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Winter Water Factory, Brooklyn, NY
Summer 2014

This past summer, I had an amazing experience working as an intern at Winter Water Factory, a small business based in Brooklyn, New York. Winter Water Factory specializes in designing, manufacturing, and distributing organic screen-printed textiles. Their main products are baby and children's clothing. However, they recently expanded to home goods such as interior fabric and home accessories, as well as an adults' clothing line. Winter Water items are predominantly sold in clothing stores and specialty boutiques worldwide, and supplement retail space with online retailers such as *Diapers.com*. As a small-scale business, Winter Water works with many independent agencies, including different printers, manufacturing factories, and freelance personnel in charge of marketing and financial works. The company takes pride in its bold and whimsical signature prints, which are printed on certified organic fabric and crafted 100% in the USA into beautiful designs. Their commission to high-quality and sustainable manufacturing process has been recognized and featured in *Martha Stewart Living*, *Earn Shaw Magazine*, and several famous blogs. Winter Water recently won the *Best New Product Award* at *NYNOW* Winter 2014 Exhibition, one of the biggest trade shows for small brands and designers to promote their products to retailing stores from all over the world.

Running my own business has always been a dream that orientates my studying plan and career path. I learned and found much inspiration from the two owners of Winter Water Factory: Stefanie Lynen, designer and in charge of sample production, and Todd Warnock, in charge of daily and other operations as well as mass production. The hands-on experience working on all of Winter Water business aspects, from product development and business planning to production and distribution, has substantially widened my perspective of a practical business world.

Since my internship coincided with the company's continuation of their Classic 2014 collection, launching of Fall 2014 collection, and development of Spring 2015 collection, I

was involved in every part of this small business. I primarily worked with the Classic collection. My duties consisted of managing physical inventory to ensure correct stock number, checking fabric inventory to help come up with production-making schedule, and packing, shipping, and fulfilling other special customer services for immediate orders from both wholesale and retail websites. Additionally, I assorted and shipped items requested by magazines and bloggers for photo shoots and online features, and assisted in Winter Water photo shoot on their new women's clothing line. Winter Water participated in the Brooklyn Flea every Saturday, granting me another weekly mission. I managed and reported the market's inventory values, and prepared for Flea stocks every Friday by checking online inventory, pulling items off online websites, and customizing them with specific price tags. Helping out at the Flea offered me direct interaction with Winter Water customers and gave me a sense of their preferences so I was able to adapt the rack accordingly. In August, launching the Fall 2014 collection was our main concern. We had to ship our goods out by mid-August, and launch them on two wholesale and retail websites by the month's end. I took charge of managing this inventory, and got the opportunity to visit Jomat, a Brooklyn cut-and-sew factory and Winter Water's long-time partner. There I saw how fabric was cut and assembled together to make a complete Winter Water piece. I also created cutting tickets on Adobe Illustrator software to inform the factory about the numbers of production for each style. While wrapping up production, I received newly made items from the factory, counted and sorted them by styles and sizes, kept track of inventory on a spreadsheet, made sure all wholesale pre-orders were filled accurately, and shipped them within a very limited amount of time. The first two weeks of August set the records of orders shipped by Winter Water Factory: in only one day, Mr. Warnock and I were able to ship out about \$15,000 worth of orders. After all wholesale orders were filled and all extra items were counted and recorded, I uploaded fall items on the company's two websites by carefully going through each item to find if there was any misinformation. Finally, towards the end of my internship, I also had the opportunity to assist at the annual *NYNOW* gift show, where Winter Water Factory showcases products to stores and

other exhibitors. To get ready for the Winter Water booth, I organized samples and prepared special gift sets and display, set up decorating materials, and helped man the booth for two days. This was my first exposure to a comprehensive marketplace for fashion-forward, design-driven products in a competitive industry where thousands of designers and retailers from everywhere exhibited and advertised their brands. Thanks to the chance to represent Winter Water Factory to introduce our items to retailers, speak with stores, distributors, and magazine and blog representative, take their wholesale orders, and observe other business, I learned a great deal about presentation and interpersonal skills. The show was my incentive to strive harder and more audaciously, as it demonstrated how start-up and small business enter the market to endorse their products and expand their targeted audiences. Through these wide-ranging responsibilities, I was able to perceive business operations from a more thorough and realistic standpoint, in which the jobs are not always exciting or easy, but rather labor-consuming and tedious. Packing for the flea market every Friday or bringing orders to the post office before 5:00P.M every day were monotonous, but integral to the running of the business.

Mr. Warnock was aware that I am an Economics major, so the first question that he asked me on the first day was, “Are we making a lot of money?” That is when my Economics and accounting knowledge came in handy. My final project was to consolidate the company’s financial documents and report an inclusive summary of their revenues, which had grown momentarily over the past few years. Since the company has different collections within one tax year, it is complicated to identify revenues of each collection. I first experimented a new income statement on Classic 2014 collection. With Mr. Warnock’s help, I examined the company’s monthly expenses in detail, and compared the numbers I accumulated on the spreadsheets with numbers on existing invoices and bills. Eventually I distinguished costs for each collection. After that, I exported sales reports from their three resources of sales – retail website, wholesale website, and the Flea, to get the most accurate revenues. I also closely inspected the company’s operating expenses, and separated true operating cost and owners’ personal expenses. I

summarized these expenses in the monthly expense spreadsheet and came up with a format to automatically sync all numbers to the master income statement so it would be easier for Ms. Lynen when she checked the files. As a result, the company was able to see the cost and profit coming from an individual collection. Since experimenting with the new income statement for Classic collection was a success, I then proposed a new master file for all three collections. This new version was drawn from the previous files. I separated cost of goods sold (COGS) and operating expenses to present Winter Water's profit and loss in manufacturing products. This emphasized the need to reduce these costs. In addition to working with revenue and expense statistics, I also ran different sales reports, and used my Microsoft Excel skills to present best-selling item/pattern/style for different categories, and analyzed sales numbers over different periods and collections. Mr. Warnock and Ms. Lynen used my analysis to decide what patterns and styles to make in the future. The company was also looking forward to starting its screen-printing business on canvas and Belgium linen fabric for interior design, to tempt a high-end market. During the developing stage, I researched fabric printing and spoke with representative of MetroPrint, a renowned printer in Brooklyn, on true costs of materials, tools, and operations. I then suggested a complete business plan that included a full list of estimated expenses and projected future revenues of the company with different business options. Besides hands-on daily tasks, these finance and business planning assignments aided in further honing my current computing and accounting skills.

One of my most interesting experiences was learning screen-printing techniques and graphic design. Ms. Lynen and Mr. Warnock are expert at screen-printing and using Adobe Creative Suite to produce appealing images and digital artwork. Before the internship, my graphic design skills were basic, so they both offered me numerous tutorials and simple assignments in Adobe Illustrator to improve this skill set. One of the tasks was using Illustrator to trace real images of animals, flowers, and hand-drawn patterns for the Spring 2015 production development. My final project in this area was to design my own prints and screen-print the

designs on T-shirts to mass-produce my signature items. Prior to this project, I learned about the whole screen-printing process through helping print fabric for Spring 2015 samples, from mixing ink for colors of fabric, to hand-print patterns on blank cloth rectangles. Thanks to this first trial, I did not encounter any major difficulties in my own printing project, since they taught me how to operate the entire process. I spent several weeks working on Illustrator to sketch a rough draft of my ideas on the computer and perfect it with Ms. Lynen and Mr. Warnock's advice. After that, my next step was to print my designs on transparency sheets, and, depending on the size of the screen, piece them together to form a continuous print. Then I "reclaimed" old screens, in other words cleaning and readying the screen for photo emulsion. After the screen and the transparency sheet were ready, they were placed together and vacuum-sealed in a high-power exposure unit. The screen was then exposed to light, and since the emulsion is light sensitive, the parts covered by the black shapes on the transparency stayed soft while the rest of the emulsion hardened. After exposure, I scrubbed, washed, and dried the screen, revealing the transferred print. The final step was to use a "squeegee" to apply ink on the screen, which was placed on top of the shirts. This process took a full day, and I was very satisfied with the final products – beautiful T-shirts with my print and my logo, an initiation into the hopeful future of my business career.

Interning with a company growing at an exponential rate like Winter Water Factory was such a valuable chance for a first-year student like me to get hands-on business practice in the real world context. Exciting works like design and screen-printing as well as labor-intensive business routines like filling web orders, inspecting financial paperwork, and proposing cost-friendly alternatives not only sharpened my technical skills in graphic design, marketing, and advertising, but also truly deepened my understanding of practical business. This internship significantly influenced my intended career path, which is starting my own business that involves my passion for digital arts and fashion. I also learned a lot about communications, networking, and interpersonal skills, which are essential in setting up helpful relationships and connections. I am happy to announce that Winter Water Factory has offered me a full-time position after I

graduate in May 2017. This fall, I hope to continue my work at Winter Water Factory as a remote freelance employee assisting the company in its finance and accounting area. In the end, I am glad that I played a great role in contributing to the growth of the company, and thankfully come back to the mountain with a lot of knowledge, experiences, and unforgettable memories.