Wal-Mart's Training Offered Student Excellent Management Experience

I had no idea what to expect when beginning my internship with Wal-Mart store #919. Little did I know that I would soon learn so much about Wal-Mart and the retailing industry. From the beginning, I was able to learn the different facets of the day-to-day operations of a Wal-Mart Supercenter ranging from back room inventory to the front-end people greeters and everything in between. I was able to move around and work in different positions and departments such as a Customer Service Manager (CSM), a cashier, sporting goods, photo lab, customer service, paint/hardware, layaway, and claims.

After gaining hands on experience, I was able to sit in and join Wal-Mart’s Management Training Program (MTP) and was able to go through the same classes that the other associates went through to become Assistant Manager. In that class, I was able to learn about the behind the scenes events such as checking in vendors’ stocks, programming associate schedules, strategies for managing and motivating others, and numerous skills required to be a good manager.

On top of learning all of these skills and having the opportunity to gain hands-on experience, I also had the pleasure of interning with a company whose philosophy and culture I believe in. The Three Basic Beliefs: “Respect for the Individual, Service to the Customer, and Striving for Excellence” are a way of life that the associates believe and follow.

That past 12 weeks have been beneficial to me by teaching me skills that I will one day use in the retailing industry. I have had such a positive and memorable summer working with the 600 associates and the management team that we have at store #919.

Macy's East Internship Allowed for Creativity

As the opportunity to intern at Macy's East was offered to me, I accepted it without hesitation knowing it would be an incredible career building experience. I had no idea what to expect as my first day approached, but I couldn’t wait for it to arrive. My internship consisted of an 8-week program where I was given the opportunity to learn about the many facets of retailing as I rotated through different store functions every week.

From the first day, I was paired with a manager and started learning about daily store operations. I rotated from working with GSMs, as part of the sales team, to working with MTMs, as part of merchandising support. While working alongside the MTMs, I

See MACY’S on page 2
Some of the nation’s top retailers recruit interns at the University of Florida. I thought it would be difficult to choose a company, but as soon as I interviewed with Sears I knew I found a perfect fit. I wanted a chance to lead, learn, and grow. If you can relate and are considering a career in retail, I highly recommend a retail internship with Sears.

Sears offers interns a structured twelve-week program, full of opportunities! During the internship, students have management status and rotate through each department, including Softlines, Hardlines, Operations and In-Store Marketing. These rotations ensure each day is filled with new and exciting projects. My tasks ranged from analyzing sales reports while wearing heels, to lacing up tennis shoes and unloading a fashion truck!

Interns are afforded a great opportunity to apply what they have learned in college to the “real world” when they are assigned a competitive analysis. After competitive shopping and research during the final weeks of my internship, I presented my findings on Sears’ laundry business to my store manager and staff.

The highlight of the program was my visit to Sears’ headquarters in Hoffman Estates, Illinois. Hearing from top executives, seeing where strategies originate, and meeting interns from across the nation was incredible. I came back to my store re-charged, instilled with a sense of pride to be part of such and amazing program and culture.

What have I learned from my Sears internship? Well, I can now measure tire treads with the best of them! But more importantly, I walked away with a set of highly transferable skills, such as leadership, team work principles, and, most notably, the concept of ownership, which I will utilize for the rest of my career, and life.

Macy’s continued from page 1

quickly developed an interest in merchandising, shifting most of my focus to this aspect during my internship.

As part of the merchandising team, my days began at 5:30am and every day brought a new challenge. I mostly worked alongside the Center Core MTM and I couldn’t have been more pleased to be welcomed as a member of his team. I took part in projects varying from merchandising Back-To-School backpacks and totes to prototype floor moves in lingerie. My favorite project involved creating various wall displays for Hilfiger, Fossil, and Esprit bags because I learned a lot about the ways merchandise gets featured according to protocol. I enjoyed the creativity of working behind the scenes and I was constantly learning from my managers, thanks to their great direction and feedback.

Not only did I take part in sales and merchandising, but I was also involved in inventory, working with vendors, and preparing for corporate store visits. I got to work in almost every department in the store and I couldn’t believe how much I got to experience in what seemed to be such a short amount of time. Our store in Plantation had an amazing culture, which ranged from analyzing sales reports while wearing heels, to lacing up tennis shoes and unloading a fashion truck!

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Living the Corporate Life at JCPenney

by Aimee Norsoph and Lisa Mills

Free airfare, free apartment, free rental car. Is this a radio station prize for being the 9th caller? Sounds like it, but these luxuries actually accompanied our JCPenney Summer Internship. Aside from learning how to expertly ride a mechanical bull, how to “two-step”, and how to find the perfect cowboy hat, we also learned a great deal about the corporate side of retailing.

A retail company consists of both a corporate office and stores that work collaboratively to run a successful business. During our nine week internship, we worked at the JCPenney Corporate Headquarters in Plano, TX. As assistant buyers in the Purchasing Department, we were responsible for procuring not for resale (NFR) goods and services for each department in the company on an as-needed basis. On top of dealing with demanding clients and the occasional over-eager supplier, we were given the opportunity to attend various classes and activities. These events were added bonuses to our work experience, as they broadened our knowledge of JCPenney and the business world in general.

Many times, the perception of what an internship entails is clerical work and coffee serving; however, at JCPenney, we were given real managerial responsibilities. Our buyers gave us several projects and then challenged us to plan and execute them effectively. Through these projects, many opportunities arose. We initiated and maintained a good rapport with our clients, kept in close contact with our suppliers throughout our time here, and attended several meetings with different clients and suppliers. All this added to our understanding of the procurement process.

At JCPenney, the importance of teamwork was evident. Working in a team adds to the content and quality of ideas. Innovation and improvement can only occur if new suggestions are brought to the table. During our internship, we were able to significantly contribute to the procurement process for each of our projects.

The JCPenney Summer Internship Program was an excellent experience. Not only did we learn a great amount, but we will also leave Dallas knowing that we contributed much to the company during our time here. We learned, we accomplished, and we had fun doing it.

Learning Management Skills with Walgreens

by Margaret Hahn

Now that a four-year degree has become the norm instead of the exception, I feel that experience will give me an edge over my peers when entering the job market. I decided that through their rigorous and comprehensive program, Walgreens would provide me with the variety of business experience that I was hoping to receive.

I was located in a 24-hour store in Jacksonville, Florida. This Walgreens made just over $30,000 a day, and was the leader in sales in its district. When I became aware of this, I knew that if I wanted to learn about store management, then this store manager, Mr. Waldrop, was the man to teach it.

It’s amazing how much someone can learn in just 10 weeks. Prior to my internship the only retail experience I had was as a consumer. Now my perception of retail is much broader, and I am now able to see it from a management point of view.

The internship started with a 20-day training program that walked me through every department of the store. I learned how to work on register, cosmetics, photo, inventory, and pharmacy. After the initial 20 day training, Mr. Waldrop handed over the keys and from then on I was an assistant manager. Some of my job responsibilities were working with customers, counting inventory, merchandising, ordering, receiving vendor merchandise, assisting employees, completing resets and revisions, and handling deposits. The list could go on and on.

One of the advantages of working in a relatively small-scale retail store was that I was able to become very familiar with store operations. There were even some occasions when I was the only member of management in the store.

This internship is, without a doubt, one of the most rewarding experiences I could ever imagine. It has been a great challenge and a great learning experience. ✪
Interns Received Store and Corporate Training at Save-A-Lot

by Cliff Hudson

After interviewing and researching the companies offering summer internships I found a company that provided exactly what I was looking for: a structured program and a culture that was a fit for me. I was intrigued when I reviewed the program Save-A-Lot planned for interns. They knew exactly what I would be learning every day. The program was designed so that I always felt I had sufficient knowledge and training to know how to complete my job.

One thing that Save-A-Lot did to insure that I learned everything planned for me was the way they look at people working in the store and people training in the store as two separate entities. My training came before the store operations. If my training schedule required me to work on front-end management on a given day and complete related tasks, then that was my priority. As a trainee, I was there to assist the store manager and in the course of learning help the store run more smoothly.

The program started with a full week of training in the classroom to give me the foundation I needed. After that, I learned how to perform every position in the store from the meat department, perishables department, cashing and front-end management. One of the most exciting times of my internship was going to St. Louis to the SAL corporate headquarters for two weeks of training. There, we learned more about operations and effective management skills. The training opened my eyes and allowed me to practice management techniques in a controlled environment with professional guidance to hone the skills to perfection. One of my favorite techniques was coaching because I enjoyed helping associates discover their own solutions and feeling empowered!

The manager’s friendly open attitude at SAL was not the exception, but the rule. I was able to talk and learn from store managers, district managers, division managers and even the Vice President. I still cannot believe that I had lunch and dinner with the Vice President of a major company and was able to talk to him openly and ask him anything I was concerned about. He was genuinely interested in my input on how to improve the internship program for future students. The CEO of the company, Bill Moran, came to speak to our training class as well. He gave a candid speech about the history of SAL and the future. He is truly a great speaker and motivator. After hearing the vision he has for the future of SAL, I was excited to share this vision with my employees at my training store. The example that the leaders of SAL have demonstrated to me had a profound effect on the way I treat my employees. They have all been humble, down to earth people who made me feel at ease and showed me they value my opinion. I have tried to incorporate this in all my employee relations by creating an environment where my employees can always talk to me and tell me their ideas. I learned this summer that this internship was no longer about managing employees, but about motivating them to complete their job to the best of their ability because they want to rather than because they are told to.

Office Depot is the company I joined for the summer as an intern. I, along with two other interns here in Gainesville, began our internships working in the two Gainesville locations. After three weeks of training and getting the hang of things in the stores, our District Manager called us to her office in Jacksonville for a meeting. We were assigned two mega summer projects that day: 1) Formulate an evaluation form on selling skills in order to observe and evaluate each sales specialist in the district, and 2) Get as many teachers as possible enrolled for the Office Depot Star Teacher Program and Breakfast and get as many give-a-ways and prizes from local businesses. That very Monday we began preparing. By Thursday, we were on our way to Savannah, Ga. to begin our sales specialist observations and evaluations. The three of us traveled for the next three weeks between Savannah, Jacksonville, Gainesville, and Daytona completing our evaluations and having meetings with store managers. Managers were very receptive to what we had to say, and we found that they were almost relieved that we observed things that they have noticed for years. Throughout our Consultative Sales Piece, we were able to get a glimpse of what it takes to observe, coach, and direct sales associates.

Our next project was to get the 11 stores in our district ready for the Back To School Teacher Appreciation Breakfast in terms of everything from food and drinks, to give-a-ways and door prizes that will be raffled off at the breakfast that will take place in each store location right before school begins. For this task, we hit the pavement. The three of us tackled the Jacksonville, Savannah, Gainesville, and Daytona areas, approaching businesses that could benefit from the publicity of this breakfast by donating prizes. On average, each store received about 35 prizes to give away - from restaurant and salon gift certificates to free oil changes. Also, we worked to get teachers enrolled for the Star Teacher Program and invited them to this fun event.

By the end of this internship program, I had learned so much about what it takes to run a retail organization and market a promotion. Most important of all, I learned that it takes motivation in the form of coaching and directing from managers towards their sales associates to provide “fanatical customer service” that can make the customers want to return, which is what ultimately drives the business. This internship was a great experience.

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Student Research Improved Customer Service Techniques at Office Depot

by Clarissa Blanco

Cliff Hudson (left) with Dave Pylipow, Senior Vice President of Human Resources for Save-A-Lot Grocery Stores.

Clarissa Blanco worked with other interns to evaluate associate selling skills and enroll local teachers in the Star Teacher Program.

At Office Depot, we were able to get a glimpse of what it takes to observe, coach, and direct sales associates.
Internship at Burdines Gives Students a Career Advantage

by Kelli Koegel

For the summer between my Junior and Senior year of college, I decided to intern with Burdines. I made this decision because I felt comfortable with the recruiter, and I believe in the direction and priorities that Burdines represents. For example, they believe strongly in maturing their people in the retail industry, as well as participating in numerous community service projects in the surrounding communities.

My internship began the first week of June in the Boca Raton Town Center Mall. From the first day, I was constantly challenged. Learning the terminal functions was the first hurdle. Once I understood that, I was on to the actual selling floor. As I was introduced to the associates, I was presented as a member of the management team. Now people recognized me and knew I could offer them help.

During the first few weeks I shadowed my buddy manager to observe what his daily tasks were, and also to see how Burdines handles different customer and associate situations.

Week five brought my biggest hurdle. While my shadow manager was on vacation, I was given the responsibility of managing my entire area! I was now in charge of coaching my staff to make sales and credit goals, making sure the new merchandise was not only put out onto the selling floor, but also merchandised correctly, and also completing a very large after Father’s Day floor move to get the floor back to prototype standards.

This gave me the opportunity to add my own input into the tasks that I was given. Even though I was making individual decisions, there was always someone there to offer me guidance.

There are several advantages of participating in an internship program. Not only did I earn college credit, I also gained something this summer that most students didn’t...management experience. And when it comes time to visit the Career Fair in hopes of landing a permanent job, I will also be one step ahead of the game because of the experience I acquired during my summer internship. In this competitive retail environment, I feel confident that my management experience will be nothing but an asset to help push me over the top! ☻

Build-A-Bear Workshop was a "Beary" Good Experience

by Lauren Pearl

Working at Build-A-Bear taught me valuable lessons in life as well as in business. I really enjoyed my time as a member of the team, and I’m sure that I have made some life-long friends.

From the moment I heard that Build-A-Bear Workshop was offering an internship, I knew it would be a unique experience. This was further confirmed when I learned I would be the first intern at the operations level and my formal job offer was delivered by a messenger bear.

I began my internship by learning how to stuff, stitch and dress stuffed animals. However, I quickly learned that this in itself is not what makes Build-A-Bear a success. Instead, it’s their mission to create a unique experience for guests that will last a lifetime.

Throughout the course of my internship, I was exposed to all facets of managing a retail store. One of my weekly duties was to report on the results of the Floor Leadership and Guest Satisfaction Survey at the managers’ meeting. This included customer ratings on employee enthusiasm and guest service. Also, for the month of July, I was able to create and run a contest for all employees. Each week, the employee that had shown the most team spirit, enthusiasm, and salesmanship was honored and received a prize.

In addition, I was able to help prepare for and participate in several special events. Among the most exciting were new animal launches, a party for Russian orphans, and a visit from Maxine Clark, the Chief Executive Bear herself.

Near the end of my internship, I was given the opportunity to work on a project affecting the entire company. It was a wonderful experience to be able to work closely with a project manager located at the home office in St. Louis, Missouri. The intranet, that all store managers use daily, needed to be revised. I was asked to examine the problems and draft a proposal to make this tool more user-friendly. This was very exciting, because my recommended changes are currently being made and I was able to make a difference for the company.

I would definitely recommend this internship. Working at Build-A-Bear taught me valuable lessons in life, as well as in business. I really enjoyed my time as a member of the team, and I’m sure that I have made some life-long friends. ☻
This summer I interned at Nordstrom at the Florida Mall in Orlando. As I approached the store for my first day, the nervousness set in. A million thoughts flooded my head... “Will I know what to do?” ... “Will they think I’m doing a good job?” ... “Will the other employees be helpful and nice?” Finally, I reached the employee entrance of the store and was greeted by my intern supervisor and several other managers. Instantly, a wave of comfort came over me and I felt like I had been welcomed into a huge family.

As my time at Nordstrom went by, I learned the importance of excellent customer service, which is the key in their culture. Three other University of Florida interns and myself, participated in various support departments. We alternated between three selling departments. I worked in the Men’s, Women’s, and Kid’s Shoe Departments. Every employee went out of their way to teach me about Nordstrom’s standards as well as providing me with product knowledge and selling tips. I spent one day a week in each of the support departments, which included Human Resources, Loss Prevention, Visual Merchandising, Store Information, and Customer Service. The interns had the opportunity to be included in the weekly manager’s meetings as well as a recognition meeting in Tampa.

I learned so much about the retail business and about people in general throughout my time at Nordstrom. Also, this internship provided me with the knowledge I needed to be capable of choosing the career path that will be the best fit for me. I had no idea that there was so much I didn’t know!

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Johanna Hedman learned details of her passion from the intense training City Furniture provides for interns.

Early morning on May 12, I walked through the glass doors at the corporate headquarters of City Furniture. It was with great excitement that I entered the enormous building of the South Florida furniture emporium. I was going to spend the summer working with one of my great passions: furniture.

The two first weeks of the internship were filled of intense training at the corporate headquarters. I ate, slept, and breathed City Furniture for these two weeks. I was taught everything about furniture down to the innersprings of a leather sofa. My internship class, which consisted of about 20 college students, formed strong bonds as we were put through furniture boot camp. Each day, we had to write note cards and study our training manual to prepare for our verbal and written quizzes that were given twice a day. We learned effective selling strategies and had to practice each new step in skill practices which were monitored and graded by some of the most prominent vice presidents and managers in the company. Needless to say it was a tough two weeks, but it paid off when I was allowed out onto the sales floor to put all the knowledge into practice. Closing my first sale was a wonderful experience and my confidence started to grow.

The next eight weeks I spent working at one of the larger City Furniture showrooms in North Miami Beach. I loved it from the first day. I was very fortunate to combine my passion for furniture with working with people form all around the world. Out of 33 sales associates there were 15 different nationalities represented! On top of that, I had several customers exporting furniture to the Caribbean and Latin America. One of the most exciting parts of the job was to meet and work with people from different places and learn more about their culture.

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Nordstrom’s Family Culture is Strong

by Summer Hodges

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Bridgestone/Firestone Offered a Fast-Paced Learning Experience

by James Lawhun

What are you looking for in an internship opportunity? Is what you are seeking a fast-paced, exciting and educational experience with the strong possibility of a future position in retailing? This is what I sought when I pursued an internship with Bridgestone/Firestone, however, my experience ended up being so much more! I have learned a great deal in my last few months with multinational retailer, not only what would be expected such as about the automotive industry, but about inventory systems, managing employees, scheduling, sales/promotions, reading and interpreting financial spreadsheets, as well as a great deal of information about the company as a whole. For instance, what their marketing strategies are, how they are trying to position themselves in the industry and how a huge retailing operations run.

The internship that I took part in did not only put me in a single store working behind a counter, on the sales floor, or in an office. I got to travel to Chicago to corporate headquarters for a whole week where I met the top officials in the company and was taught many things about the company, leadership, and responsibility. I also got a chance to communicate with other Bridgestone/Firestone interns from around the country and hear their feelings about the internship they were facing.

This is an amazing company! They promote from within at an exceptional rate, which is somewhere, around 98-99%. If you are unclear what that might mean for you, it is simple: they take care of their employees and advancement possibilities are real. In addition, while engaging in the internship, I was able to take part in a customer survey project where I went around to different locations and took a poll of customers. I found this very interesting and it fostered many ideas as to how not only Bridgestone/Firestone could change or continue in good practices, but it made me think back to all of the classes I have been taking as a business major and realize how a great deal of it can be tied together to raise profits in this world of business. I would definitely recommend an internship with Bridgestone/Firestone to anyone who is serious, or considering, a career in retail.

Priceless Experience Combined with so Much Fun!

by Jay Perez

I worked as the assistant buyer of men’s furnishings, men’s gifts and all licensed apparel. My mentor had me hard at work with writing and maintaining purchase orders, meeting with vendors, analyzing department sales, checking weekly markdowns and going to the store to get ad samples. I also accompanied my buyer to ad turn ins, lunch with vendors, and trips to the distribution center to make sure that all of our shipments were arriving correctly.

When I was not diligently working with my buyer, I was immersed in Beall’s new hire and management training programs. The new hire-training program is designed to teach the employee how to use the AS400 program, which is used throughout the corporation to do everything from entering purchase orders to checking daily sales. The management training program is designed to teach the employee all the different divisions of Beall’s and how they actually work together as a whole.

The last and most important part of my internship was the area specific and team internship project. For my area specific project, my buyer had me analyze, project and then buy UCF merchandise for the upcoming school year. Since Beall’s had never bought UCF merchandise before, I had to pick the stores, the different types of merchandise and how much of each type to stock the floor. For my team project, I worked with all the seven other interns (5 from UF!), on designing a new website for employee recruitment on the Beall’s Department store side of the corporation. We changed the site to a Florida style theme that has everything about Beall’s incorporated into it. The outcome was surprising to everyone and I really think we hit the mark with our final presentation.

The Beall’s internship program was paramount in my maturity in the retail world. It showed me the ins and outs of every stage of retail and how a successful corporation actually operates from day to day. Along with the informative side of the business came the family side. Beall’s culture is outstanding. Everyone that I met this summer welcomed me with open arms and encouragement. If experience and atmosphere is what you are looking for then a Beall’s internship is definitely the right decision for you!

Check out the website at www.careers.beallsflorida.com!
Famous Footwear Interns Learn What it Takes to Go from Good… to GREAT!

by Shannon Frederick and Lynn Tallman

It is not everyday that an intern gets to meet the CEO, CFO, and Senior Vice Presidents of a company. However, the Famous Footwear internship is not a typical internship. Human Resources, Information Systems, Finance, Merchandising, Buying, Loss Prevention, Marketing, Operations, Logistics…we experienced it ALL at Famous Footwear’s Headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin!

Famous Footwear is evolving and challenging itself to go from a good company to great company. We have never worked for a retailer so enthusiastic about their future and eager to embrace the changes necessary to succeed. This enthusiasm was not only contagious, but opened our eyes to the retail world beyond the in-store experience.

The Back to School Meetings in Chicago allowed us to contribute to regional goals, strategies, and tactics for this critical time of year. We visited stores in Milwaukee to assess visual merchandising and customer experience. We even got the chance to tour the Brown Shoe Corporate Office, Famous Footwear’s parent company located in St. Louis, Missouri. But throughout the summer, we learned the most moving from one functional area to the next in Famous Footwear’s headquarters.

In Human Resources we created position descriptions, sourced resumes, selected interview questions, and participated in the interviews. Merchandising taught us how to select, plan, and allocate every style of shoe for every gender category. We even had the opportunity to forecast store numbers ourselves! Buying had us view the Famous Footwear website as a customer and present our findings and recommendations to the entire Buying Team. We also sat in on shoe vendor meetings to pick shoes for Spring 2004. Exception Based Reporting, used in Loss Prevention, aided us in catching “bad guys!” Our time spent in Marketing gave us an opportunity to brainstorm ideas with the Store Grand Opening Team. We also toured the Distribution Center in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin to see how a single pair of shoes is sorted and dispatched to its final destination.

While participating in all these functional areas, we embarked on an assignment to help communicate profiling to the field operations. This assignment required us to take initiative, network by setting up meetings, research this profiling concept to the fullest and then present our ideas to the Directors, Human Resource Sr. Vice President, and the President of Famous Footwear. We found that it is not just about selling shoes, but rather selling “the right shoes, in the right stores, to the right customers, at the right time!”

Shannon Frederick gives Lynn Tallman a lift in the corporate headquarters of Famous Footwear in Madison, Wisconsin.