

Glemson Horticulture Student Essay

Internship at BWI Companies, Inc., Greer, SC

By Myles Ayers

I am experiencing an internship with a wholesale horticultural company for the first time in my life. Growing up in a family landscape business I have never had any experience in sales. In past summers I spent 40-50 hours a week installing landscapes and maintaining properties for commercial and residential areas. One afternoon my dad sat down with me and discussed some internship opportunities. He logged on the Internet, pulled up BWI's (Bunch Wholesale Industry) number, and handed me the phone. I made the phone call to the division sales manager, Bob Phillips, who immediately scheduled an interview and then after we met, hired me.

My internship agreement form stated that I would be rotating duties throughout the entire company by working in the warehouse, transportation, customer service, inside sales, and outside sales. I am pleased to say that when the internship ended I had obtained great experiences from each of these departments.

The connections that I made between my internship and the classroom appeared on a daily basis. The class that always comes to mind is HORT 210. In this class we concentrated on learning how to grow fall plants. We also had discussions on how a lot of growers are pushing towards organically grown foods. As I shadowed the outside sales associates I noticed how a lot of their customers are leaning towards purchasing organic products. BWI offers an organic line that is a top seller to garden centers, growers, and seed stores. I've heard customers repeatedly say how important organics are to them. Another connection that I always seem to have with the classroom is pest control. In HORT 433 we were fortunate enough to receive a booklet of notes that explained every type of pesticide that is used in the horticultural industry. We mainly learned about herbicides, but occasionally discussed insecticides and fungicides. BWI has recognized its customer's need for pesticides and it has paid off by becoming the top-selling product in the wholesale industry. One of the most significant connections that I have experienced as an intern is communication skills. Whether it is talking on the phone with a customer, or eating lunch with another employee, you must have good communication skills to be successful in a sales-oriented career. In my COMM 150 class our professor, Eddie Smith, did a wonderful job teaching us how important it is to have these skills in the business atmosphere. When I was in his classroom, his excellence in communication made the students happy, so I know my excellence in communication can make my customers happy.

The best experience while interning at BWI was riding around with the drivers for deliveries. A lot of people do not understand how important a driver is for a successful company. BWI has 90-100 drivers in their entire company and they make deliveries in and out of state 3-4 days out of the week. They have to sacrifice a lot of time to the

road and don't get to see their families as often as they would like. It is great to see how strong the relationship is between the customer and the driver. Usually they are walking in the door and right away making jokes. BWI's transportation manager implemented a very good interview process and brought in a lot of good people with outstanding characteristics.

Each and every employee at BWI made me feel at home, but my favorite person had to be Bob Phillips (Sales Manager). Bob was very supportive throughout my internship experience. He rotated my duties almost every other week and made sure that I was exposed to many aspects of the company. I like how he has a laid back attitude but still gets the job done the best way possible.

In my opinion, the best traits that an intern needs for this job would be outstanding communication skills, good work habits, and a will to try new things. This business is a process that takes months to catch on to and when you do it is a lot of fun. I would recommend at least 2-3 years of horticulture experience before attempting this internship. If you are able to communicate efficiently and listen to what others say this job can come easy. Sales is about exposing your product to your customer but also following up with them to make sure they are content.

