

Joseph's Remodeling Solutions Internship Report

My summer of 2016 was spent working side-by-side with Joseph Sumpter, owner of Joseph's Remodeling Solutions. Working side-by-side with the owner, I was able to really get a firm grasp of what it's like to own your own business. I learned the day-to-day tedious tasks and challenging obstacle that most every day employees may never know. Each week I attended meetings, solved problems, worked on projects, and learned everything about the business world from office organization to team management and finance. Each week was a new learning experience and a new business obstacle, and being a part of the decision making and solution processes was the most rewarding feeling. The many things I encountered and new aspects of business I was exposed to made it possible to learn more than I thought would ever be possible in a single summer.

On my first day at work I hit the ground running. As I walked into the office I was informed that the workers' compensation auditor would be there that day, interesting. I was immersed in the world of insurance on the first day. The auditor was unkind to say the least. He had no respect for others and refused to make eye contact with anyone but the owner. Watching Joseph handle this was like watching a well-rehearsed play. People skills are an invaluable asset, and this truth was demonstrated on my first day of work. The way Joseph talked to this impossible auditor, and the way he treats his team and customers is the real reason his business is a success.

I often traveled with Joseph to customers' houses to close a deal, watching him work as a salesman and a contractor. I learned that an entrepreneur has to wear many hats, has to be a "Jack of all trades." Dealing with difficult customers taught me that "you catch more flies with honey

rather than vinegar.” With kindness is the best way to run any business. Joseph taught me that running a business is not about making money, it’s not about being the best at what you do, and it’s not even always about doing what you love. Running a successful business is about serving those around you, improving your community, and leading by helping others.

Joseph, like every business owner, constantly came to impasses, finding challenges that he didn’t personally have the answer for. This is a testament to the fact that we as humans are constantly learning, constantly improving. He demonstrated a skill of which I have always believed is one of the most useful skills in business. This is the ability to recognize a weakness, recognize a problem, and find someone to answer it for you. Henry Ford, founder of the famous Ford Motor Company, was once put on trial, and at the stand the issue of his lack of education arose. Ford simply explained how it’s unnecessary for him to know everything, as long as he can find someone who knows what he needs to know. At the push of a button Henry Ford could have an expert in any specific field at his desk to solve any problem he faced. If every owner of every company spent his or her every moment solving all of a company’s problems, not a single fortune 500 company would exist. Joseph, in an attempt to find outside support in his decision making, tasked me with a reading assignment on how to influence people. After leaving the office to embark on a two to three hour mission to gain the knowledge to solve the problem, I returned and reported my findings. Flawlessly executed, that is delegation at its finest.

Throughout the summer, Joseph encountered multiple potential new hires. I joined him in the interview process and learned the ins and outs of what an employer looks for in a new hire, and why. In my experiences, I found that an employee must be right for the company as well as the company right for the employee. It’s important for the organization’s mission to be clear, and

it's even more important that the new hire fully believes in that mission and is passionate about it. A passionate team working towards one unifying goal that can be applied to all roles in the business is crucial to success.

I learned the importance of a drug-free workplace, a safe work environment, and an upbeat company culture. The culture of a company is its brand, and I learned that it's imperative that the brand of a company, the sum of experiences associated with a company, is what makes loyal employees as well as loyal customers. The idea of a company's brand being the sum of experiences one has with a company rather than its logo was introduced to me in a social media workshop that Joseph and I attended in an attempt to improve the company's social media coverage and website productivity. After the workshop we brainstormed ideas to improve our media infrastructure.

The largest project I overtook during the summer was the companies Best Practices Manual. I was given the task of creating the infrastructure and method of slowly bringing the manual to life in the company. I worked one-on-one with team leaders and Joseph, teaching the team how to create Best Practices and brainstorming the best techniques for success in creating a lasting and effective policy. The challenges I faced during this process were interesting. I saw first-hand the challenges associated with the use of technology and the older generation. To help integrate the Best Practices, I had several meetings with team leaders and project managers in order to show them how to use the technology needed to create this new policy. Along with this challenge, I ran into a problem of illiteracy and continued to find a means to work around and integrate an illiterate team member in a project solely focused on policy and paperwork.

The summer of 2016 has been a leap in the way of my progress in the business world. During my internship I felt as if I was a business leader myself for eight weeks. Joseph's natural ability to make the people around him feel a great sense of importance, I noted, is one of the many qualities of an outstanding leader. In my future, whenever I find myself in any position of leadership, I will look back and remember the example that he made. With whatever endeavors I undertake, I will know that as long as I lead a life of generosity, kindness, focus, dedication, and humility, then success will cease to be a question. The lessons I've learned at Joseph's Remodeling Solutions will forever guide me in my future career. This internship has been invaluable and has facilitated a personal growth that I believe could never have been duplicated in any other work place. I will forever be grateful for the opportunity given to me by Joseph Sumpter, my donor(s), and the University of the South. Thank you all for such a life changing experience.