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Implementation of a Supply Chain Management "Intern for a Day" Program

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Honors College Participation Program

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Honors Project Submitted to the University Honors College at Bowling Green State University in fulfillment of the requirements of graduation with

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Introduction

During my first professional internship, I found that there was a type of culture shock when I was immersed in the professional environment working with the supply chain professionals. I wanted to develop a way that students could experience this before entering a full-time internship. Also, during my time in class I learned many valuable and applicable skills. However, it was very interesting to see how all the different areas of supply chain have to work together for so many of their projects. This inspired me to find a way to help students, specifically younger college students, gain a better understanding of the workings of supply chain.

The College of Business Administration here at Bowling Green State University has many professional development programs for students and provides many ways for students to expand their knowledge and capabilities. However, as I began to inquire about a job shadowing program, I learned they did not have one.

I decided that if students had the ability to spend a limited amount of time in a professional environment, talk to the different supply chain employees and understand their typical day to day activities, it would be extremely beneficial to their education. This is where I gained inspiration for my honors project. With the help of Dr. William Sawaya and Mr. Tom Siebenaler, I designed an experience for students to shadow supply chain employees at a local company, Therma Tru.

Benefits of Job Shadowing

Job Shadowing can be a valuable experience for students. They can learn valuable skills that cannot be learned easily in a classroom. With job shadowing, “the participant experiences the

employee's approach, the interpersonal interaction required, the steps and actions necessary, and the components needed to effectively perform the job that the employee might never think to mention" (Heathfield). There are additional steps that employee's may not think are important to discuss, but through job shadowing the students can see each step and why it is important.

Job shadowing also allows a student to try out a career to make sure they will like it. If a student spends 4 years studying a degree, then reaches the real world and discovers that they no longer have a passion for the subject, they will not excel at their job. They will likely have low productivity and try to transfer to different positions or even a different company. It's important that students understand what a typical day in the life of an employee (Mckee).

Students will be able to ask employees questions about their work life, their likes and dislikes of the position and even tips for how to be successful in this area.

Job shadowing can be beneficial for the student as well as the employer. The employer can find new talent to fill internships and potential full time openings. Bringing in these students during their college career and building a rapport with them, these students can go to these companies when they are applying for internships. This will reduce the strain on the human resource department to continue looking for and interviewing new students to fill their intern roles.

Another benefit of job shadowing for students is that it gives students the opportunity to build their network. As they meet the employees, managers, human resource directors and more, those are more individuals that the student can work with and even be willing to reach out to if

they need help with an issue in the future. Also, these students will be participating in these programs with other students who want to further their education. These students can work with these other participating students

Description of the Program

Therma Tru is a company located in Maumee, Ohio. Their full name is Therma Tru Doors, which shows their main product. They produce different types of doors, such as patio doors, entry doors, and doors with decorative glass. Therma Tru has several types of designs for their doors as well as different wood and glass type. I chose Therma Tru for this program due to its close proximity to Bowling Green State University, as well as their history of hiring students for internships and graduates for full time positions.

This program is classified as an “externship” compared to an “internship”. An externship is a temporary training program in a workplace, especially one offered to students in a specific field of study. An externship implements the use of a “watch-and-learn” education and utilizes better understanding in new employees (Cresswell). The success of externships can be attributed to the support from alumni to the program. As Therma Tru recruits heavily at Bowling Green State University, alumni at Therma Tru will be more than willing to volunteer to help with this program at their location.

This program will include pairing up students with supply chain employees at Therma Tru for the day on April 21st 2017. They will be shadowing these employees for the day in either the sourcing or logistics team. They will attend meetings with them and get to participate in the activities that these individuals have planned for the day. However, they will be actively

learning during this time as well. They will be discussing all of the steps of supply chain and how they relate to one another.

As this is an educational activity that takes place during the school day, if necessary, I can send an email to their professors to explain why they are absent. Also, if students lack the ability to get to Maumee by themselves, I will personally provide transportation. The Therma Tru location is approximately a 25-minute drive from Bowling Green.

Finding Interested Students

As this program is aimed towards students who do not have experience in a professional supply chain environment, the ideal age range for desired students is freshmen and sophomores. Also, students who have added, or are considering adding, supply chain as a specialization would greatly benefit from this program.

Once Therma Tru confirmed the number of students that they could accommodate on their chosen date, I set out to find students. My two advisors, Dr. Sawaya and Tom Siebenaler helped with this task. Dr. Sawaya announced the program and asked for students to send in their resumes, as well as a paragraph asking why they wanted to participate in this program. Tom Siebenaler sent a similar request to the freshmen and sophomore emails, as he has important access to these emails as the head of the business career accelerator.

Agenda on the day Program

When the students arrived, they first were able to meet with seven different employees in their supply chain department. They started with introductions and then discussed why the students

have a desire to work in the supply chain field. The employees then talked about their education and their career paths through different companies and through their time at Therma Tru as well. The seven supply chain employees also informed the students about the history of the company.

After spending time with employees, the students went on a tour with the human resources department of the corporate office. The human resources has such an important role in the supply chain department because they know the qualities necessary in a successful supply chain employee. During their tour, they were able to observe a brief overview of many positions in the department, such as advertising, media, marketing, customer service, IT, the call center, and more. They also were able to discuss how different areas of the company work together on projects to improve the company.

After the tour and exploring of the company, the students worked with the head managers of the sourcing. They learned information about sourcing and how they work with finding new distributors as well as new law regulations. An example of relevant law regulations for the company was that Therma Tru gets fiber class for their doors in China. Therma Tru has to ensure that the employees they have in China are being treated fairly and receiving an appropriate hourly wage.

After working with sourcing, they then worked with the head managers of logistics. They discussed the advantages and disadvantages of parts of their doors being transported from different areas, such as their manufacturing plants in Indiana and Mexico. They also discussed

the importance of importing products from Mexico and how the paperwork needs to be exactly correct. Therma Tru then provided the students with lunch.

After working with the logistics and sourcing managers, the students then worked with two employees who are in charge of commodities. They learned about all of the different parts that go into a door and how it can be beneficial to find the raw material cheaper at other locations by saving money for the company. The students were able to join a conference call with the commodity employees, as well as employees at the Indiana location that discussed new ideas for blinds. This particular conference call was discussing a new business plan that Therma Tru is planning for 2019. This new plan is to come out with new glass doors that include mini blinds.

After working with the commodity employees, the students worked with two employees that work in transportation. They learned about all of the different materials that come into the country through different ports such as Houston, Los Angeles, and Chicago. These are the most popular ports that Therma Tru uses to import goods from Mexico and China.

After working with the logistics employees, employees from all of the areas that the students had experienced earlier that day came together to once again talk about the overall supply chain department at Therma Tru and how it works. Therma Tru also provided the students with goodie bags that contained various candy and a Therma Tru laptop bag.

Results

Students were sent to Therma Tru on April 21st, 2017. They arrived at 9am and departed close to 430pm. They worked with different areas in the supply chain department, such as commodity managers, sourcing managers, logistics managers, and the human resource department.

The students that participated in this program have both said that it was extremely rewarding. Therma Tru has requested the students forward their resumes to them, for a potential upcoming internship. This is a very promising result of the program as the increased network for the students is equally as important as companies finding promising young students. This program made Bowling Green State University students look even more impressive as they got the chance to work with some of our brightest young students.

The students also stated that they have a better understanding of the overall workings of supply chain and how all of the areas work together. By seeing all of the different areas of the supply chain, the students have expressed that they now know what area of supply chain they hope to specialize in after graduation.

Also, a capstone class working to redesign the current state of the BIZX classes, or applied business experience, has recommended using this program for the second BIZX class. This class is ideally taken by sophomores which would be an ideal age for this program.

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