The Summer 2000 Retail Management Internship program opened the doors to another group of eager University of Florida students. Many of the students experienced retailing in the stores learning management skills from hands-on experiences. Students participated in management meetings, designing displays with the visual merchandisers and worked with the operation managers to understand what makes each store function. These students were challenged with responsibilities of managing a department, managing employees, handling cash and offering excellent customer services to the customers. Students were impressed with what it takes to run a retail operation!

All students were required to enroll in the course that corresponds to what they are learning within the stores. Assignments are designed to push the student beyond what they are taught at the stores in order to supplement the learning experience. Students are offered a choice in the areas they would like to research and encouraged to discuss this with their supervisors to get the best guidance. In essence, students are given an opportunity to control part of what they want to learn during their time on the internship. In return, the retailers are able to train a manager to work as a team member in promoting the store. It is a win-win program!

When I was offered a summer internship position with Burdines, thoughts of planning glamorous fashion shows and meeting famous designers lingered in my head. My dreams were temporarily altered however, when I was assigned to work in the Luxury Linens Department at the Burdines Home Gallery in Miami, Florida.

I knew that working with linens and other home accessories would not give me the opportunity to plan a fashion show or meet anyone famous as I envisioned and I quickly began devising excuses to have my store department changed.

My mother reminded me how absurd and ridiculous I was acting and kindly asserted her “everything happens for a reason/things will work out” speech.

Well, as it turns out, my mother was right – things did work out. My experience at Burdines was phenomenal, and I attribute this experience to the personalized training and support I received from the wonderful sales staff and management team at the home gallery.

As an intern, I observed and performed management tasks in a high volume retail
**THE GRAPEVINE GROUP: A WHOLE NEW EXPERIENCE**

By Carlos Lajara

What is The Grapevine Group and what do they do? Those were the first two questions that came to my mind when I first heard about the company. I said to myself, “What will I be doing as an intern at this company?” To me, that was the most important question that needed to be answered when I applied for the position. Well, today I can proudly answer those questions.

The Grapevine Group is a human resources consulting and recruiting firm located in Atlanta, Georgia. Although their primary focus is on filling jobs for their clients, they provide an array of human resources services worldwide to a variety of businesses including major retailers, pharmaceutical companies, service organizations, and information technology companies. The company is composed of executive recruitment professionals committed to providing companies worldwide with high quality and customized recruitment services utilizing an ethical approach.

The retail internship program at The Grapevine Group is the best alternative to any in-store retail internship program. The company has an incredible business environment. They are very attentive to the needs of their employees, as well as their clients. The people at the company are true professionals, very dynamic and possess positive attitudes. Since the first day I walked through the doors, everyone made me feel I was part of this great family.

During my internship I was able to work in all aspects of the consulting and recruiting services the company offers. I was able to work in the two major businesses of the company, the retail research and the pharmaceutical sales recruiting. I was allowed to do research to identify prospects, determine their interest to work with our clients, and interview the prospects by phone to qualify and screen them for the clients’ hiring requirements. I learned how to prepare the final presentation of the candidates to our clients, in a form of a book mailed to their offices. I modified and updated the sales and productivity reports of the company and developed a new form to keep track of all completed projects for each client.

I participated in the preparation and organization of the company marketing collateral that was used during the Human Resources convention held in Las Vegas, Nevada. I had the opportunity to attend a SHRM (Society for Human Resources Management) meeting and also attend an AHRA (Atlanta Human Resources Association) meeting. In my last month, after I acquired sufficient information about the company, I participated in one of the most valuable experiences. I went with the Vice-President and the Director of Marketing to visit and present the company services to a potential client in Birmingham, Alabama.

My internship at The Grapevine Group has been the best work experience I ever had in a short period of time. It not only helped me build my professional career and increase my business knowledge, but it also made me change and improve my personal life.
By Jessie Furman

Bentonville, Arkansas… Bentonville, Arkansas… Do you know what’s in Bentonville, AR? Could you identify the 15,000 people town on a map? Before this summer my answers were fleetingly short and simplistic. I knew the town was the homeland of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., but as to locating it on a map… that was a far stretch. When I accepted my internship in their Merchandising division I had no idea what to expect from the world’s largest retailer. The company seemed endlessly huge, and certainly a place to get lost amongst the masses. The home offices alone employ nearly 13,000 people!

Upon my arrival I met my mentor, John Reeves a buyer in the Housewares department. John is a seasoned veteran, having worked solely at Wal-Mart for 19 years. Within minutes of meeting, John handed me two sheets of paper that listed my objectives and goal for the summer. Six very distinct projects were outlined with the first being my objectives and goal for the summer. Six very distinct projects were outlined with the first being the most important, and the one that I will present to 200+ people within 2 weeks! It has to do with Wal-Mart Associates, and learn about the culture and region. Prior to visiting the area I knew virtually nothing about Mexican society, nor do I speak the language! The trip was amazing and extremely informative. Did you know that Mexicans consume more tortillas than any other culture in the world? If you did know that, then you could deduce that these people also need items to prepare and warm these tortillas. Our Texas-Mexico border stores and our stores located in predominantly Mexican markets sell an enormous amount of skillets and square griddles that are used exactly for this purpose. A Mexican kitchen thrives on skillets, chili peppers, tortillas and cooking oil.

I have yet to present this project to 200+ people within Wal-Mart, but I look forward to it with anticipation. I still have research to do, but I feel confident that the tools that Wal-Mart has provided me with will allow for a successful and positive presentation. My summer thus far has been incredible and my learning even more so. I have been given numerous responsibilities that many companies would never trust in the hands of a summer intern. Wal-Mart is a place of learning, growth, aggressiveness, motivation and appreciation. Do I regret leaving the sunshine and the beaches of Florida? NO WAY! My experience here has been tremendous, and without a doubt I would make the same choice again. ❖

Recently Wal-Mart implemented this initiative corporate-wide. This program entails putting the right product at the right price in the right store. Demographics are incorporated into analyses to allocate and price products correctly. My dominant project this summer is directly tied to Store of the Community and will give me the opportunity to make a noticeable impact on the community. I am to analyze the Mexican cookware market and implement a new program for the spring 2001 modular (plan-o-gram). I was fortunate to travel to Laredo and San Antonio, Texas and Nuevo Laredo, Mexico to analyze the Mexican market, speak with Wal-Mart Associates, and learn about the culture and region. Prior to visiting the area I knew virtually nothing about Mexican society, nor do I speak the language! The trip was amazing and extremely informative. Did you know that Mexicans consume more tortillas than any other culture in the world? If you did know that, then you could deduce that these people also need items to prepare and warm these tortillas. Our Texas-Mexico border stores and our stores located in predominantly Mexican markets sell an enormous amount of skillets and square griddles that are used exactly for this purpose. A Mexican kitchen thrives on skillets, chili peppers, tortillas and cooking oil.

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My experience with Burdines gave me a great overview of the retail industry. I am very grateful that I decided to continue with the internship despite my initial disappointments. To my surprise, I did get to plan my glamorous fashion show – introducing the sales associates to Burdines summer dress code. I also managed to meet a celebrity. (I think the picture speaks for itself!) ❖

BURDINES from page 1…

My primary duties included hiring, scheduling, and direct supervision of ten sales associates, driving and tracking sales of a $4.5 million business, planning and executing major sale events and floor moves, handling customer complaints, practicing shortage control and helping to organize Burdines community service endeavors.

As a member of the Burdines management team, I also had the opportunity to attend storewide meetings discussing customer and management survey results, credit reports, store visits and major sale and promotional events.

My final project during this internship was to assist in planning and executing the annual August Home Pre-Sales. Several weeks prior to this event, the management team devised a plan of action to successfully achieve the store $644,200 pre-sell goals. The plan included hiring new associates, communicating stock needs to vendors, changing displays, establishing associate incentives, and creating a fun, motivational program to introduce the associates to key products in the store.

The event was successful, producing over thousands of dollars over the store’s goal. As a result of my efforts, I was given the prestigious Candy Martin Magic Award by the Regional Director of Burdines stores.

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Not only is Bealls continuously growing, the Florida Trend Magazine ranked Bealls one of the “ten best places to work in Florida.” With over 5000 employees, Bealls continues to make their employees top priority. Even as interns, we were welcomed with open arms and immediately adopted into the Beall’s Family.

My name is Jennifer Blevins and I am studying Accounting. I interned at the Beall’s Corporate Center in the Internal Audit Department. With no experience at all in auditing, this 12-week program will benefit me for the rest of my life. Treated as one of their regular Internal Auditors, I was asked to research several topics and write audit reports for each one. For example, during one audit, the research consisted of interviewing employees, observing employees while they work, and reviewing files. Not only did I gain great experience doing the required research; my professional writing skills also improved. I wrote reports, assisted in the yearly inventory counts, performed the yearly test of transactions, cross-trained with a buyer, and worked on several computer projects. All in all, this internship was a great learning experience.

My name is Jessica Blevins and I interned at the West Bradenton Beall’s Department Stores. The internship was a wonderful experience for two reasons. First, I was immediately welcomed into the Beall’s family. Second, I learned a great deal about the retail business, which I could not have learned in a classroom. In this management-training program, I’ve had many responsibilities and many learning opportunities. I learned how to work on the sales floor, how to set an ad, the procedure for receiving freight, and many non-sale functions; which include markdowns, store transfers, returning merchandise to vendors, daily office duties, and even spending time with the Loss Prevention Agents. I also cross-trained with a Buyer. I could not have learned all this in a classroom.

During my summer internship with Sears, I was offered a unique learning experience. After being on the job for four weeks, I was asked to fill in as interim sales manager in the Home Fashions department. The department was going through some changes and I was able to hold it together until a new sales manager was hired.

At first I was a little nervous about running an entire department by myself, but after a few days I realized how rewarding and enjoyable it could be. The store had just been through a remodel in which new central cashwraps were put into each department. Since this was a major change, the sales associates needed a lot of direction on how to adjust to the new setup. I came up with a rotation schedule for the new cashwrap, in which each associate was given about one hour in the wrap per day. This system seemed to work well and the associates really appreciated the direction I was able to give them.

Not only did I learn to serve as a supervisor during these two weeks, but I also worked with the visual team to create a back to school experience. We had to have the department looking great for an upcoming district visit. The home fashions associates and myself worked extremely hard to prepare for the visit and it was worth the effort. The day after the visit we received nothing but praise for a job well done. I learned that when you work together, a lot can be accomplished.

My favorite part of this position was working with the associates. I enjoyed motivating them and encouraging them to work together as a team instead of a bunch of individuals. I felt that the associates really respected me. We were all able to learn from each other. They were constantly teaching me new things and I was able to serve as a support person for them.
This summer I was a management intern at Dillard's. The experience that I gained will prove to be a valuable tool for preparing for, and entering into the retail workforce.

Dillard's really gave me the chance to exert myself, and jump headfirst into the waters of retail management. The very first day I started I was incorporated into the management team, attending meetings and being asked to extend my opinions and ideas.

I rotated on three-week intervals to different departments throughout the store. My first department was cosmetics where in less than one week, I coordinated the Father’s Day Extravaganza fashion show that included fragrance and the men's clothing and shoe departments.

For the majority of the summer we were one ASM short. I stepped up and took on the responsibility of running the lingerie and accessories departments and made sure everything ran smoothly through inventory.

The management at Dillard's made me feel a part of the team, and was more than willing to take the time to work with me. Before I knew it I was taking pages on the floor and making decisions concerning customer returns and other problems.

While at Dillard's I had the opportunity to utilize my problems solving and trouble-shooting skills. My internship was an enlightening experience of the retail world and will most likely play an intricate role in preparing me for my future.

My experience with the Walgreens internship program exceeded all of my expectations. My store manager made sure that I would learn all of the specific duties of an assistant manager and a store manager, as well as the district responsibilities (which consists of twenty-seven stores), such as loss prevention, bookkeeper/district trainer, the pharmacy manager, each individual store bookkeeper, each store pharmacy manager, and the district manager. By the middle of my second week I was given the store keys, and I was in charge of the safe and covering all employee and customer needs. I completed my internship in two stores in order to understand how each store is run in different ways. My store manager would sit down with me up to three times a week to make sure I was learning what I needed and he answered all of my questions. I worked in several areas/departments including ordering inventory, making employee schedules, resetting and reorganizing aisles, reviewing daily cash reports, checking in vendors, and I was given the freedom to delegate responsibilities to employees.

An internship with Walgreens is unlike anything I could have ever learned in the classroom. I gained invaluable experiences from an industry leader and I highly recommend this excellent and challenging internship program to all that are interested.

The first day I walked into Office Depot, I didn't know what to expect. What would I learn during this 10 week period? As it turned out, this internship provided me a great learning experience, and I always felt that everything I did was beneficial to the company. I was first introduced to my store manager, Rick Berry, and he and I mapped out my internship. For the first couple of weeks I spent time training as an Assistant Manager would train, learning all of the departments in the store. Once I completed training, I began work on my project that I would be doing the rest of the summer. As my District Manager, Larry Woldanski put it, I was to be Office Depot's Back to School "guru" for District 15. I was to develop my own audit for the 11 stores in the district. After completing the audit in stores from Tampa to Naples, I was responsible for resolving any issues that any of the stores in my district had. At the end of the summer I put together a Back to School presentation which I presented at a Store Manager’s meeting. During my time at Office Depot this summer, I always felt as though I was a part of the management team. I was invited to sit in on conference calls, to run a few of my store’s nightly meetings, and was even invited to play in a golf tournament with many of the managers in my district. I enjoyed my summer at Office Depot, and am hopeful to gain full time employment with this company upon graduation.
The time I spent working for The Home Depot was undoubtedly the best working experience that I have encountered thus far. Upon beginning the internship, I admit that I was somewhat nervous, because I had not worked in such a large retail environment previous to this. However, the associates of Home Depot were extremely friendly and helpful, and welcomed me into their family. I quickly forgot about my anxiety and felt right at home.

A reoccurring aspect that I noticed about the Home Depot as a whole is that it is a team player workplace. Each and every associate, manager, or vendor that I have met has conveyed this teamwork attitude. As I worked throughout this internship, it felt great to know I literally had hundreds of people to turn to if I didn’t have the answer a customer sought.

I enjoyed each minute of working at The Home Depot. It is highly probably that I will return to work for Home Depot upon graduation. After such a great experience, I am convinced that with respect to retailing and a friendly atmosphere, Home Depot is where I would prefer to dedicate my career.

When Sears called us and offered their summer internship, there was no doubt we were accepting. The offer could not be beat.

Our internship placed us in separate parts of the corporate offices. Our experiences ranged from marketing of softlines to hardlines and even the newest addition to the company, the Great Indoors! I worked in marketing soft lines. I often participated in meetings with the president and vice-president of marketing!! We would discuss every single picture and description that would be included in the national circulars.

All corporate interns met twice a week. We engaged in activities called The Professional Development Program and Executive Presentations. The Professional Development Program exposed us to presentations from Sears employees that ranged from Interviewing Techniques to Resume Writing to Team Building and to Becoming an Associate. These presentations gave us insight into important aspects of moving into the next stage of our lives. The Executive Presentations included top Sears executives speaking to us about their careers and how they achieved their goals. These experiences were valuable because it exposed us to successful executives and gave us a chance to learn from other interns.

This internship allowed us to see all of the behind-the-scenes activities of a corporate office. The bonds we formed with the Sears associates and the other interns could never be broken. This experience will be remembered for a lifetime.
Let’s talk about my corporate experience….My name is Zahara Kassamali and I have interned with Office Depot’s Corporate Headquarters for the last two summers! The summer of ‘99 I had the opportunity to work in the Telecenter. My internship started off with 2 weeks of order processing training for the call center. This enabled me to get a broad view of the call center as a whole. I learned the job of a Commercial Sales Representative. At the end of two weeks I was able to satisfy and fulfill customers’ needs by placing orders, returns, and helping the customer in finding the products they needed. I learned a Great Deal about Office Depot’s products, which empowered me to successfully complete my projects. In the Summer of 2000 – I encountered another awesome experience. I transferred departments and got the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with a buyer from the merchandising department. Launching the Hewlett Packard (HP) Configure-To-Order Program was my main focus this summer. The Configure-To-Order Program virtually allows, “1 order, 1 customer, and 1 experience” to happen in our Office Depot stores. My main focus was to design the HP Training Manual. The Hewlett Packard Training Manual is a self explanatory “How To Book” for the trainers, managers as well as the employees to refer to. I was enlightened from my internship as Office Depot left me with three effective tools that I will always remember: the importance of coordination between department, time management, and how to communicate and work with different levels of management.

BURDINES TEACHES STUDENT ABOUT THE SYNERGY BETWEEN BUYING AND PLANNING

When I thought of retail, I thought of what I saw in the stores. In my eyes retail was about fixing displays and servicing customers. After interning with Burdines, I realized that there is a lot more to retail than just the store experience. Little did I know that approximately 70% of retailing happens before the merchandise even hits the stores.

During the summer I had the opportunity to be one of the five interns in Florida to participate in the Burdines Assistant Buyer Internship Program. This internship showed me the behind the scenes aspects of retail. While working in the Men’s Contemporary / Status Denim office, I had the chance to not only track the sales of some of the hottest Young Men’s vendors, but also communicate with them and place orders. Furthermore, this internship allowed me to see the entire retail cycle. I experienced the buying aspect when I purchased the clothing. I experienced the planning aspect when I decided what styles and how many units went to each store. I experienced the merchandising aspect when I had the opportunity to set up for Fathers Day sales.

In addition to all the cool stuff that I got to see and do, Burdines made me feel important and part of a team. Burdines not only gave me an extra line on my resume, but the working experience and people skills that will definitely aid in my future job search and placement.
Sounds like a new teenage pop culture show MTV made up to supplement the other “Real” life series. It’s about fourteen strangers chosen to live amongst each other sharing their lives and learning the ways of the retail world. Take away the 24-hour cameraman and the luxuriously lavish unreal world like house, and you have the assistant buyer program JCPenney put together which brought college seniors and recent graduates to Dallas, Texas from all around the country.

JCPenney relocated us for nine weeks to learn the new merchandising process the company plans to roll out for the third quarter. Three University of Florida students were chosen to come and were the largest represented college amongst the group. They were; Adrian Jimenez, Shauntte Latimer, and Evelyn Hernandez.

To understand the process completely we learned everything from product design and logistics, to quality control and international sourcing. Even things like costing a garment were taught in two-day interactive seminars. A Road Rules like road trip to Mena, Arkansas was taken for three days to visit Aslfs manufacturing where we took a quality control and manufacturing course in one of the only remaining clothing manufacturing plants left in the United States. Witnessing and learning firsthand what it takes to make blue jeans and the stringent quality control measures JCPenney requires. The over-all know how of the process is crucial in being able to purchase good quality fashionable goods that satisfy the customer’s needs at the lowest and most profitable price. And all the while keeping in mind the task of purchasing all the inventory of that item for every store in the nation. Sounds like a lot in one breath but it is the reason they say you either love retail, or you hate it.

This internship was much more like the real world than we thought it would be. Working out of the JCPenney home office in Plano, Texas provided a professional setting and corporate experience which felt a little bit unreal at first. We selected an item, which will be introduced into the stores this fall from the buying units we worked in, and we presented an oral and written presentation to buyers and other associates at the end of the internship.

The constraints of space in this article cannot fully tell how many different skills we finely tuned and different things we learned. We learned more that those skills were not really working and that we knew nothing about retail. The things the customers do not see play the biggest role when making successful marketing and images about the product. Despite what Sprite seems to think, in retail, image is everything. Thirst will be taken care of at the food court. The JCPenney Company hired us to be human sponges for a summer and learn about the retail industry through the eyes of a company that has been doing retail for over 100 years. Seeing how JCPenney is embracing the new millennium proves to the three of us that they will be here for another 100 years.