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Harvesting Growth -- An Internship Thesis

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Harvesting Growth: An Internship Thesis at Harvest Group

By

Emma Conover

Advisor: Molly Rapert

Introduction

During the Summer of 2021, I had the privilege to Intern with Harvest Group in Rogers, Arkansas. During this 12-week internship, I was placed in the Client Services division and was a part of a consumables team that served several clients. I gained invaluable experience from this internship and developed both personally and professionally.

Company Background

In 2006, Harvest Group was founded by current CEO Ross Cully at his kitchen table. The goal of this start-up was to manage the relationship between small suppliers and big retailers. It has since grown into a full-service retail growth agency serving clients at Walmart, Target, Kroger, and Amazon. According to Ross, “the goal in starting the Harvest Group was to honor God by building a values-based culture that focuses on doing the right thing, delivering remarkable results with humility, never settling for ‘good enough’, serving one another, innovating new ways of working, and leaving a positive impact, all to the benefit of clients, retail partners, and teammates alike.”

Harvest Group services their clients in a multitude of ways including account management, ecommerce, replenishment, analytics, and strategic management. The goal is to help clients build relationships with retailers, increase their sales, and grow their brands. These goals are accomplished through teams of people who are dedicated to the clients’ business, and with technology that integrates all aspects of digital commerce strategy.

Company Culture

Harvest Group prides itself on its company culture. They believe that by taking care of their employees first, they can better service their clients. The Harvest Group website has a great depiction of what the culture is like:

Something we talk about a lot is “bringing your whole self to work”. At Harvest Group, there is not only freedom, but expectation, to feel what you feel, believe what you believe, and be who you are. We don’t just say this, but we live it out with our unrivaled flexible work strategy, Maternity/Paternity leave, comprehensive paid time off benefit, charitable giving match, and more benefits that help work and life find their proper balance. AND we have a blast while we’re at it!

One of my favorite parts of the Harvest Group culture comes from the weekly “team meetings” and the monthly “sub-team meetings”. Every week, the entire company gathers both in person and over zoom for a team meeting. This meeting is an hour long and is an opportunity to share company news such as new hires, pregnancies, marriages, and more. Each week someone from the company shares a presentation about relevant happenings in the news, the world of retail, or their personal lives. Once a month, team meeting is substituted with sub-team meeting. This is a chance to gather with a smaller group of people and share winnings, hardships, and recognize people who have gone above and beyond in their job. These meetings were a great way to feel connected with both the entire company as well as members of my team.

Client Services Intern Position

During the Summer of 2021, Harvest Group hired interns in three different divisions: People & Culture, Technology, and Client Services. With my business and analytics background, I was placed in the Client Services division. Client Services is the heart of Harvest Group, as they are the people are directly servicing and engaging with the client and retailer. Client Services are furthermore broken into two areas: Grocery and Consumables. My position was on a consumables team who serviced clients on the Walmart side. The typical duties for this position were to provide assistance to the team in order to enhance and improve business results, perform ad hoc analysis, and complete a group project to provide recommendations and present to the Harvest team.

Journal Entry 1: The Interview Process



I began my search for an internship at the beginning of my junior year, and I did research on many different opportunities. As an Information Systems and Marketing major, I wanted an internship that would give me exposure to both of these fields. I came across Harvest Group through LinkedIn, and saw that two of my classmates had previously interned with them. I reached out to both of these classmates and asked them about their personal experience at Harvest Group. They both had amazing feedback about the internship and highly recommended that I apply. One of my classmates said, “the best professional decision I have ever made is accepting an internship with Harvest Group.” I was very excited after talking with these classmates and decided to apply for the internship. Several weeks later, I received an email informing me that I had made it through the application process, and I was asked to complete an online assessment as well as a virtual interview.

The assessment was a personality test, and it asked me several questions about how I would react in certain situations. An example of a question I received was “If your manager made a decision in which you would not agree with, how would you respond?” There were then several response options and I had to order these responses from best to worst. The virtual interview was not live, but instead I was asked questions from the computer and my answers were recorded. After submitting both the assessment and the interview, I waited several more weeks to hear a response. Finally, I was informed that I had made it to the final round of interviews. Typically, these interviews would take place in the Harvest Group office but due to Covid, the interview would take place over Zoom. I was nervous before this interview because I knew I really wanted this internship, so I spent a lot of time in preparation. In the interview were six Harvest Group employees. A few of the employees were from the HR department, while the others were members of the team I would be placed on. The interview was behavioral based and lasted about thirty minutes. I had the opportunity to use examples from my previous experiences to answer questions and showcase my skills. I was very pleased with how the interview went and I was excited to hear back from Harvest Group.

It was only a few days later when I got a call from Jill Vick offering me a Client Services internship at Harvest Group. I was extremely excited and immediately accepted the position. I would be on Jill’s team and would work with the general merchandising clients. Before the summer began, I was able to have several discussions with Jill about the internship and what to expect. I then began my internship in mid-May.

Key Takeaway:

Harvest Group invested a lot of time and resources into the recruiting process for the internship and I am excited to become a part of the team!

Journal Entry 2: May 17- 21



My internship began on Monday, May 17 and I was fortunate enough to work in person from the Harvest Group office in Rogers. Due to COVID-19, the office was not yet back to full capacity, and only a limited number of employees are able to be there. Although there were very few people working in the office on the first day, I could immediately feel the great company culture that I had heard about. Everyone was extremely welcoming and made me feel as though I was truly apart of the Harvest Group team. This summer there are four interns that worked for Harvest Group. I worked in the Client Services department, one intern worked for the People and Culture department, and the other two interns worked in Technology. I am excited to get to know the other interns and learn from each other.

The first week was consumed with onboarding. I got set up with my laptop and monitor, learned more about Harvest Group, met with the team I would be working with, etc. I learned that I would be working on the General Merchandising Consumables team, and have the opportunity to work with clients in several departments including beauty, celebrations, writing, and more! I was able to get to know my manager, Jill Vick, as well as learn more about the rest of the team. Jill leads a team of seven individuals, who have one of four jobs: National Account Manager, Sales Insights Manager, Digital Sales Manager, or Replenishment Insights Manager. Throughout the summer, I had a chance to work with everyone on the team, and learn more about each of their roles. One of my favorite parts about the onboarding process was getting to have a meeting with Ross Cully, the CEO of Harvest Group. Once a month, Ross hosts a meeting with all new hires in order to make a personal connection with them, as well as talk more about Harvest Group. From this meeting, I was able to learn more about how Harvest Group started, where it is now, and how Ross sees it growing in the future. The ability to meet with the CEO is a great advantage to working for a small to mid-sized company.

Along with meeting several Harvest Group employees, part of my onboarding process was learning more about the systems that they utilize. I went through training on how to use

Walmart's reporting software called Retail Link. This database gives Walmart suppliers the ability to view real time data on their products in store. With this training, I learned more about how Walmart works with their suppliers, including learning about line reviews. These meetings are between a Walmart buyer and a supplier, and is a time to review how supplier's products have done in the store, and to discuss what products can be introduced in the future. I had the opportunity to work on projects this summer that helped prepare our clients for these meetings. I also learned how to use the business intelligence software called Looker, which Harvest Group uses to analyze and understand their client's data. This is a tool I utilized in various projects, especially when I work with the Sales Insights Managers.

Key Takeaway:

I believe that this first week of work did a great job for preparing me for what is to come. I am excited to get started on projects, and continue to learn additional skills.

Journal Entry 3: May 24- May 28



This week I was able to learn more about our clients through sitting in on meetings and helping to prepare for upcoming line reviews. Line reviews are a chance for suppliers to sell new products to Walmart and increase the amount of their items sold in stores. During this presentation, the retailer assesses the products and determine if they are a match for their merchandising goals. Harvest Group often takes months to prepare for these line reviews with their clients. A few of the ways in which Harvest Group aids suppliers in preparing for a line review include:

- Analyze the success of current products
- Project the future success of both old and new products
- Explain how the product contributes to the overall success of the category
- Prepare samples of all products

Many of the meetings I sat in on this week were line review preparation meetings. Specifically, I was able to watch one of our clients in the hair accessories department prepare to attempt to sell a new sustainable line to Walmart. I was able to assist in this preparation by helping to prepare the deck for the presentation. This deck was over 100 slides long, and I was

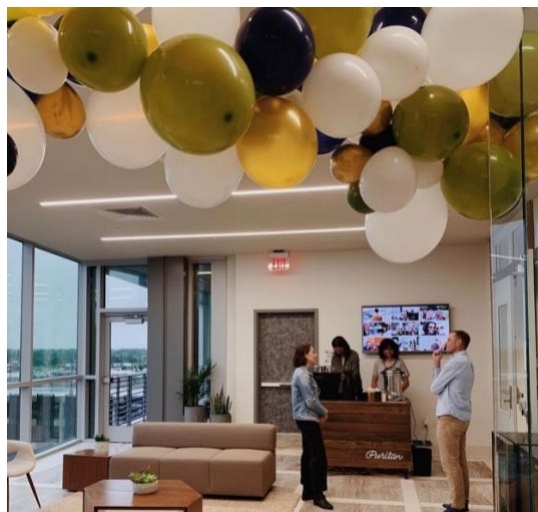
tasked with formatting and revising the deck. My manager had me review each of the slides and make changes to the font, text size, and spacing. Although this was a simple task, it allowed me to get hands on with a line review presentation and fully understand how the importance of these reviews. The line review took place on May 27, and it was a success! Walmart approved the new sustainability line, and was interested in a few other new products. These new items will be seen in stores after Walmart has their next modular reset.

Another project I was tasked with this week was creating a spreadsheet with information about new competitive products within hair accessories. After I was given a list of these competitive products, I went into different Walmart stores to collect the UPC numbers for each item. UPC stands for Universal Product Code and it is a worldwide method for tracking items in stores. Harvest Group uses the UPC to track gain insights on competitive products and analyze how their clients are performing compared to other supplier in the market. After I finished collecting the UPCs, the competitive products were analyzed and this information was put into Tableau and used to compare how specific hair accessories are doing in comparison to their competitors. Something I learned from visiting different Walmart stores is that not every store carries the same products. Different Walmart stores carry different products depending on the size of the store and the demographics of the location. These factors also determine how much space is given to certain items. For example, some Walmart's may have an eight-foot modular, while others may have a twenty-foot.

Key Takeaway:

I had a successful second week learning about line reviews and how products are placed in Walmart stores.

Journal Entry 4: June 1- June 4



On Tuesday, June 1 the Harvest Group office officially opened back up to full capacity. In March of 2020, the office closed due to Covid-19 and employees began to work from home. After the initial closing, the office was slowly reopened to allow a limited number of employees to work from the office. It wasn't until this Tuesday that the office was completely reopened. When I arrived for work on Tuesday morning, I was greeted with Puritan coffee and Chick Fil A

breakfast! The office was filled with workers excited to start working in person and collaborating with their teams face to face. Although the office is back to full capacity, Harvest continued to offer a hybrid work environment with the motto “work where you work best”. Most employees only came to the office a few days per week, while choosing to work at home on other days. As an intern, I am excited to work in the office in order to create better connections and have the ability to ask more questions.

While in the office this week, I had the opportunity to shadow Megan, one of the sales insights managers on my team. The sales insights manager is responsible for analyzing data and looking for trends or areas to drive client results. I was able to learn about her daily tasks and the tools that she uses to be successful. One application that is used by the sales insights managers is Tableau. I had previous experience using Tableau in my business analytics class, but I had the opportunity to practice more this summer. A large amount of client data is stored in Tableau in order to produce visualizations and dashboards. While shadowing Megan, I also learned how she does her weekly reporting. Megan has four clients and each week she sends them an analytics report that highlights how products are doing compared to previous weeks or previous years. Some metrics that are shown in this report include total POS vs LY, total traffic % change, in-stock vs previous week, and more. One metric that was measured that I was not familiar with was U/S/W. I learned that this stands for units per store per week and is a measure of velocity that helps display the average sale of products in a given week. I realized quickly the importance of knowing retail math and becoming familiar with the acronyms that are used in the retail world. I also was able to sit in on Megan’s clients meeting and watch how she presents analytic updates.

In addition to shadowing Megan, I was asked help prepare for a line review for a client in the celebrations department. I helped to set up the example modular that was used to showcase the products that the client would like to sell into stores. I also helped prepare the slide deck that was used during the presentation. The line review is scheduled for June 8, and will determine the products that are put into Walmart in Spring of 2022.

Key Takeaway:

Line reviews are a very important for suppliers, as it will determine which of their products are sold into Walmart stores.

Journal Entry 5: June 17 – June 25



When a line review is completed, samples must be taken to the Walmart Layout center along with quotes that list important item information such as the item name, costing, UPC, vendor, and more. After the line review was finished for one of our clients, my job was to create quotes for each of the samples that were to be submitted to the layout center. This process took a full week, as there were over one hundred items to be quoted! I worked in Walmart's Retail Link to prepare each of these quotes. These quotes are very important, as they act as a contract between the supplier and the buyer that confirms the costing of each item. Due to this, creating quotes required diligence and attention to detail so that no information was entered wrong. An important step in creating quotes is to add an image. The client I was working with does not have a marketing team; therefore, there were some images that I had to take and edit myself. To take these pictures, I used a room in the Harvest Group office with good lighting and blank walls. I had to make sure that the products were angled correctly and that there were no shadows. After taking the pictures, I had to upload them to my computer and crop out the background. After this, I was able to upload the pictures to Retail Link.

Once each of these quotes were submitted, I printed them and attached them to the samples. I then dropped these samples off at the layout center in Bentonville, AR. The layout center is set up like a normal Walmart store, but is much bigger and allows employees to test mock displays. The products inside the layout center have not been released yet, so everything that is done inside is confidential and no pictures are allowed to be taken. We dropped off about one hundred samples, but the buyer narrowed down this selection when choosing which items to include in stores. She also chose certain items to only sell on Walmart.com. I learned that even if an item is not chosen to be sold in stores, it has the possibility to be offered as a "dot com only" item. This project was important in helping me understand the process of selling items into Walmart stores. In addition to this project, I continued to attend client meetings this week. These meetings are beneficial to listen to, as they help me pick up on retail terminology. They also help me understand the relationship between suppliers and buyers at Walmart, and where Harvest Group falls into that relationship.

Key Takeaway:

It is interesting to see how each client interacts with Harvest Group, and what each client expects out of the working relationship.

Journal Entry 6: June 28 – July 2



Every Tuesday, all Harvest Group employees gather for a company-wide meeting. These meetings include important announcements, company news, trainings, special speakers, and more. This week, a Harvest employee spoke about her own personal work journey and how she grew to trust the people around her. She spoke about how she used to want to be the best and do everything on her own, but has learned how to lean on her coworkers and gain mutual trust. This was one of many speakers I have heard throughout my summer internship that has given great insight through sharing their own personal experiences.

This week I had training in Looker, the data analytics platform used by Harvest Group. I learned how to pull data for specific clients, view Walmart Omni channel data, create visualizations, and more. I learned that retailer data comes from a single retail store, whereas syndicated data shows the data across multiple retailers. In order to have access to syndicated data, a supplier must subscribe to a market research firm such as Nielsen or IRI. Harvest Group highly encourages their clients to invest in syndicated data, because it gives the best context to understand their products within the broad market. Looker gathers syndicated and retailer data into a single platform and is useful in creating dashboards with real time data, as well as pulling any ad hoc requests. One of my most important take away from this week came from a conversation with the sales insights manager on my team. I asked him what he thought were the most important skills to have to succeed in his job. He told me three things:

1. The ability to collect data
2. The ability to find insights from this data
3. The ability to create visualization and communicate a story from the insights

Along with these three abilities, he emphasized that knowledge of Microsoft applications such as Excel and PowerPoint will help you succeed.

Key Takeaway:

I enjoy the opportunity to talk to so many different professionals within the Harvest Group Family and hear their advice.

Journal Entry 7: July 5- July 14



This week I was tasked with a new project. One of our clients has their product featured in the back to school selections across retailers and they requested a market place assessment. My project was to visit different retailers, take pictures of their back to school selections, assess the similarities and differences, and create a PowerPoint with my findings. With this project, I was asked to focus on the back to school selections as a whole, but also look specifically into the writing utensils. Retailers that I visited included Walmart, Target, Sam's, Office Depot, Staples, and the Dollar Stores.

I first focused on the overall look of the displays. As expected, Target did a great job in drawing attention to their back to school selection with seasonal imagery and bright colors. In contrast, Walmart offered a large back to school section, but one that blends in with the rest of their store and it did not stand out like Target's. I also noticed that Target had their display in the back corner of the store, whereas Walmart put their display at the entrance. The office stores had medium sized displays, and the dollar stores offered the smallest displays. I next focused on the writing utensil selection in each store. I compared the prices, the selection of brands, the types of writing utensils offered, etc. Prices stayed very consistent through the retailers, except for the office supply stores. The prices of writing utensils at the office stores were much higher than any other retailer. Something that varied a lot from store to store was the selection of writing utensils. For example, there were some stores that offered more mechanical pencils than wooden pencils, and others that offered more wooden. Each store carried similar brands, but some offered more products from certain brands than others. I also found it interesting that some brands would be featured on endcap or pallet displays within certain retailers.

After assessing the back to school selection in brick and mortar, I moved to researching online selections. I assessed the back to school and writing utensil selection at Walmart.com, Target.com, and Amazon. It was interesting to see how the online selections could slightly differ from the instore selection. It was also interesting to see how each of these retailers promoted their online back to school selection. After finishing my assessment, I pulled together my images and main conclusions into a PowerPoint that would be presented to the client. I put together about twenty slides and presented my findings to my manager. She was very impressed with my work and put all of my slides into the final deck! In addition to this project, I was also introduced to our "intern project." Each summer, the interns are given a question that they are to research and present to the company at the end of the internship. The question we were given is "How has

Covid-19 effected the workplace, and what does this mean for future college graduates?” We were asked to focus on the future of remote versus in person work, and how our generation views these changes.

Key Takeaway:

The competitive analysis allowed me to learn more about how brands try and differentiate themselves in order to win customers.

Journal Entry 8: July 19- July 23



This week we continued to work on our intern project. We decided to split the presentation into four main sections:

1. Pre-Covid workplace vs the current workplace
2. Benefits of working at home vs working in the office
3. A case study of large businesses
4. The unique needs of Gen Z in the changing work environment

Each of the interns chose a section to research and create slides for. My responsibility was to research the large businesses and find how Covid-19 has changed their workplace. After researching several different companies, I decided to focus on Google because they were ranked the number one employer in the world for college graduates. They are a company that will hire a large number of Generation Z workers in the coming years, so they have put a lot of thought into the future of their workplace. Google CEO released a message on May 5 that outlined a plan for hybrid work to take place this fall. Employees would be required to work in the office three days a week, while having the option to work from home the remaining two days. Google also offers a few “work from anywhere” weeks each year, where employees can work remotely from anywhere in the world.

Not only has Google changed their work policies, but they have also changed their physical work spaces. Google is known for having amazing office spaces with great employee perks. In order to safely bring their employees back to the workplace, they have had to innovate and create new office spaces. An example of a space they created is called the “campfire meeting room”. This is a round room that has seats for those that are in person, while also having monitors that

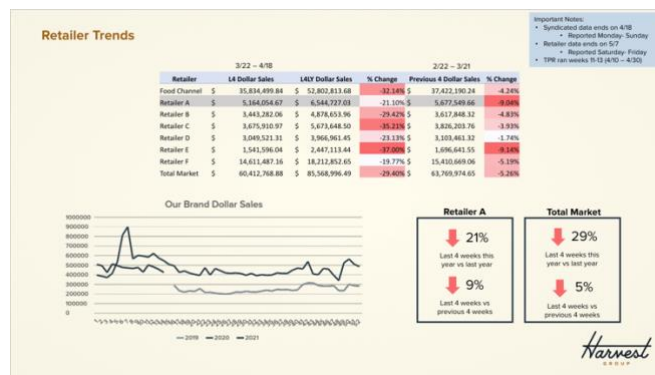
display the faces of those that are joining the meeting virtually. The idea behind this meeting space is that each employee gets a spot around the “campfire” and everyone can have the chance for equal participation, no matter if they are virtual or in person.

In addition to researching Google, I spent time researching some of the other large companies to compare their plans for the future. What I found was that most companies were leaning towards a hybrid work environment. Companies such as Facebook and Apple took similar stances as Google, and will only require employees to be physically present in the office a few days a week. However, there are some companies that have different requirements. Morgan Stanley will not adapt to hybrid work, but instead expects employees to be off zoom and back in the office full time once it is safe to do so. In contrast, Ford Motors is adopting an extremely flexible work plan and allows workers to work from home as often as they would like. After researching these large companies, I was put in charge of filming and editing a video about the younger workers at Harvest Group. I asked these Generation Z workers about their favorite parts of the office, and what it is like to work remotely.

Key Takeaway:

Working on the intern project was a great chance to network with some of the newer Harvest Group employees!

Journal Entry 9: July 26 – July 30



This week we continued to work on our intern project, but I was also given an activity to help with my analytical thinking and excel skills. My manager asked me what I would like to be exposed to in the final weeks of my internship. I told her that I would like to learn more about data analysis and specifically examples of what a Sales Insights Manager (SIM) does. Per my request, my manager gave me an activity that resembles the work of a SIM. I was given an excel sheet that contained data from a Harvest Group client and I was tasked with analyzing this data, finding insights, and create a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes my conclusions.

I started this project by trying to understand the data. I found that the excel sheet I received had both retailer and syndicated data, and that the data came from the past two years. After I had a better understanding of the data I was working with, I began creating pivot tables and pivot charts in excel to try and find insights. Examples of the insights I found were drops in sales, products that were gaining sales, issues due to supply chain, and more. I also compared the

client data to data from competitors so I could understand how the brand was doing in the overall market. This assessment was challenging, but I was able to

In addition to working on the data assessment, I had the opportunity to assist the category team in setting up a new modular. Harvest Group has a small Category team that assists the Walmart buyers in analyzing specific categories and creating new modulars. This team is in an interesting position because they are Harvest Group employees, but they assist the Walmart buyers so they have to keep their work confidential. I had the opportunity to go with this category team to the Walmart Layout Center in order to physically design the new modular that would be set in the coming months. Although I had dropped off samples at the layout center, I had never had the opportunity to go inside. While I was setting the new modular, I was able to talk with the category team and learn more about their work and how they go about designing these modular.

Key Takeaway:

It was great experience to work on the SIM analysis and very interesting to learn the thought process that goes into the positioning of each product on the shelf!

Journal Entry 10: August 2 – August 6



In the last week of my internship, most of my time was dedicated to working on the data assessment and preparing for our final intern presentation. The data assessment was challenging, but it was great Excel practice. I was able to work on my pivot table and graph skills while trying to draw conclusions from the data set. After working with the raw data in excel, I put together a PowerPoint that I presented to my manager. She pointed out the things that were done well in the presentation, while also giving me constructive criticism and walking me through additional items I could have analyzed. After hearing her feedback, I was able to further dig into the data set and continue to practice drawing insights from raw data.

I spent a large portion of my time working with the other interns as we prepared for our final presentation. I loved working with the four other interns because we all had very different backgrounds. One other intern was a University of Arkansas student, but she is a member of Fulbright College and is majoring in Communications. One intern had immigrated to the United States from China, and was returning to school to pursue a degree in Computer Science. The fourth intern worked completely virtual because he is from California, and also is pursuing a

degree in computer science. Each of us had a different background, which brought four unique perspectives and opinions when working on this project.

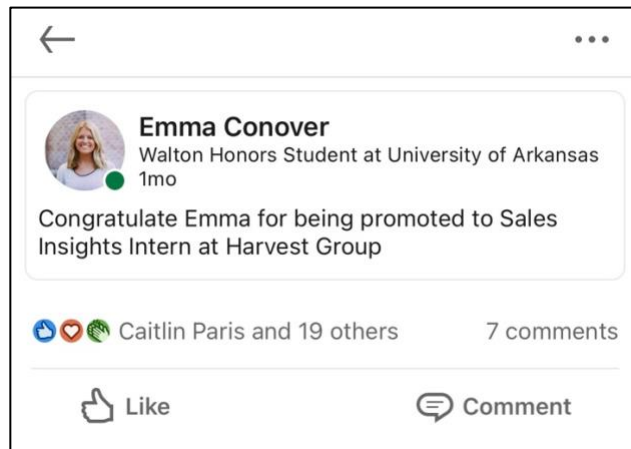
I worked on editing our video and making sure that my slides were prepared. We had a mock presentation in front of two of our managers, and they were able to give us feedback and areas where we could continue to improve. On Tuesday, August 3, we gave our final presentation to the entire Harvest Group company. Some employees watched in person at the office, while others were at home watching on zoom. The presentation was extremely successful and we received compliments from everyone!

After finishing the assessment and the intern presentation, I was only left with a few things to do to wrap up my internship. I helped my manager with creating quotes for samples that we received from a client, and I delivered these samples to the Walmart layout center. After ensuring that all other projects were finished, I was able to attend a few events to celebrate my internship. My team celebrated both the end of my internship, as well as a successful quarter by going to top golf. Harvest group also treated the interns to a spa day to thank us for all of our hard work. Overall, I had a great summer and learned more than I could have imagined.

Key Takeaway:

This summer gave me insight into the world of retail, and helped me develop both professionally and personally.

Journal Entry 11: Spring 2022



After completing my Summer internship, I returned to school in the fall to wrap up my senior year. In October of my fall semester, I got a call from my previous manager at Harvest Group and she offered me a spring internship. With this internship, I would be working with the same team that I did over the Summer; however, my role would be more focused in analytics. I was super excited about this offer and immediately accepted. This Spring I began my internship and have gotten to work on several exciting projects.

One of the first projects I worked on was completing a competitive analysis of diapers at Walmart. Specifically, I analyzed how prices differ between different brands and different retailers. This project helped me gain experience with excel and other analytical platforms that

Harvest Group utilizes. I also completed a competitive analysis on feminine needs products. This was a similar analysis to my first project, but I had the opportunity to present this project directly to the clients. I got great feedback from my manager on my presentation and it was great to see my work come to life.

I recently was offered a full-time position as a Sales Insights Manager at Harvest Group upon my Graduation. After having such a great intern experience, I decided to accept this position. I will stay on the same team I am currently on and get to work with the same clients.

Key Takeaway:

I am excited to begin this position in June and learn from the many talented individuals at Harvest Group!

Retailer Comparison: Walmart, Target, and Amazon

Harvest Group services clients and their relationships with multiple different retailers including Walmart, Target, and Amazon. The intention of this comparison is to look at the Q4 results and marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion) of each retailer.

Q4 Reports

Walmart:

- Q4 comp sales up 5.6%
- Q4 ecommerce sales grew 1%
- Q4 transactions increased 3.1% driven by in-store traffic, robust consumer spending, and strong holiday shopping trends
- Q4 basket size increased 2.4%
- Full Year: Walmart's total net sales topped \$568B

Target

- Q4 revenue up 9.4% (\$30.6B)
- Q4 comp sales grew 8.9%
- Q4 store comp sales grew 8.9%, digital comp sales grew 9.2%
- Q4 traffic grew 8.1%
- Full Year: \$106B total revenue

Amazon

- Net Sales grew 10% to \$137.4B (Amazon's highest ever quarterly revenue)
- Net Income increased to \$14.3B
- Amazon Prime memberships grew 16% during the quarter
- Physical store sales grew 16%
- 3P Marketplace sales grew 56%
- Full Year: Net Sales of \$386.1B

The Marketing Mix: Walmart

Product

Two thirds of merchandise sold in Walmart U.S were made, grown, or assembled domestically. In March 2021 Walmart announced their commitment to invest \$350 billion in products made, grown or assembled in the United States over the next ten years. Each year, Walmart hosts an “open-call” that provides new and current suppliers the opportunity to pitch their products to Walmart buyers (*Where in the world does Walmart source its products?*, 2019). Walmart sells their products in a wide array of categories. Some of the largest categories include Dry Grocery, Household Consumables, Fresh Food, and Beauty/ Personal Care. The majority of Walmart products sold are National Brands, but they do have Private Label items as well (CRC Walmart Benchmark).

Price

Walmart implements a low-price strategy in an effort to sell the products at the best possible value. The strategy they use is referred to as Every Day Low Price (EDLP). This strategy provides customers with low priced products without the use of coupons or sales. This is made possible through reducing the cost of creating, warehousing, and shipping the item. It also requires a smooth and efficient supply chain. Consumers often trust retailers with this strategy because they are given a fair price the first time, and they do not have to wait for prices to be lowered during a sale (*What Is Everyday Low Price (EDLP)?*, 2021). In 2021, the vast majority of suppliers raised their prices. This is expected to be the same in 2022, with the largest drivers of the price increases being transportation, labor costs, and commodities (CRC Walmart Benchmark).

Place

Walmart operates approximately 10,500 stores and clubs in 24 countries. They employ approximately 2.2 million associates around the world and 1.6 million in the United States (*Where in the world does Walmart source its products?*, 2019). Walmart has recently announced plans to redesign their stores. The first phase of this project focused on navigation so that consumers can find what they need. This phase enhanced the layout of stores that spotlights products and guides customers through their shopping journey (*Reimagining Store Design to Help Customers Better Navigate the Omni-Shopping Experience*, n.d.). The next phase of this redesign attempts to amplify the design elements in stores to elevate the customer experience. This includes the use exciting brands, QR codes, and digital screens. (*Designing Interactive Stores that “Wow,”* n.d.) In addition to their brick and mortars stores, Walmart also offers an ecommerce platform and an online marketplace.

Promotion

Walmart promotes itself and its products with a variety of different tactics. They use a combination of sales promotions, advertisements, and public relations. They utilize a few different slogans, including “save money, live better” and “everyday low prices”. Walmart is also expanding its reach to more consumers by expanding their InHome delivery service. This service offers delivery straight to the consumer’s garage, refrigerator, or anywhere in their home.

Currently reaching six million consumers, they are planning to expand this service to at least 30 million by the end of 2022 (Smith).

The Marketing Mix: Target

Product

Target sells a wide range of products in general merchandise and food. About one third of the products sold are private-label and exclusive to Target. There have also been several instances of Target partnering with a designer or a brand to offer an exclusive collection. An example of this includes the partnership with Chip & Joanna Gaines for the Magnolia collection (*products & services / Target Corporation, 2017*). In August, Ulta Beauty will launch in over 100 target stores as well as online. This “shop in shop” concept allows customers to shop brands typically available at Ulta while they are at Target. It will feature specialized displays, discovery zones and on-trend products. Target hopes to reach at least 800 stores with the Ulta partnership in the coming years (*Ulta Beauty at Target Launches in August*).

Price

Target promises their customers the best prices and the best quality with their “Expect More. Pay Less.” slogan. They offer several ways to save and earn rewards with each purchase. One way customers are able to save is with the Target RedCard. With this card, consumers get 5% off each purchase, free shipping, and an additional 30 days for returns and exchanges (*Target: Expect More. Pay Less., 2019*). Target also has a price match guarantee so that consumers know they paid the best price. If consumers find an identical item for less at Target.com or select online competitors, they may request a price match at the time of purchase or 14 days after the purchase (*Price Match Guarantee, n.d.*).

Place

Target is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota and has 1,926 stores in the US. They also have 49 distribution centers in 23 states. Target has historically been known for their trendy stores and positive shopping experience. They are planning to continue this legacy as they plan \$5 Billion in operations, including 30 new stores. Some of these new stores will be mid-sized stores in suburban areas, while some of the stores will have a smaller format and be placed in Urban centers. 200 of their stores will receive “top-to-bottom” renovations this year, and the retailer will continue to play around with new formats to refresh their stores and create the best shopping experience for their consumers. Also included in this \$5 Billion investment are investments in digital, fulfillment, and distribution capabilities (*Target plans \$5B investment in operations, including 30 new stores, n.d.*).

Promotion

Target promotes their brand and shopping experience in a variety of ways. One promotional tactic they have is Target Circle, a loyalty program. This program allows customers to earn 1% in Target Circle earning rewards for every eligible purchase made. It also gives customers access

to select deals and promotions, as well as a special birthday gift (*Target Circle*, n.d.). Program such as Target Circle can motivate shoppers to choose Target as their preferred retailer. Other ways Target has promoted their brand is through implementing a large amount of campaigns over the years, many of which have been successful. One recent campaign ran under the tagline “What we value most shouldn’t cost more” (*Check out Target’s new marketing campaign*, n.d.).

The Marketing Mix: Amazon

Product

Amazon offers a wide variety of products, with the majority coming from third-party sellers. These sellers are primarily small and medium sized firms that list their items on the Amazon Marketplace Platform. In 2007, Amazon started making their own products and has since added private-label brand names. In 2022, Amazon is on track to post \$31 billion in private-label sales (Mattioli, 2020).

Price

Amazon does the majority of their selling through third party sellers and offers a couple different price plans. The individual plan costs \$0.99 per unit sold and the professional plan costs \$39.99 per month no matter how many units are sold. Either way, Amazon charges a referral fee for each item sold, and these fees are typically between 8% and 15% (*How to Sell on Amazon / Become an Amazon Seller - Amazon*, n.d.). Amazon has been known to be the price leader in many categories across retailers. Ecommerce analytics firm Profitero recently released its “Price Wars” study and found Amazon to be the price leader in almost every category. Amazon products were on average 14% cheaper than other retailers.

Place

Amazon is traditionally an online retailer and they dominate the ecommerce space. However, the company is constantly looking for new ways to dominate CPG. They have grabbed the market share in many categories including, however they have always struggled in grocery. One way they have competed in the grocery category is through its acquisition of Whole Foods and the birth of ‘365 by Whole Foods Market’. Amazon also has 14 Amazon Fresh Stores across the country, and there are reports of plans to bring at least 2,000 physical grocery stores to the US. Although Amazon is known for its ecommerce presence, Whole Foods and Amazon Fresh store are helping them begin to compete in the brick-and-mortar space (*Best*).

Promotion

Since 1995, Amazon has spent \$75 billion on advertising and promotion. In 2021 alone, Amazon spent \$16.9 billion. This was a 55% increase and ranked the retailer as the No. 1 US advertiser (Johnson). Amazon also allows their sellers to increase visibility and sales with advertising. They have several different options for third-party sellers including sponsored products, sponsored brands, sponsored displays, and custom multi-page “stores” (*Amazon Advertising*).

Recommendations for Future Interns

An internship is a very important time to develop skills, learn from professionals, and gain real world experience. I have compiled together advice that I learned over the summer that will help interns at any company:

1. Network! Network! Network!

I was told over and over again the networking was extremely important in the professional world; however, I never realized how beneficial it can be until I began my internship. As an intern, you will meet many new people. These people all come from different backgrounds and they will have a lot of experiences that you can learn from. Making connections in an internship can help you succeed as an intern, but also get you a greater chance of landing a full-time job.

2. Ask LOTS of questions!

Asking questions and learning does not end in the classroom. As an intern, no one expects you to know anything. This gives you the leverage of being able to ask any question you can think of, even if you do not think it is a good question. Through my experience at Harvest Group, I learned that everyone genuinely wanted to help me. They loved when I asked questions and they were always eager to answer!

3. Don't be afraid to make mistakes.

Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone. And as an intern, you are expected to make mistakes. Making mistakes is the only way that you are truly going to learn. When I worked on intern projects, I would often make several mistakes before I could complete what I was working on. Sometimes this would be frustrating, but I learned from my mistakes and I became better at my job because of it.

4. Communicate your goals.

An internship is a great time to learn what you want and what you don't want in a future career. If you have a goal for your career, make sure to communicate this with your boss! For example, I knew that I was interested in analytics. I told my boss this and she let me work on analytical projects and shadow analytical jobs. This ultimately led to me receiving a full-time job in analytics!

5. Have fun with it!

I truly believe that if you are having fun at your job, you will be a better worker. I was blessed to intern at a company with an amazing culture that could make working fun! Do not let yourself be too stressed about the future. It is very important to think about and you want to work hard towards your future career; however, you need to remember to take a step back, breath, and have a little bit of fun along the way.

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