

Careers in Credit: Next Steps

By: Toni Nuernberg

To help illustrate the valuable role of credit professionals and the rewarding credit career path, Forius/NACM North Central is publishing a series of Careers in Credit articles. Our [first article](#) looked at credit assistant positions. This, the second article in our series, examines the role of credit analysts.

After beginning their credit profession journey as credit assistants, those who enjoy the job's challenges and responsibilities often explore career advancement options. For most, becoming a credit analyst marks the next logical step on the credit career ladder.

Credit analysts typically review customer credit applications, project sales, evaluate credit risk, and analyze financial statements, financial data and trends. They use this information to set new customer credit limits or make recommendations for credit limits based on their companies' credit policies. For existing customers, they perform periodic credit reviews and maintain customer files with current financial statements and bank reference information.

Analysts are often responsible for working with both customers and their companies' sales teams to resolve credit issues, and they watch for signs of increased risk, communicating concerns to management and the sales staff.

"Many think that 'credit analysis' is really just a fancy way of saying 'collections,' but it is so much more than that if you apply your full skill set," said Chad Sivertson, CBA, CICP, credit analyst for NatureWorks in Minnetonka, Minn. "Credit analysis takes skill and knowledge beyond the purchased credit report and into the meat of all business."

According to staffing agency Robert Half's 2015 Salary Guide, average salaries for credit analysts at large companies in the North Central region range from \$36,415 to \$66,515, depending on the company's location.

Credit analyst salary data was not available for small and mid-size companies.

Leslie Harrison, SPHR, CGA, director of membership, staffing and HR for NACM Connect and its subsidiary, Midwest Business Staffing, said companies filling credit analyst positions seek more experience and education than they require for credit assistant positions. “Senior-level analysts usually need seven to 10 years experience,” Harrison said. “Companies look for a finance background and/or NACM designations.”

Sivertson stressed the benefits of taking advantage of the resources and opportunities available from membership organizations.

“NACM and Forius are the entry point to the credit career, and the tools they offer have been great,” he said. “The ability to learn from those in my field has been essential. [Credentialing is key](#), but even more important is utilizing all that they teach so that you don’t lose it.”

Pursuing designations not only helps improve performance, but it demonstrates job commitment, professionalism and motivation. According to Sivertson, this is critical for continuing to improve a company’s credit process and for career growth.

“The future of any credit department depends on how well we position ourselves, and a large part of that is first to get the right credentialing and then to make yourself visible and useful to your sales team,” Sivertson said. “The credit department is evolving at such a rapid pace that you have to live and breathe this profession. You have to be current on the news from around the world and how it might impact your role and your company.”

As credit analysts build their experience, skills and knowledge, they can create a foundation for moving into management roles in the credit profession, including credit manager and, eventually director of credit.

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