Retail Internship Update for 2001

What an incredible summer for University of Florida students out in the world of retailing. Our students have been able to experience a wide variety of opportunities -- more so now than ever before! Within this newsletter you will be exposed to just a few of the 100+ experiences from the interns. We have had several students present their summer research projects to company presidents! Many had the opportunity to travel to trade shows and negotiate with vendors. Several students worked closely with management in the stores learning the value of increasing sales by developing the loyalties of customers and employees. We had students develop product lines, and as a result, there will be shoes on the market named after UF students! A common response from the interns was they felt their education here at the University can be utilized by the retail industry. They were energized by the opportunities they saw. Retailers, thank you so much for your partnership in retail education!

The First and Finest Famous Footwear Interns

by: Erin Fischer and Whitney Moyer

What do you think of when you hear the words Madison, Wisconsin? Cows, farms and cheese are what we thought we would be dealing with when we accepted our corporate internships at Famous Footwear. We couldn’t have been more uninformed! During the internship, we worked at the corporate office, the distribution center and various stores. Each week we viewed a different area and its operations.

We never could have guessed how intricate the process was of receiving one pair of shoes into the stores. We were able to see the progression of a pair of shoes from the idea of the season’s trends to the actual delivery to the customer. Our overall goal of the internship was to present a project to the executive team on the subject of large concept stores. To do this, we had to learn everything we could in just a few weeks!

In the Buying department, we helped design boards about trends for the upcoming season. In Marketing, we wrote articles about our experience at Famous Footwear to be published in the corporate weekly newsletter. We gained hands-on experience by shadowing a diverse group of people such as the Eastern Region Vice President of Retail Operations, the Field Support Group Manager and the District Sales Manager for the Milwaukee area. We even had the opportunity to participate in the Grand Opening of the largest store in the Madison area. Not only did we help the Marketing Sales Promotion team set up for the Grand Opening, we also assisted the Visual Merchandisers to add the finishing touches to the look of the store.

The Famous Footwear internship was a worthwhile experience that helped us decide on a career path for the future. It gave us a taste of the corporate world and an overview of the shoe retail industry. Our summer not only consisted of working with extraordinary people, but we were able to become a part of the Famous Team.
Bridgestone/Firestone: America’s Home for Tires and Service

rolled through my summer dealing with the nuts and bolts of America’s home for Tires and Service, Bridgestone/Firestone, Inc. In my position as an intern, I found that working with both vendors and consumers helped me develop better communication skills. Being able to ask the right questions and in the right manner made the customers feel they were taken care of and it made the job easier for the service technicians. I learned to appreciate the need for accuracy when giving an estimate for services and products keeping commitments made to customers.

One aspect of my internship I valued was learning how to “sell”. This company strives to make sure every employee understands the importance of customer service because that is what turns a one-time sale into long-term loyalty. At times, I found this to be quite a challenge for me because historically, this has been a male-dominated field. With approximately fifty percent of the clientele being female, I initially found that I could work to develop their trust because I was the same gender. Then I realized that gender was not the focus. The more I learned and the more confident I became with my knowledge of the product, both men and women began to trust my judgment and decisions!

I will always remember the friendly staff and the support of the management as they helped me to learn and understand the business which helped me to develop my career goals.

No Boundaries With Office Depot Career

experience as an Office Depot intern this past summer was priceless. Prior to this internship I did not have much knowledge about retail or Office Product Super Stores such as Office Depot. The internship program was well structured and organized. The work ethics and atmosphere of Office Depot created a wonderful place to work. The characteristic that I liked most about Office Depot was that there were NO boundaries limiting my success within the company. This past summer I had the opportunity to present my summer project to the CEO of the company, Bruce Nelson. I found this to be an extreme honor, because companies of the same size as Office Depot generally do not provide opportunities for interns to meet with the CEO. What I took from interning at Office Depot was that there are NO limits to your goals as long as you work towards them. I found my experience at Office Depot to be extremely valuable, not only did I gain work experience I also gained great work ethics and corporate moral.
A Culture of Learning and Family at The Home Depot

by: Danny Gabriel

My experience at Home Depot was incredible. I met numerous hard-working, helpful associates guided by a knowledgeable, successful management led by the Store Manager, Tammy Gilmartin (who has since been promoted to District Manager). I consider myself lucky for having the opportunity to learn from the associates of Home Depot store #287 in Oviedo, FL.

The entire store was very supportive during my training program, always eager to lend a helping hand when I needed it. I spent the first four weeks in the operational departments of the store working in bookkeeping and the computer room. I also spent time in receiving checking in trucks. When I moved to the front of the store I worked the register and learned the jobs of the special services team.

My next move was to the 11 merchandising departments in the store. During this rotation, I spent two days in each learning how to order, maintain inventory, and merchandise with the various department’s supervisors. I also received certification to use the different lift equipment while working in the departments. I learned that running each department as an individual business is vital to the overall success of the store.

During my final four weeks, I worked closely with the store manager and the assistant managers. I also spent a few days at the district office working with the district manager and other personnel, although, the highlight of the last few weeks was the trip to the Southern Division’s headquarters in Tampa, FL. While there, I met with different officers in the Division including the Division President, Tony Brown.

The experience I gained from my Home Depot internship will be invaluable to my future career in retailing. The fast-paced environment kept me on my toes and constantly busy. Sadly, my time ended and I had to leave a group of incredible people whom I now call friends. The culture at “The Depot” is far different from most other organizations, the company and its people become one giant family- a family I had the pleasure of joining.

Danny Gabriel rotated through operations, 11 merchandising departments and 4 weeks with upper management.

Nerves Turn to Knowledge at JCPenney

by: Amy Crutchfield

"A"my, please dial the operator," rang out across the store intercom, paging me for the fifth time of the day. I soon became accustomed to hearing this during my internship with JCPenney. Before I began my internship, I had no idea what I had gotten myself into. Not only was this my first job, but also my first time in retail. As soon as I heard my name paged I would get nervous and just hope that I had the right answer to the problem.

The biggest challenge that I faced was putting my training and common sense into practical use on the sales floor as a management intern. I approached my job with a humble attitude and an enthusiasm to work. I began working within Women’s Accessories with handbags. My job was to solve associates’ problems and to assist my supervisor, but it was also my duty to work with my team and guide them. I made a point to get to know associates on a more personal level. They learned to trust me, and I was able to learn a great deal from them. I learned about using the register, providing customer service, and displaying merchandise. I sat in on the management meetings, which taught me more about the company structure and operations.

I can honestly say that because of the training I received, I felt confident I could solve problems and fulfill my responsibilities. It was satisfying to see the results of my work. I was sad to leave my coworkers but I now look forward to future endeavors with JCPenney. And now, that nervous feeling I had at first, is nowhere to be found.

Amy Crutchfield applied common sense and training to her management skills.
These summer I interned at Macy's East in New York City! I worked in the corporate buying office in Men's Leather Accessories, which is a $20 million dollar business. The internship was divided into a 10-week program where I was able to explore all areas of retail including buying, planning, and store management. I received wonderful training and learned how to analyze the business and upcoming trends. Soon I was responsible for updating my department’s on-order, inputting price changes, and assisting with advertising layouts.

One of my favorite aspects of the job was exploring the market and negotiating with vendors. I was able to meet the vendors and visit the showrooms of Coach, Perry Ellis, and Fossil. My buyer and I looked at new products and determined the quantity and styles, which we wanted to carry. I learned how to communicate with the vendors and develop strong business relationships.

Overall, I had a wonderful summer working at Macy's and living in New York City. I highly recommend this internship to anyone interested in buying or planning. I feel I got the overall retail experience and I am so glad I got to work for such an amazing company!

Responsibilities are Challenging Yet Achievable at Rich's

by: Meredith Bretz

Imagine a place where every day is different and filled with surprises, where associates are more than happy to help each other as well as the customers, and where customer service is at the top of everyone’s mind. Imagine a place where your fellow associates respect you, where managers are there to lend a helping hand, and where you enjoy it. Imagine a place where you work and you actually love it! This place that you have imagined is Rich’s at Lenox Square in Atlanta, Georgia.

I was a manager in the textiles department this summer and loved every minute of it. I had many responsibilities right from the start and it was truly a maturing experience. All the top managers were very supportive during the entire internship.

Tasks each day would vary, and I did many things. For example, I set sales, retrieved information on sales (for department, vendor, store) from the previous day as well as weeks, expressed customer service, shadowed an assistant buyer for a day, shadowed a merchandising team leader for a day, helped recover a store in Athens, Georgia, conducted a huge pre-sell event, and so much more! If I had to list all of the things I did on a daily basis, the list would never end! The responsibilities and requirements that I had were difficult but achievable, especially when you have a smile on your face. I learned so many things that will help me in life, both personally and professionally.

Everyone’s experience is different than mine. Try to imagine a place where you love everything you do. For me, it was interning at Rich’s.

Wal-Mart Taught Intern the Way to Manage and Motivate

by: Monica Aubry

As an international student who came to the United States to continue my education, one of my goals was to work with a huge company. As a management trainee for Wal-mart, I got what was looking for including how to work hard and have fun and how to respond to changes. I started each day with a management meeting that included the associates and the famous Wal-Mart cheer: “Give me a W...A...L”...you get the idea. I received instructions on completing assignments in a timely basis in order to service our customer better. Working in such an environment can be stressful, but the management and employees are always there to assist and teach. During my internship, I was exposed to many management functions including hiring, payroll and budget. This exposure taught me the importance of being efficient to maintain a competitive advantage within the company and at a global level.
The Sears You Never Knew Existed
by: Alusola Adebusuyi

Small town America. For a city boy, a small town is just something I see in a movie or hear about in a book. But this summer, I had the opportunity to work with Sears at their corporate headquarters out side of Chicago. I was on a team with the Sears Authorized Retail Dealer store program. The concept of Dealer stores began after the demise of the catalog in 1993 and is a smaller version of full line stores without clothing and accessories. Dealer stores deal with appliances, electronics, hardware and lawn and garden products. This gives Sears the opportunity to branch out into rural areas and make their presence known. The Dealer stores are constantly looking to expand their businesses and are currently piloting 16 stores for a new up-to-date-look. I was involved in overseeing the schedule for the pilot stores. I was able to develop a commission analysis to determine profitability and commission sales for a new product line. I also analyzed assortment productivity for hardware and select divisions. The focus was on remodeling the stores to accommodate more merchandise and increase the turnover of items. Working with Sears and this remarkable team exposed me to so many avenues in retailing that I never knew existed.

Walgreens Provided Guidance in Management
by: Woodly Lovinsquy

Um...Let's see, I am junior business student majoring in Decision Information Sciences, would I qualify? I thought that it would not hurt to try to sign up. Fortunately, I was granted an interview and then given the job. It was the best decision I could have made for my summer plans. I worked at a 24-hour store in Miami, Florida. My manager, Mr. Sastre, helped in guiding me through the Walgreen’s internship curriculum. I learned how to provide excellent customer service in each department in the store. These include the front register, photo center, cosmetics, liquor and the pharmacy. Other duties I learned were focusing on managing the employees, assisting customers, handling the safe, checking in the vendors, merchandising and managing inventory through their Strategic Management Inventory System (SIMS). I also completed assignments that required me to analyze the work that I was doing and pushed me to think at the level of the manager.

Once again, I cannot emphasize enough how rewarding this experience was. I did not come in this internship with any management experience in retail. In the course of ten weeks, my caring co-workers and patient store manager guided me so that I may proudly be referred to as a Walgreens assistant manager. I am glad that I was chosen for the internship.

The David F. Miller Center for Retailing Education and Research would like to thank the following companies for providing internships:

- Bealls
- Bridgestone/Firestone
- Burdines
- City Furniture
- Dillards
- Famous Footwear
- The Home Depot
- JCPenney
- Macy's
- Office Depot
- Rich's
- Sears
- Walgreens
- Wal-Mart

Thank You!
The Grapevine Group Gave Intern an Education
by: Matthew Stoy

When I first learned of my internship offer from The Grapevine Group I did not really know what to think. I knew very little of the company other than the fact that it was not a retail establishment. I was assured by the Center for Retailing that this internship could be an incredible experience for me and I'm here to tell you that they were right.

The Grapevine Group is a nationwide Human Resources recruiting and consulting firm with clients in both pharmaceutical and retail industries. I was able to work in all aspects of the business from both planning and implementation standpoints. The management style here could only be described as open, meaning every employee is made part of all policy decisions that directly or indirectly affect them. Group meetings called to discuss current issues within the business are a daily occurrence here. Much to my surprise, I was not treated as just an intern. I felt my presence was important to them and I truly believe that my ideas were given consideration and value. I was even allowed to spend time on-site with one of our largest clients, Solvay Pharmaceuticals, helping to develop a marketing strategy.

The Grapevine Group is an excellent place to do an internship because the company is so inherently focused on employee education. Once a week a group of us gathered at lunch to discuss chapters from The Great Game of Business, by Jack Stack. This experience taught me that having great people is the key to any successful business and knowing how to recognize talent is the future of business. I came to The Grapevine Group expecting a summer job, what I got was an education.

Management Experience at Dillard's
by: Yvette Machado

When I first began my internship this summer at Dillard's, I did not know what to expect. I knew that I wanted hands-on experience in a retail environment and that's exactly what my summer internship with Dillard's gave me.

During the first week of my internship, I worked with the Store Manager observing what it takes to run a large department store. I was given a week-by-week schedule that placed me in various departments throughout the store. Whether it was in the men's, shoes, or women's ready-to-wear department, I was being taught something different each day. I attended a manager meeting where issues, such as sales volume and best sellers for each department were discussed. I also assisted the visual team with merchandising, working on signage, and fixing displays. While working in the home department I helped coordinate a back-to-school event called, “From Dillard's to the Dorm,” which featured items from the home area and fashions from the junior area.

Throughout my internship, I had the chance to learn about the non-selling functions of the store when I worked with the Operation Manager and the Dock Manager. This was interesting because I was able to see what takes place behind the scenes, such as employee scheduling, systems operations, shipping, and housekeeping. I also learned a great deal about retail when I prepared for and participated in the inventory process. Continuous involvement with the managers and the sales associates helped me develop my communication skills.

The internship program at Dillard's was an excellent way for me to find out what retail is truly all about. Not only did I learn about retailing as an industry, I also gained knowledge of Dillard’s as a company.
Product Development at Bealls Challenged Student to Work with Buyers and Manufacturers

by: Dana Veldman

The first day I entered Beall’s corporate office in Bradenton, I was unaware of the experience I was about to embark on. This summer I interned in the Product Development department. Product Development acts as a liaison between the buyer’s design ideas and the overseas/domestic manufacturers.

I was responsible for approving fabric quality, color standards and inspecting production garment samples. I was also responsible for communicating with Asian factories regarding style specifications and production details.

The most exciting aspect of my internship was to develop a young men’s clothing line for next fall. The project required me to comparative shop, purchase samples, and change design aspects to meet the needs of our target market. Every design aspect of my sample garments was to my discretion and the opportunity to express my creative ideas through a clothing line was exhilarating.

After developing ten styles including shirts and shorts, I presented clothing line and design ideas to the president, divisional vice president and buyers. At the commencement of my internship, I was informed that at least half of my line was going to be produced.

During one week of my internship, I cross-trained in the junior/children’s footwear buying office. I was responsible for entering purchase orders, markdowns and assisted in calculated price points. The most exciting part of being in the buying office was that a shoe was named after me, which will be debuting on the shelves next February. The internship opportunity I had with Bealls allowed me to utilize my creative energy, organizational skills and training to develop a clothing line and gain an understanding for the retailing industry. I left my internship with new friends, a great introduction to buying and an experience to assist me throughout my career.

BurdinesTeaches Buying and Planning

by: Lilliane Nodarse

This summer I had the opportunity to participate in a 10-week merchant internship at Burdines. During the first 6 weeks, I worked in the buying office for Boys 8-20 Collections. I learned about product advertising and marketing as well as merchandising to the stores. From my experience I learned that buyers have the responsibility of forecasting the business from beginning to the end. I realized that everyone works as a team player in reacting to the sales. I also learned that there is no average day. Every morning we analyze the previous day’s sales, but after that the events of the day depend upon the month, the event and the season.

I was also able to spend some time on the floor in the store. There we were participating in Back-To-School. I participated in a seminar where we set up a floor as a prototype to walk through for sales managers and associates. From there I visited stores and worked to make sure the stores were set up and displayed as planned.

During the last four weeks of my internship, I spent my time in the planning office working in Young Men’s and completing my final project. I thought it was great to see how buyer and planner work as a team. I learned how merchandise is allocated to stores and how planners react to sales in placing merchandise in the right location.
When I decided to intern this summer, it became difficult to decide on a company that best suited my career needs. Fortunately, it quickly became evident that City Furniture was offering the kind of exposure that I would find the most beneficial. During my ten-week internship, I had the opportunity to interact with a very diverse group of people while I worked in a showroom. Working in the sales department taught me to overcome my initial shyness with strangers, as I was forced to work with customers to close sales.

Unlike any other retail internship, City Furniture actually takes the time to train each new sales associate, including all the interns, so that each person feels completely comfortable when they begin to sell in the showrooms. During the first week of my internship, each new sales associate learned effective selling strategies and techniques that would greatly assist them in becoming more successful when they started in the showroom. Also, they provided us with enough product knowledge to feel confident when we gave our product presentation to each customer that visited the store. This training is truly invaluable because I can utilize this knowledge if I decide to pursue a career in sales. After all, selling is a universal occupation, and the same principles apply across all fields and areas.

Most importantly, working in the showroom afforded me the opportunity to handle customer problems and crises on a daily basis. This quickly taught me how to properly handle difficult situations with poise and patience. Fortunately, I got all the training that I need to resolve customer issues without having to spend any time in the service department. In City Furniture, you learn by training and experiencing. It enabled me to learn and absorb a tremendous amount of information and then go out and apply it.

**Student Gains Selling Confidence at City Furniture**

by: Kristina Pacca

Krissy Pacca studied with the best when she trained with the sales staff at City Furniture in South Florida.

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