

EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD



Laura Phillips

Vice President, DMM for Home Entertainment
[Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.](#)

A career with Wal-Mart Stores Inc. can be an exciting and unexpected journey. Picture being a student intern one day, then being a new associate the next, flying to the Orient your first week to purchase \$75 million in toys, and nine years later, being promoted to an officer. That was the actual career development of Laura Phillips, vice president and divisional merchandise manager in dry grocery. Laura oversees the buying of 5,000 grocery items and manages a team of 15 buyers in a category that generates more than \$1 billion in sales.

Laura's career started Memorial Day weekend in 1994, as a management intern for Store 1080 in Johnson City, Tennessee. Like many people starting a career with us, Laura was fortunate to find a mentor who could reach out and give her the kind of career advice that would help her continue climbing the ladder of success. "Richard Porch, my store manager, talked with me about various opportunities at Wal-Mart," she says. "He taught me every aspect of managing a store—from the front end, to the back room, and everything in between. He suggested that instead of returning to the store the next summer, I should apply for a merchandising internship in the home office in Bentonville, Arkansas."

Following Richard's advice, Laura spent the summer of 1995 as an intern with the toy department's buying team. She learned the entire cycle that occurs to get a toy from its creator into a child's hands. Right off the bat, Laura was on the fast track to greatness with us.

"I graduated from the University of Florida in December 1995, and I returned to Bentonville in January 1996 as an assistant toy buyer. Within the first week, I went to the Orient, where I purchased \$75 million in toys." Laura later was promoted and moved around before taking a leave of absence to earn her master's degree in business administration from the University of Arkansas. She then returned to Wal-Mart as a merchandise coordinator in groceries.

Laura then became merchandise manager of fresh floral. Under her leadership, sales of fresh flowers doubled, and her team developed regional processing centers that enabled the company to deliver the freshest product. Laura rose to her current position in the spring of 2004, a mere nine-year journey from college student to senior leader at Wal-Mart.

"I have the best of both worlds," Laura said. "I love the fact that there are options to manage my career, and that the company encourages us to take care of home and family. I have a husband, John, and a son, Jack, and sometimes balancing work and family can be a challenge, but I've built a team that is capable of running the business while I am away. And my husband and I agreed that we would leave work at work. So my career and family are both providing me great joy."