



Interview with Ardena Gonzalez, September 1, 2011

Where did you work?

I worked for three months at *Element*, a young, urban, clothing brand, located in the south of France. I worked primarily in the design and merchandising departments; however, I helped in odd jobs throughout the entire office.

What did you do?

My main tasks consisted of reviewing and updating the catalogues; unpacking, organizing, and hanging up samples for the showroom; updating sales information, helping at photo shoots, and checking production samples for quality control. I also helped create mood boards and inspiration for the future collection, which the designers began to work on during the last month of my internship.

What did you learn through your internship?

I learned a lot about how an apparel company functions and the process that goes into creating what we later buy in stores. In particular, I saw how market-oriented brands such as *Element* function, and was surprised to see that sometimes sales representatives' view of a specific market may carry more weight than the designers'. There are always ways in which processes or jobs can be improved, and any company needs to be constantly changing to be able to compete in an incredibly competitive market.

What did you like best about the experience?

The most exciting part of my internship was a trip to Lisbon for the brand's annual sales meeting. At this three day event, sales representatives from across Europe were invited to view the new collection for Spring/Summer 2012. I helped organize the fashion show that kicked off the event, and spent the following two days helping the designers present every item of the new collection to sales representatives from different regions. This was an incredible experience to see how a brand interacts with its sales forces, and how new lines are launched before they are ordered, put in production, and sold in stores.

What advice do you have for students who are looking for internships or looking for work?

Send as many resumes out as possible. You don't lose anything from trying. I sent over 20 resumes before I was given this incredible opportunity, and I probably could have sent another 20 more before getting an answer from anybody. I also highly recommend using your contacts within family and friends. I told everybody I could think of that I was looking for an internship, and fortunately had a great support system that put me in touch with a lot of interesting people and companies I would not have had access to otherwise. I also recommend taking full advantage of the career services at SLU. It's important to get the right advice on what to include in your cover letters to make them stand out, and on how to format your resume in the right way.

What advice do you have for other students as they begin work in a new environment?

Don't take things too personally, especially when you're only going to be working in a company for a short period of time. Most people in the company will want to help you and welcome you as part of the team; however, don't expect it from everybody. There will be those who only see you

as a temporary addition, and might not be as encouraging as you'd expect. Be respectful to your boss, show professionalism and responsibility, and most importantly, show enthusiasm in whatever task you are given, no matter how menial it might seem. When I left my internship, the one comment many co-workers said to me, was that they enjoyed seeing me put enthusiasm and interest into my work. They liked the fact that I was curious about how things worked, willing to learn, and always ready to help.