ALUMNI IN RETAILING

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Graduated from UF School of Journalism and Communication in 1986 with a degree in Advertising after two summer internships in the advertising department at Famous Barr department store - a division of The May Company based in St. Louis, Missouri where I grew up. I was offered a position in the advertising department of a sister store based in Washington DC (Hechts) and started my career there as an executive trainee. In this program, I learned all aspects of retail from the buying office to operations to store operations to customer service. I had no idea how valuable that program would be to my career later.

Once in the advertising department, I held many positions during my 13 years at Hechts: account management; finance; copywriting; events; etc as I worked my way around the department and up the ladder. In 1999, I moved to Portland, Oregon to head up the advertising department for another sister store (Meier & Frank) and was there for about 2 years before coming back to Hechts as the VP-Advertising Director and was promoted to SVP-Sales Promotion in 2004.

The merger of The May Company and Federated Department Stores resulted in the closing of Hechts as an independent division requiring many to relocate or separate from the company. I joined the ranks of Macy's Midwest, the newest division of Macy's, as the SVP-Marketing and moved back to St. Louis, Missouri to be a part of introducing Macy's to the Midwest. I remain in that position today.

A few bits of advise to those graduating and contemplating a career in retail. Retail is a lot like the Gators. It has good days and it has bad days and then, it has great days. You have to love it through it all in order to be successful in the end. You can't jump on its bandwagon through the great days and then back off during the bad days because it is in those difficult times that you learn what really makes the good days become great days.

Retail marketing is not "Melrose Place". It is hard work and you get a report card everyday from your customer in the form of sales. They will love some campaigns and they will hate some campaigns. Your success depends on finding the ones they love.

Finally, I can't stress the importance of an internship to really help you understand if all of the hard work and feedback is for you. It's incredibly satisfying to be a part of a national campaign that works and is well liked by the media. The sense of pride that comes with launching your own brand and getting positive reaction from customers is overwhelming but it does come at a price. An internship will help you make that choice.

Good Luck and Go Gators!