

Report on internship in merchandising department

Business, Company



Background Information of the Company

The ODM Group is a product design and marketing company that provides high-quality customised marketing products to corporate clients around the world. With offices in Hong Kong and Vietnam, the company provides a variety of services such as Prototyping, Logistics & Shipping and Quality Control. (Refer to Appendix 1)

Work Responsibilities

The department that I am assigned to is the Merchandising department. The supervisor that I am assigned to is Ms Dasha Krylova, a Senior Account Manager for the company. Although Dasha is not under the Merchandising department in Vietnam, she will constantly receive feedback from the manager of the Vietnam office, Ms Hana Hanh Pham, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the company, Mr Conor O'Donovan and other senior merchandising colleagues. My primary job scope is to source for suitable products based on clients' requirements from suppliers in mainland China and Vietnam. I will be negotiating with the suppliers regarding customised products and attempt to find the best possible price. On top of that, I am also required to create products' excel files which include the product description, costs and supplier information for client's viewing. Furthermore, I am required to write marketing and product blogs for the company website to attract more future clients. (" Case Study - The ODM Group")

Transition Challenges & Adaptations

The first challenge that I face is stepping out of my comfort zone. In school, there are lecturers that constantly guide me. However, working for a

company in a foreign country, I am expected to be able to handle all the work tasks by myself. Although my colleagues are helpful, I am still expected to be able to handle the workload independently. However, I managed to adapt by working closely with my colleagues so as to ensure that I fully understand the tasks and not make any mistakes. The second challenge that I face is integrating with the corporate culture. The corporate culture in Vietnam is very different compared to Singapore's corporate culture. In Vietnam, local employees value relationships over efficiency which is the opposite of Singapore. Therefore, it took me a few days to adapt to the work culture and I achieved this by prioritising my relationship with my office manager and colleagues over efficiency.

Key Learning Experiences

Communication Skills

As an employee in the merchandising department, the most important skill I picked up is communication skills. As a merchandiser, my primary role is to communicate with suppliers and other businesses. Some of the common forms of communication include e-mails, telephone calls, factory visits and attending trade fairs. Through my six weeks of internship, I have learned how to craft a proper e-mail message to be sent to the suppliers. For the first few days, I struggled with e-mails. However, my manager forwarded some of her e-mails to me so that I am able to learn to craft a professional e-mail message. Besides e-mails, another way of communicating with suppliers is to attend trade fairs. During the six weeks of internship, I have attended the Vietnam International Plastic & Rubber Industry Exhibition. During this trade fair, I met a lot of suppliers, both local and international. As an employee for

a promotional and marketing campaign, it is crucial for me to talk to as many suppliers as possible to widen the company's supplier base. I talked to the suppliers about the materials and the products/services that they offer and at the start of every conversation, we will trade business cards so that we could keep in contact. The skill of communication is taught and widely used across my school life, ranging from project work to external activities.

Communication is key during project work as different members are doing different parts of the same project. Therefore, it is important for me and my project mates to constantly communicate with each other, be it via group meetings or e-mails so as to ensure that we all understand one another's tasks. Through the six weeks of internship, I have now begun to see the importance of communication in the workplace and also in my life. This past six weeks of internship has taught me that communication is one of the most important life skill.

Software Skills

The second experience that I have gained from six weeks of the internship is using the software, " Wordpress". WordPress is a blogging and website content management system and is widely used by The ODM Group as a blogging platform. Besides sourcing from products from suppliers, my job scope also consists of writing blogs for the company's website. During the first week of internship, I have received training from my senior colleagues on how to write good and reputable blogs for the company. Training includes reading and understanding blog posts that were done by other employees as well as writing a practice blog so as to assess our capabilities. For each blog

post, there has to be a Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) word that will help direct potential customers to the company's website.

Therefore, I have also received training from the senior colleague on how to find the most suitable SEO word that is most likely to attract a lot of potential consumers to the company's website. Even after the training has concluded, after every blog post that I completed, the senior colleague will provide constructive feedback on how to further improve the blog before it is published on the company's website. Although software such as WordPress is not taught in school, I was still taught how to write effectively in modules such as Business Communication. Also, in the International Marketing module, I was taught about how to craft messages to target certain audiences in the form of advertisements. As a student that is pursuing International Business, it is crucial that I learn essential skills such as writing effective blogs that can attract consumers' attention. Also, WordPress is a software that is widely used by companies around the world.

Therefore, by being able to pick up this skill during my internship with The ODM Company, it will definitely benefit me when I enter the working world.

5. 0 Conclusion To conclude, the past six weeks of internship has given me valuable knowledge and insights into the promotional and marketing industry. Furthermore, my role as a merchandiser has taught me the inner workings of the company as well as all the necessary skills. For the remaining weeks of this internship, I hope to gain more skills from this company that can be applied when I enter university or the working world.