Job Title: Coordinator, Purchasing & Merchandising (Apparel & Custom Orders)

Department: Print + Retail Solutions

Reports To: Manager, Purchasing & Merchandising Strategy

Jobs Reporting: None

Salary Grade: USG 6

Effective Date: August 1, 2019

Primary Purpose
The Coordinator, Purchasing & Merchandising (Apparel & Custom Orders) is accountable for the purchasing of merchandise for the University of Waterloo’s W Store locations and wstore.ca, with a focus on university-branded apparel and custom orders. The incumbent will work with the Purchasing & Merchandising team and the Purchasing & Merchandising Working Group to develop merchandising strategies, and is expected to provide leadership in these settings with respect to his/her areas of expertise.

Key Accountabilities

Purchasing & Vendor Management
- Researches and analyzes market and product trends for categories that are relevant to Print + Retail Solutions’ (P+RS) customers, and makes recommendations regarding new products and new lines that would help P+RS better meet customers’ needs
- Makes purchasing decisions and plans product collections with cross-merchandising opportunities in mind and in conjunction with knowledge of customers’ demographic and psychographic profiles
- When placing orders that include university branding, monitors and enforces the appropriate use of University of Waterloo registered trade-marks
- Researches, develops and maintains a database of vendors for product sourcing and for the development of University of Waterloo brand-specific merchandise and ensures that all vendors comply with P+RS and University of Waterloo ethical business practices and guidelines
- Negotiates prices and purchasing terms with vendors, with the goal of maximizing benefit for both P+RS and customers
- Maintains a deep understanding of evolving vendor offerings, production timelines, turnaround times, product knowledge, limitations and abilities and coordinates timely arrivals for time-sensitive goods
- Regularly monitors product and vendor performance, manages conflicts and disagreements, addresses concerns and makes recommendations regarding how best to manage vendors when there are ongoing issues
- Attends trade shows, conferences and vendor meetings as required

Merchandising & Inventory Management
- Performs timely and accurate stock adjustments and chargebacks to ensure effective inventory management
- Works closely with the General Merchandise Coordinator to monitor inventory levels and advise on price changes, new arrivals and discontinued stock
## Job Description

- Assists with managing the product life cycle: research, forecasting, procurement, pricing and promotional strategies, display and discount/clearance strategies
- Utilizes strong understanding of financial reporting and data analysis in decision making and analyzes retail performance of apparel SKUs, inventory levels, seasonal demands, market trends, cost and retail pricing thresholds, financial budget, margins and delivery timelines to maximize inventory turnover
- Creates detailed fashion assortment planning documents for each season, highlighting prices, mark-ons, item numbers, PO numbers, vendor numbers, delivery dates, FOB costing, quantities, etc.
- Especially for apparel items, but for any product category when needed, develops recommendations, planograms and sample displays that the Store Operations team can implement in various retail locations – including providing hands-on support as needed
- Provides guidance and trains P+RS colleagues as needed on effective display strategies and leveraging cross-merchandising opportunities, with the goal of maximizing sales and inventory turns

### Custom Order Management
- Responsible for all aspects of the custom order program, including facilitating customer meetings, providing quotes, sourcing promotional merchandise, order fulfillment, and completion of transactions
- Collaborates with the Manager, Business Development & Marketing as needed to ensure consistency and optimal customer service for customers
- Provides relevant and timely quoting, purchasing, invoicing and logistics services to customers, taking into consideration tight timelines, budgets and order requirements, managing up to 50 separate orders at any given time
- Maintains a deep understanding of customer demographics and their wants and needs, in order to offer a relevant and compelling product offering that positions P+RS as the campus supplier of choice
- Conducts analysis of external competition in the promotional product sector in order to provide competitive pricing, appropriate product selection and excellent services
- Maintains a detailed database of current and completed custom orders including PO details, invoices, art files and quotations

### Special Events
- Creatively supports the promotional planning process for P+RS special events (e.g., pop-up shops, in-store promotions, sales events, etc.) through recommendations related to product features, pricing, inventory availability and procurement constraints
- When required, assists with planning, implementation and supervision of special events

### Collaboration
- Interacts regularly with all P+RS staff and supports cross-promotion of products and services
- Establishes and maintains strong partnerships and relationships throughout the university and the affiliated colleges, to help P+RS achieve its goals, while ensuring that P+RS is represented professionally
- Works closely with the Manager, Business Development & Marketing to build and maintain new relationships and generate new revenue streams
- Collaborates with P+RS e-commerce team to select merchandise to be sold online, create web identifiers and provide recommendations on online merchandising
**Job Description**

- Collaborates with the Accounting & Financial Analysis team and IT to improve purchasing and inventory processes, determine gross margin targets and achieve performance goals
- Works with P+RS Shipping/Receiving and Central Stores to ensure shipment and invoice accuracy, timely delivery and effective management of overstock
- As part of the Joint Planning Working Group, provides input and direction on product launches, promotions and ways to increase customer engagement
- Assists as needed in other areas of the day-to-day operations including year-end inventory preparations and counts, supporting the development of marketing strategies, convocation services, and general customer service support

### Customer Service & Leadership

- Commits to positive interactions with all customers and ensures that all customer inquiries are handled in a professional, timely manner; and in cases when customers should be redirected to other staff, the incumbent will ensure that the redirection is complete and that the customer is not left without service
- Provides customer service support to, and shares product knowledge with, customers and on- and off-campus partners in the W Store
- Models the values of the P+RS department in interaction with internal and external partners
- Assists in the creation of and adherence to P+RS’s standards of excellent customer service
- Provides coaching, training and operational support, along with functional direction and oversight, to Store Operations staff as needed (e.g., visual merchandising, POS support, inventory management, customer service, supervision), including periodically during weekends, evenings and at pop-up shops
- In coordination with the Coordinator, Purchasing & Merchandising (Supplies & Gifts), oversees and provides direction to the Purchasing & Merchandising Assistant to ensure that his/her daily tasks support team goals and accountabilities
- Contributes to goal-setting and strategic planning for the department and implements those goals both independently and as part of various cross-functional teams

### Required Qualifications

#### Education

- College diploma or university degree in business, economics or administration, preferably with a concentration in strategic merchandising, visual merchandising, supply chain management and/or retail operations (equivalent combination of education and/or experience will be considered)
- Formal training in customer service, merchandising and open-to-buy are an asset

#### Experience

- Minimum three years of experience working in a retail setting, with accountability for achieving sales goals and targets, gaining purchasing and/or merchandising experience, and providing customer service
- Minimum one year of experience creating and executing visual merchandising plans in relevant product categories (e.g., apparel, gifts, stationery)
Job Description

Knowledge/Skills/Abilities
- Business acumen, critical thinking and analytical skills
- Excellent written and verbal communication, interpersonal and relationship-building skills
- Intermediate knowledge of MS Office
- Demonstrated ability to use and learn new database and scheduling software (e.g., Visual Ratex, Point of Sale)
- Familiarity using Adobe Illustrator is preferred
- Demonstrated skill with product analysis, visual merchandising and inventory management
- Ability to work quickly and accurately, while remaining organized and paying close attention to detail, in a fast-paced environment
- Comfortable managing multiple simultaneous projects (e.g., several custom order accounts all placing order with concurrent deadlines)
- Knowledge and ability to manage duties, customs, brokerage, shipping and international exchange rates

Nature and Scope
- **Contacts:** Beyond connections with Print + Retail Solutions colleagues, the incumbent has regular contact with customers, students, campus groups, off-campus industry peers and suppliers, and is expected to develop and maintain positive, professional, constructive relationships and beneficial vendor relations.
- **Level of Responsibility:** Responsible for maintaining positive sales and inventory performance for specific product categories and custom orders. Analyzes data in order to make good decisions, develops marketing and merchandising plans, develops and maintains relationships, sources new merchandise, and partners with new vendors.
- **Decision-Making Authority:** This position has decision-making authority for the items outlined above. Authorization with respect to the purchase of merchandise for resale to a maximum commitment to any single transaction up to $40,000. Purchases exceeding this amount will be forwarded to the Manager, Purchasing & Merchandising Strategy or delegate (see University of Waterloo Procedure 1, Contracts and Agreements).
- **Physical and Sensory Demands:** This position requires exertion of physical sensory effort resulting in slight fatigue, strain or risk of injury. For example, some lifting, bending, twisting, stretching and repetitive motion are required from time to time, in order to move equipment and fixtures and to display products for sale. Attention to details, accuracy and verbal communication with customers, co-workers and management. Multi-task environment requires excellent organizational skills and ability to prioritize, to ensure timely, efficient completion of tasks.
- **Working Environment:** This position works in a typical retail store and office environment. There may be unusual hours or schedules, extended weekend hours, or weekday extended hours with varying volumes of work at different times of the year. Some travel may be required for trade shows and industry events.