

Dolma Jewelry

This summer I was lucky enough to be able to work for a jewelry company in Atlanta named Dolma. Sewanee graduate Ashley Logsdon, class of 2007, founded the company shortly after she graduated. Ashley's semester abroad in China during her junior year inspired her to use her creativity combined with her major in economics to start her own pearl company. In the beginning, the company was very small and run out of the family home. Ashley's mother was the bookkeeper for sometime and the company focused on sales through home shows. When her sister, Shannon, graduated from Sewanee in 2009, she became the Vice President of the company and took over the bookkeeping role that their mother was filling at the time. The two sisters run the company out of a home office as well as a booth in a showroom in downtown Atlanta. They have changed their focus away from home shows and have redirected their efforts to a wholesale company. From the beginning, Ashley and Shannon have traveled to China every few months to handpick cultured freshwater pearls to create the pieces of jewelry that the two of them have designed.

Ashley and Shannon were both Economics majors during their time at Sewanee. Ashley is able to speak Chinese because of classes she took at the University and met vendors and suppliers she could both trust and communicate with. A driver in Tibet gave her the nickname Samkidolma, which means foresight. Ashley's nickname became the namesake for the company. The vision behind Dolma was to create a pearl company with a twist. Ashley and Shannon aim to take pearls from grandmotherly to runway at an affordable price. They cherish the beauty of their pearls and are obsessed with the unique characteristics each pearl possesses. While the company does carry the traditional classic strands of pearls, they also design jewelry for all people. Dolma carries bridal, children, and holiday lines along with day and night jewelry.

During this internship, I wore many hats. Since the company is so small, I was able to do tasks from marketing to jewelry making. I photographed the jewelry for the website, catalogues, flyers and other brochures. I created materials on Photoshop that were then passed out to retailers, customers, and sales representatives. I feel that becoming proficient in the Adobe program was a great skill to be able to acquire while at my internship. I had never used the program before, but by the end of the internship I was very comfortable using the program. In addition to marketing materials, I became the company's web presence by updating the twitter and facebook pages. The Logsdons have been in the process of taking their personalities out of the company and making an online character that could embody the company. They have named her dolmaniac. She is fashionable, trendy, and gives advice on what to give as gifts or what the weekly picks are. I tweeted as if I were dolmaniac to advertise what was going on in the company as well as get the followers excited for upcoming products and events. On Facebook, I advertised the new locations that Dolma jewelry was popping up in as well as uploaded pictures to give fans a sneak peak of the upcoming collections that were becoming available.

The bulk of my time spent at Dolma revolved around creating their website. The company had outgrown its old server and needed to upgrade to a better host site. My website responsibilities included uploading pictures, inserting product information, formatting links, tweaking the code, designing the images for the home page, and more. Because the host site was the same as what we have been taught to use through my art class blogs, I was able to navigate the controls fairly easily. With the help of the Webmaster I became proficient in how the back end of the site worked. Creating the website was a gratifying task. I had to face a new issue daily and had to take the time to problem solve and work around the problem. When I was through editing the site, I had a concrete example of all the time I had spent at the computer.

Along with the in-office tasks that I was assigned throughout the summer, I was also able to participate in the sales aspect of the business. In July, the Atlanta Mart has a large market for vendors and retail buyers to come together to buy and sell their products. Through the market I was able to meet other company owners who gave me advice about pursuing my future career. I was able to learn retail techniques from people who have been in the business for many years. I contacted retail stores after market to follow up, as well as contacting old clients to inform them about new products. The duties I took on at market were unique in that I did the same work as Ashley and Shannon. We all took turns doing what would normally be considered "intern tasks" and also meeting and pitching the pearls to retail clients. To further cement my role in the company, Ashley and Shannon went as far as to create a business card and company email for me so that I could be contacted by retailers.

This internship was everything I wanted out of a summer job. Because of my art background I had the creative skills for design purposes. The Photoshop knowledge I gained will feed back into my art major and help me create projects in the future. Creating the marketing materials gave not only experience but also pieces to add to my book for future interviews and job applications in the advertising industry. Similarly, photographing the jewelry gave me photography experience in a studio setting. It was exciting to be able to use the techniques and abilities Sewanee has taught me to help benefit a company while at the same time learning more to take back with me to school.

I absolutely loved every minute of this internship. I have had several jobs throughout the past few years and have never found anything I was interested in. For the most part I only went to work because it was something I had to do. Yet, at Dolma, I looked forward to every morning, never minded staying late, and enjoyed all the tasks I was given. Ashley and Shannon were the best employers I could have asked for. They were both genuinely interested in every idea I had and took my input seriously. In

addition they both wanted to help me become more marketable for future employment.

They treated me as more than just an intern but as an equal part of their company.

This internship definitely helped steer my career path. I was mainly interested in the opportunity because of the marketing aspect. However, after working for the business all summer I became very fond of small business and became a fan of the retail world. I was very impressed to go into a small business owned and run by young women. I feel that business of that sort is rarely around and successful. However, Ashley and Shannon have the drive to push their company forward. I credit Sewanee 100% with this achievement. They made contacts with professors, vendors, and employees through the school. So while the internship was helpful in terms of helping to guide my in my journey to become a working adult, it also reaffirmed the purpose of being a Sewanee student. It opened my eyes and was a reminder to embrace every moment and opportunity I have up on the mountain.