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## The Wonderful World of Retail

Brands, fashion, décor. Words that might just be music to your ears if you are anything like me, who grew up preferring to redesign her Barbie house rather than play with her dolls. I would come up with elaborate plans for my parents about how we could redecorate our home on a monthly basis and would prefer gift cards to Ikea and HomeSense as birthday presents, starting at the age of six. You could easily say my passion for design and fashion shone through at a young age.

In 2015, I entered the Bachelor of Commerce program at Dalhousie University to explore business concepts deeper as I was intrigued by the strategy behind business decisions. This fondness for business was discovered in high school through marketing, international business, and accounting classes. However, this aside, design was always on my mind and I knew it had to be tied into my career somehow.

Touring the TJX Canada Home Office on the Dalhousie Toronto Corporate Tour in the spring of 2016 was when I realized that there was already an entire industry that combined my passions: business and fashion. We were walked through the sample rooms and I admired all of the new products that would soon be on the shelves of stores. I was inspired by the effort that the employees put into what they chose to wear to work and by the inspiration walls in the building. After my visit, I was immediately in touch with the talent acquisition team and other Dalhousie students who had completed coop terms here as I knew I wanted to work for TJX, the worlds largest off-price retailer.

TJX is different than most retailers in the sense that it follows an off-price business model. This model allows the company to sell an assortment of brand name items at lower prices through opportunistic buying. At TJX, this flexibility is exhibited in every aspect of the business, even real estate. There is no guarantee what types of items, brands, or styles will be in store, and customers are excited with this thrill of the find.

Business students are introduced to very general positions in finance, accounting, marketing, etc. since the field is so vast. However for many, this does not expose them to the actual positions or types of companies where they would thrive and be passionate about. These specific positions are less advertised to students, especially those who are not in co-op programs.

As a creative business student, I found an interest in the field of retail for many reasons after working as a Merchandise Assistant at TJX for my first coop term. The best part of my position was learning about the complexity of buying, and gaining a better understanding of each level of the business. Whether I was organizing samples, analyzing different styles, or shipping items out of the office, I was constantly surrounded by product, which is inspiring and allows for consistency in corporate vision. In this position, you are able to understand the stores operations in more depth by working with labels, store layouts, marketing tactics and more.

At TJX, it is common for a new grad to begin as a Merchandise Assistant or Allocation Analyst. The Merchandise Assistant is responsible for getting the goods from the vender to the warehouse, and the Allocation Analyst sends the right product to the right stores. Both receive extensive training and as an Allocation Analyst, this education is called PASE (Planning and Allocation School of Excellence) which is twelve weeks long and provides training in-class, in-store, and on the job. There are many opportunities that come from this program since planning and allocation is such a large department at TJX. The PASE program provides participants with an excellent overall foundation of the off-price business model and the retail industry.

If you are passionate about brands and style, flexible, organized, and strong in self-directed learning, then you have the potential to be successful in retail. On top of this, you must be a strong negotiator and have to be able to build relationships with vendors and colleagues. The culture at TJX enforces strong relationships and working with others, everyone at TJX is very willing to help out with tasks and share their knowledge. In a career at TJX, you will be given all of the tools and support to be successful in your role. There are also many opportunities to move positions, and you will only move once you have all of the proper skills. TJX is a wonderful environment to learn and continually advance your skills in the retail industry. Being a highly successful company, there are many opportunities to see different sides of the business and your opinion will always be heard.