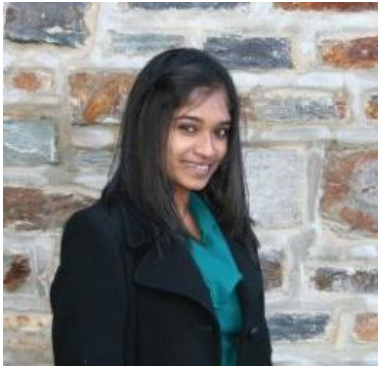


Sikha Sajeev, Demand Planner at Abercrombie and Fitch, Shares Insights About Her Role and The Retail Industry



MEMP Alumna 2012

By Shreevaishnavi Venugopalan



A recent MEM Graduate from Duke, Sikha Sajeev works with Abercrombie and Fitch as a Demand Planner. She did her undergraduate in Computer Science and Engineering from the National Institute of Technology, Warangal. Immediately after her bachelor's, Sikha decided to earn a degree in the Master of Engineering Management program at Duke, an interdisciplinary focusing on both business and technology.

“Sikha, how have you been? How was your day at work?”

“I am doing great, Vaishnavi. My day at work was as fascinating as it has always been.”

“Looks like you are thoroughly enjoying what you are doing. What led you to choose the Retail Industry?”

“I did my schooling in the Middle East. I pursued an undergrad degree in Computer Science & Engineering at NIT, India. During my senior year I got actively involved in managing the National Level Cultural Festival and a National Level fashion competition for my university. It was during this time that I realized that I wanted to get into management without completely letting go of my technical background (yet!). That led me to joining Duke's MEM program. Although I knew that it would be very demanding and challenging, I had always known that I wanted to work in a retail/fashion industry.”

“You seem very passionate. What does your role demand out of you on a given day?”

“I forecast the business trends for A&F on a daily basis. I work closely with IT and the business division to help with a smooth communication and implementation of business requirements for the company.”

“What in your opinion are the most valuable skills required for a Demand Planner to be successful?”

“Hard work, adaptability, team work, initiative to take up more work, and a will to learn something new from scratch. I have a background in computer science so my technical skills help with working with the IT department and my exposure to MEM helps me work with business too.”

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“The retail industry is a tough nut to crack compared to several other industries. What do you think are the biggest challenges that students face who are interested in entering the retail industry and a demanding planning role?”

“I think it would help to have a strong background in forecasting and a passion to work in the retail industry. Background in retail would help too.”

“If someone is interested in this field, what advice would you like to give them in terms of courses and publications?”

“Courses that are related to working with a lot of data would help. Social events such as career fairs and Tech Connect are very helpful for networking.”

“I’m sure that will help students make their course choice. What are some common roles and titles that involve similar kind of work as a Demand Planner?”

“Roles that involve working with a lot of data such as Business Analyst and Data Analyst. These roles involve similar work as Demand Planning.”

“Are there any challenges a student will face who would be interested in joining the luxury brands industry or FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods)?”

“The company is very selective. They look for candidates with the right background and a blend of skills. They also look for candidates who are *genuinely* interested in retail. A&F has a liberal work culture. But since it’s retail we have to adhere to many rules pertaining to the retail industry. Plus A&F has a lot of smart young employees so there is a lot of good challenge and competition. One should be very motivated and be willing to work really hard to be successful at A&F.”

“It was great talking to you about the retail industry and demand planning as a specific role. I appreciate that you offered time out of your busy schedule to talk to me about your role and career path so far. I am sure this will help the current students interested in making a career in either the retail industry or an analytics role.” ■
