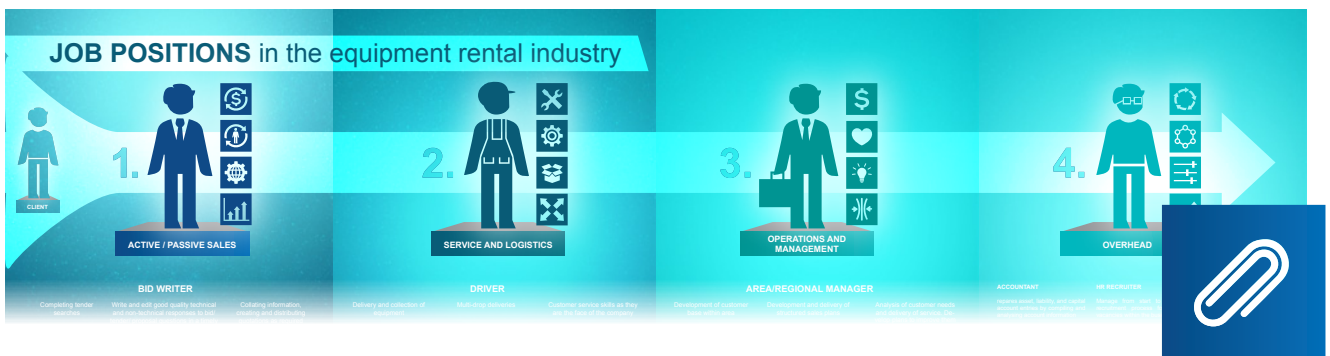
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1. INTRODUCTION

Following the ERA Convention 2017, the Future Group outlined and agreed upon several new projects to support the rental industry in hiring and retaining new talent. The first step was to identify which job positions are common to most of the members of the ERA. In order to do this, the Future Group created a flow chart representing the entire customer journey, establishing the key points in the process at which customers interact with an employee of the organisation. This enabled the Future Group to determine specific job profiles for crucial positions in the rental industry as a whole. These profiles should be of benefit to recruiters, current employees and prospective candidates to help them gain a clearer understanding of their current or future roles. The concept underpinning the job profiles is that they will provide more detail and insight than traditional job descriptions, and can therefore be utilised to more effectively match prospective candidates with roles that suit their skillset, qualifications and personality type.

To begin with, the Future Group decided to undertake in-depth analysis of one position only, with the potential for the format to be expanded to more positions if desired. The position chosen for this first profiling was that of the branch manager—a crucial role throughout the industry.



Source reference
Coustumer Journey

2. THE BRANCH MANAGER AN IN-DEPTH PROFILE

The Approach

We evaluated several branch manager job descriptions for members of the ERA in order to pinpoint key features of the role. The most common responsibilities depicted in these job descriptions were to be able to manage a team, implement sales campaigns, and to motivate and train employees.

Additionally, we developed and carried out structured interviews with current branch managers and their supervisors. The interviews were conducted via phone or video calls that lasted between 25–40 minutes, and the central themes and focal points were based on suggestions from the Future Group. These included topics such as: daily tasks, collaboration and leadership, values and principles, individual career backgrounds, critical incidents, expertise and use of technology, organisation and execution, and visionary focus.

We interviewed a representative sample. We covered companies; in Central Europe, in Scandinavia, in Eastern Europe and in Southern Europe.

For most branch managers, work usually starts early in the morning around 6am and continues on until the depot closes around 4pm or later. The overriding duty mentioned by most of the branch managers we interviewed was team management, with one noting “managing the fleet with regard to capacity, season and tool availability” as his primary role alongside ensuring overall client satisfaction. Their daily to-do lists vary greatly each day but the tasks are generally related to either team or client management. One of the branch managers summarised his role as “being a part of the daily business and helping out where someone is missing.”



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Responsibilities

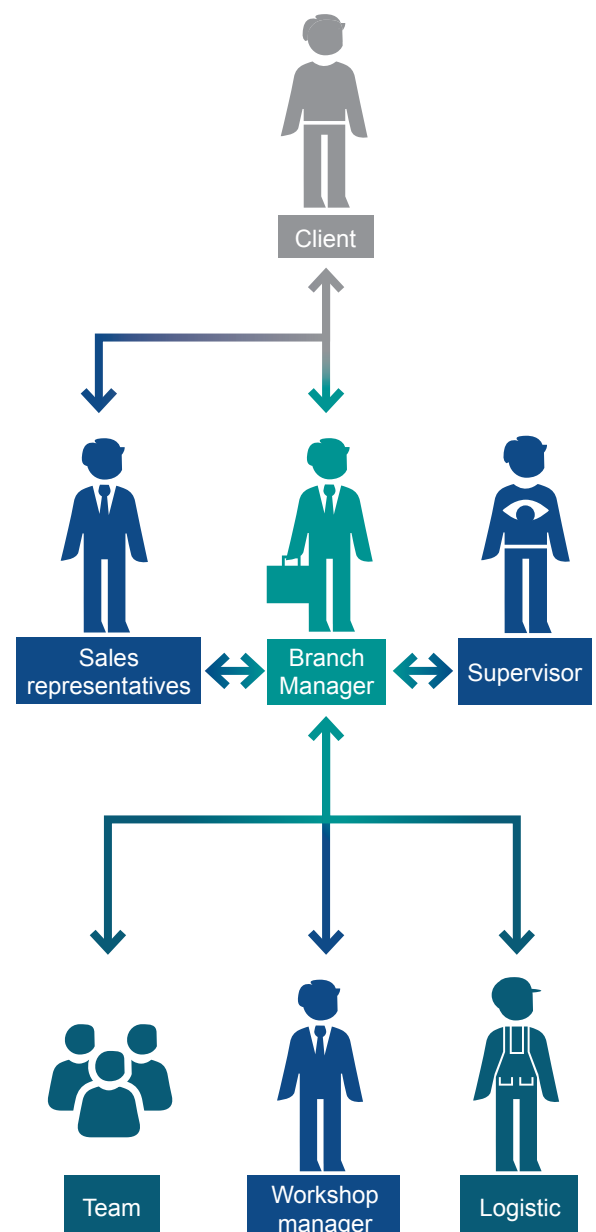
Branch managers are responsible for checking the commissioning of equipment and logistics, the meeting of sales targets, and ensuring smooth operation and profitability of the depot. It is the branch manager's responsibility to ensure that teams are led in a way in which they are motivated to work enthusiastic and efficient. Overall client satisfaction is the main priority of the branch manager, and they are often the final point of contact in the customer complaint process.

Collaboration and Leadership

The branch manager navigates working relationships between clients, sales representatives, and operational managers such as service managers, workshop managers and logistics managers. They also play a role in overseeing warehouse staff and the installation of equipment on-site, often supporting the salesmen to meet customer requirements and needs. It is the branch manager's responsibility to inform the team in advance of the tools and equipment they need, ensuring that everything is prepared for upcoming projects. One of the branch managers we spoke to explained that although the members of his team are qualified for their specific roles, his duty is to oversee the processes and step in where necessary, utilising his knowledge of the industry if needed. Over time, he anticipates this knowledge will be transferred over to his staff through practical application.

Another branch manager we interviewed pointed out the importance of establishing good relationships with branch managers of other depots to ensure smooth and cost-efficient operation of the rental company as a whole—he frequently has to help other branch managers by providing them with equipment they require. Essentially, the skillset and quality of communication from the branch managers also determines the success of the sales representatives, which in turn decides the profitability of the company. Therefore, expert communication and leadership skills are required to ensure that staff are motivated, issues are dealt with promptly, and expectations are set out appropriately.

A branch manager usually reports their key performance indicators (KPIs) once a week to their supervisor in order to provide feedback and an overview on how the business is running overall.



2. THE BRANCH MANAGER AN IN-DEPTH PROFILE

Career Background

The careers and background of the branch managers we interviewed varied considerably, indicating that specific industry experience is not as essential as a distinctly enthusiastic attitude and mindset that fits with the company culture. One of the branch managers we spoke to had worked at the same rental company for 18 years, whereas another had been positioned in the role approximately just one year ago. It became evident during the interviews that in terms of potential candidates, real experience is valued more highly than university degrees for this role. Having said that, one of the supervisors stated that he prefers to work with employees that are completely new to the industry as they are easier to train to meet the exact requirements of the company. However, it is worth considering that the majority of branch managers interviewed had a strong background in business accompanied with some kind of technical interest and sales background prior to their current position.

In terms of the career paths that led the branch managers to their current positions, many had worked previously as sales representatives or logistic managers either in the same rental company or in a different organisation in the fields of engineering, logistics or transport. Career progression to branch manager can be rapid for the right person—one of the branch managers was promoted to his current position after just eight months of consistent good work as a less senior worker in the same company.



2. THE BRANCH MANAGER AN IN-DEPTH PROFILE

Values & Personality



One of the most crucial elements of a branch manager's personality is that of stress-resistance as their working environment is in a state of constant change and therefore they must adapt themselves and their teams to new situations every day. Pressure from both clients and the logistics/operations teams within the company is navigated by the branch manager, who must co-ordinate departments to ensure satisfaction is reached at both sides.



Other essential values for branch managers include the ability to fully empathise with others, underpinned by a strong principle of the provision of exceptional customer care. The branch manager must therefore be able to recognise and deal with all different types of people and situations in a tailored and appropriate manner.



The branch managers we interviewed cited fast and calm decision-making as a fundamental part of their role. Most branch managers have a large degree of freedom around the decisions they make, so it is essential that they are able to take full responsibility for the outcomes. Their competency in their role is determined largely by their quantitative results, so any poor decisions will likely manifest as unmet expectations and targets sooner rather than later.

One of the supervisors interviewed confirmed that finding fast solutions for multiple problems simultaneously was a key asset of a good branch manager, alongside the ability to think outside of the box and to see business opportunities where others might not. A branch manager we spoke to also noted that being intuitive to the strengths and weaknesses of his team members is very important when helping them reach their potential as a co-working unit. In terms of his own character, he stated that his high degree of approachability and "open-door policy" was a key factor driving his success, whilst also being able to effectively communicate feedback—both positive and negative—to his team in a way that is fully understood and easily implemented.



Another branch manager we spoke to emphasised the importance of mindset when it comes to client management. He focuses on establishing positive relationships with clients, and underlying every interaction he has with clients is the ethos that "every deal is a good deal." It's crucial that branch managers are able to serve all customers equally to the same high standard, but at the same time skilfully prioritise the right clients when necessary.

The branch managers interviewed generally have good relationships with their supervisors and value this relationship very highly. Indeed, the most common response to the question "What would make you consider leaving your role in the company?" was being left alone and unsupported with problems that are extremely difficult to handle and overcome. The next most common response was to lose the freedom of independent decision-making in the role.

2. THE BRANCH MANAGER AN IN-DEPTH PROFILE



Critical Incidents

A fundamental skill shared by all successful branch managers is the ability to handle critical incidents effectively and smoothly, thereby bringing structure to their chaotic working environments. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to the plethora of issues that branch managers will face, and therefore it is their level of skill and experience handling such challenges that will determine the overall outcome for the business.

Many of the issues faced by branch managers present on a case-by-case basis and require urgent attention and action to resolve them. Examples of these critical incidents include:

- One of the managers we interviewed told us that after his company underwent a reorganisation at the end of last year, he was left responsible for the running of three new depots. As a result, one of his employees was tasked with a huge amount of overtime. This was something that, as branch manager, he had to be attuned to and aware of, and he took the initiative immediately to recruit another employee to cover the shortfall.
- Some problems faced by branch managers don't have such straightforward solutions—often clients will demand equipment that the depot simply doesn't have.
- Other such challenges need to be dealt with in an appropriately sensitive manner. Another branch manager we spoke to described the experience of giving team members negative feedback—and in some cases firing them—as one of the most delicate and difficult parts of his role.



Success Factors

A thriving branch manager will combine basic business knowledge with application of strong leadership qualities and the ability to remain calm whilst multitasking under pressure. The importance of building long-lasting relationships both internally within the organisation and externally with key client accounts cannot be understated—one manager stated that focusing only on one's own depot is a key oversight that distinguishes the weak branch managers from those that succeed in the long-term.

Other factors that determine the success of a branch manager include;

- **Communication skills.** Communication with their team needs to be transparent, with individualised feedback presented in a clear and implementable way with regular follow-ups.
- **Complaint handling.** The branch manager will often face urgent problems that require quick solutions that are attuned to the needs of all parties involved.
- **Process documentation.** A branch manager will have to make many spontaneous decisions, but at the same time it is imperative that the processes underpinning the company are both adhered to and documented as a matter of protocol.

2. THE BRANCH MANAGER AN IN-DEPTH PROFILE

Expertise & Technology

The branch managers we interviewed all use a range of hardware and software to fulfil their daily responsibilities, which includes;



SMARTPHONES to manage emails and calls.



LAPTOPS/DESKTOP computers.



BASIC OFFICE SOFTWARE such as Microsoft Office and Skype.

ERP

ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING (ERP) software to manage the business and automate back office functions related to technology, services and HR.

CRM

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM) software to manage interactions with customers, streamline processes and improve profitability.



Specialist rental and transport **MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE**.

Organisation & Execution

Branch managers must be able to strike a fine balance in their work routine between the documented process-based tasks, and the other more ad-hoc, leadership-based projects. According to the branch managers we interviewed, 50–80% of their work is process-based—tasks such as logistics, maintaining a safe and secure working environment, quality assurance, ensuring high levels of customer satisfaction, and the purchasing of new equipment—these must all follow a clear protocol, often in collaboration with other colleagues.

The remaining 20–50% of a branch manager's time is used to work on improving the management of their team and equipment, alongside more specialised and individualised projects for which they take overall responsibility. The fundamental skill applied by an effective branch manager is to adapt the processes appropriately where necessary in any given situation to account for any shortfall in either manpower or equipment availability.

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KPI's

A branch manager's targets are usually number-driven and it is essential that the KPIs align with the expectations of their supervisors. Branch manager supervisors will use both operational and logistic KPIs to monitor their branch managers, alongside regular depot visits and feedback retrieval from sales representatives. However, it should be noted that the main responsibility of the branch manager is to maintain a satisfactory customer experience. Although a branch manager's success is measured to a certain extent by KPIs relating to sales and profitability, these targets are usually more relevant for the sales representatives.

The economic KPIs most often used to measure and track the success of a branch manager are:

- Net turnover
- Net profit
- Depot running costs/
financial utilisation
- Return on investments

The customer satisfaction KPIs most often used to measure and track the success of a branch manager are:

- Email response rate. The percentage of email queries from customers that are responded to within a given time frame.
- Client complaints. The number of formal complaints received from customers within a given time frame. The percentage of complaints reaching a satisfactory outcome for the client could also be measured.
- X-minute call back. Some rental companies guarantee a qualified engineer will call a client back within 10 minutes from an initial service claim i.e. on-site equipment failure. This KPI relates to the success rate at which this promise is achieved.
- Same day repair. If a claim cannot be solved by the initial phone call, further customer guarantees are often in place that promise a qualified engineer will be on site and solve the issue within 24 hours from the initial service claim. This KPI therefore depends upon the rate at which this guarantee is fulfilled.
- Machine availability. Some rental companies internally measure how quickly they turnaround equipment returning from a previous rental contract into "rent ready" condition for a new contract or for eventual replacement. This KPI informs of the efficiency of the branch manager, and has a direct impact on customer satisfaction.

One of the branch manager supervisors we interviewed elaborated further on the KPIs in use at his organisation. He explained that the customer experience-based KPIs are made available on the online customer portal in order to maintain transparency with clients. All of the KPIs are automated, measured and analysed in real-time as they are natively built into the CRM. At his company, they are also directly linked with employees' bonuses.

For branch managers, he emphasised that the KPIs must be linked with customers' expectations—any breaking of internal company rules in order to fulfil customer desires renders the KPIs meaningless. Further, KPIs should be reviewed at least on an annual basis and the outcomes openly discussed with stakeholders, customers and employees in different departments.

2. THE BRANCH MANAGER AN IN-DEPTH PROFILE

Visionary Focus

The rental industry is moving at a rapid pace propelled by the use of new technology and branch managers are expected to keep up with these changes on all levels. More and more clients are now demanding services both online and offline, meaning that rental companies must now adopt an omnichannel presence to satisfy expectations. Increasing levels of service provision online means that:

- Logistics is more challenging. In order for smooth equipment rental for both online and offline customers, availability and requests on all platforms must be tracked in real-time, every second. Tight systems need to be in place to ensure equipment isn't reserved online while a different customer is travelling to the depot to collect that same piece of equipment.
- There is less customer contact. Equipment rental can now be booked online and the entire process can be automatised via online apps. Technologies such as radio frequency identification (RFID) can also now automatise the handling of rental returns, meaning that fewer employees are needed at the depot as well cutting the number of customer-facing staff in branch.
- Less customer contact makes building strong customer relationships harder. It's essential that branch managers constantly strive to establish strong client relationships in order that their custom is not solely price-driven. In the future, this could translate to rental companies developing into full service providers, offering services as part of their equipment rental package in order to distinguish themselves from the competition.

Supervisor Impressions

One of the supervisors we interviewed explained that the role of the branch manager could be undertaken in two ways. Firstly, by employing a dedicated branch manager for each depot with the responsibilities outlined above, functioning in between operations and sales, ensuring customer satisfaction as their primary role. However, a similar outcome could be achieved by instead employing centralised staff who are responsible for client management and key account management. At the same time, operations would be the responsibility of individual workshops and depots, led by logistics managers.

In terms of their responses when asked what they look for in branch manager applicants, the supervisors generally focused more on soft factors such as approachability, an easy-going attitude and the ability to provide high levels of customer service over academic certification or experience in the same role. Experience within the construction or rental industries is preferred, but not essential. In fact, one branch manager supervisor told us that out of their newly-appointed branch managers, a former optician is currently outshining an employee that worked for years in the car rental industry. Essentially, it is a candidate's personality that will be the deciding factor in determining their success in the role. An entrepreneurial mindset is fundamental if branch managers are going to thrive and develop areas of the company by themselves.

Another point that supervisors consider is the extent of variety in their team of branch managers in terms of their career backgrounds. Building a team that can assist each other with different pockets of technical knowledge and experience is critical when trying to maximise their ability to work well together.

3. THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

Both the branch managers and supervisors we spoke to concurred that the role of the branch manager will evolve as time goes on and the use of online technology grows. Data tracking and data interpretation were emphasised as imperative if rental companies are going to succeed in the future. This will be facilitated by the establishment and integration of new systems to automatise processes that were previously done manually. As a result, the number of in-person sales tasks will decrease, meaning that the number of employees working for organisations (including branch managers) will also decrease. However, during this transition it is crucial that key accounts are managed to an exceptional standard to ensure customer satisfaction.

When asked about what would make their work easier, branch managers and their supervisors cited similar changes: easier-to-use and more integrated I.T. systems, establishing partnerships to outsource tasks, and more streamlined, consistent processes. One supervisor we interviewed added that displaying equipment manuals and documentation in a more interactive, engaging way may increase accessibility to that information for both employees and customers and therefore improve the efficiency of the organisation.

Ultimately, it was agreed that it is not only the processes within an organisation that need to be optimised, but the people too. Inspiration can be taken from other industries such as automotive rental, as they are currently ahead in terms of their innovation and use of online technology. Emphasis should be placed on developing employees to think more inventively, more quickly, and to be more open to online solutions that will shape their role into a more client-focused position.



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