Report on

Books-A-Million







In the year 1917, a fourteen-year-old boy with a dream began what turned out to be one of the countries’ largest retail bookstores. That boy was Clyde W. Anderson who lived in the little town of Florence, Alabama. Mr. Anderson opened up a news stand that did well enough for him to invest his earnings to start the Bookland Company and in the 1980’s the first Books-A-Million (BAM) was constructed. Today, Mr. Andersons’ son is the current chairman and chief executive officer of the company. In a recent interview one of the BAM’s president Terrance G. Finley said, “Our vision has been to offer our customers the books they most want at the best price.” This mission statement has been the key to the success of the company, from the beginning and continues to be today. BAM not only runs bookstores, but in most of the locations there is a Joe Muggs where customers can relax and have a coffee while they read. Also, the online store at www.booksamillion.com generates a substantial amount of revenue for the company.

The organizational structure of the company follows the basic structure of management as shown below.

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| **Terry C. Anderson**  Director and Chief Executive Officer and President,  American Promotional Events, Inc. | **CORPORATE OFFICERS** |
| **Ronald G. Bruno**  Director and President,  Bruno Capital Management Corporation | **Clyde B. Anderson**  Chairman & Chief Executive Officer |
| **Albert C. Johnson**  Director and Independent Financial Consultant  and Retired Partner, Arthur Andersen LLP | **Terrance G. Finley**  President & Chief Operating Officer |
| **Dr. J. Barry Mason**  Director, and Professor,  Culverhouse College of Commerce  The University of Alabama | **Douglas G. Markham**  Executive Vice President/Chief Administrative Officer |
| **William H. Rogers, Jr.**  Director and Chief Executive Officer, President, & Chief Operating Officer,  SunTrust Banks, Inc. | **Brian W. White**  Chief Financial Officer |

First line managers report to a district manager, who reports to a regional manager, who reports to a top manager. BAM has divided its stores into three different regions and within those regions the number of districts varies depending on the amount of stores in each state. Currently BAM has over 200 stores in operation and they span throughout 31 different states. More information about BAM can be obtained at www.booksamillion.com.

Basically all of the decisions for changes in BAM stores are made at the corporate level and then flows down the chain of command. But the first line managers do have authority to make some minor changes to their stores. However, when it comes to any major changes all requests have to go through the chain of command to higher management. I interviewed Beth Roberts, General Manager of the local BAM that I work at and asked if she ever had to go through higher management to get anything approved. Her response was yes, and a good example of that was when her store needed to open up some space in the front of the store. Before they could proceed with any work the store leader had to seek permission from higher management because the work would entail discarding an entire section of approximately 11 bookshelves. She then submitted a request to the district manager for approval then the request was forwarded to the regional manager for final authorization, before any remodeling or construction was made. BAM does offer some empowerment to employees. A good example would be, that managers make certain cashiers what they all a “red badge” which allows them to do returns for customers and gives them the power to make changes that typical employees couldn’t. But for the most part, customer complaints must go to a manager, and the manager does not have the authority to take care of it then they ask a district manager for assistance.

Being an employee of BAM definitely does have some benefits. But, the benefits do differ depending on whether you are a full-time or part-time employee. Full-time employees can qualify for company paid life and accidental death and dismemberment insurance, a vision plan, dental plan, and a medical plan. Each plan varies depending on if it is for the single employee, or if it includes their family. Team members that have worked for BAM for more than one year can also qualify for short, long, or optional long-term disability. Another benefit for full-time employees is being able to purchase company stock at 15% discount. Part-time and full-time employees both qualify for pet insurance, pharmacy discounts, gym membership discounts (through Gold’s Gym), banking discounts (Regions Bank), and their 401k retirement plan.

One of the main focuses of BAM is to get customers to join their Millionaires Club Discount Card. This card costs twenty dollars and gives members at least a 10% discount on all goods in store and in the Joe Muggs portion of the store. Employees are given a seventy-five cent incentive for each discount card that they sell, and if they reach the set “service leader” goal for a week then the amount becomes a dollar twenty-five per card. In addition to the discount cards, customers are also entitled to sign up for a free 3-month trial of three different magazines when they pay with a credit or debt card. For every magazine subscription an employee gets they are paid fifty cents.

When a BAM store is looking to hire new employees they have set guidelines that they must follow. First, the general manager of the store scans the internet database for applicants who have scored high on the performance simulation test, and must meet the job qualifications requirements. Next, is the in person interview. The length of the interview depends on how in depth the interviewing manager deems necessary. The interviewee is asked questions about certain situations that may happen on the job and is evaluated based on their response. If the applicant passes the interview stage then they must have a background check done. The background check process can take anywhere from one week up to three weeks. Once their background check is cleared the interviewee must come in to fill out and sign all the necessary paperwork required by BAM. Finally, the new employee is ready to begin intense training. The first seven days of training consists of taking an online course each day and then having on the job training of the course they learned about that day. At the end of each day the new employee must have a manager sign a log confirming they have completed the task.

Although, BAM is not completely committed to social responsibilities they are loyal supporters of local schools by providing weekly story hours, offering discounts on library material, and ordering bulk shipments of books on classroom reading lists. BAM’s website has an application for all donations, which is mostly geared toward local churches, schools, and other charities. The application states the main focus of their donations, which is, “giving to qualified 501(C) 3 charitable organizations and non-profit educational institutions whose primary mission is to encourage and promote reading, literacy and education.”

Also, in the local store that I work at, each December our store collects money for the Salvation Army. This is done at the cash register, when customers check out. All cashiers are required to make a plea to customers for donations for The Salvation Army. This is the only reoccurring fund raising that the company participates in. Towards the end of the year each store is given a goal of how much money they should strive to raise for the Salvation Army charity. Of course, there are some days when donations are more and some days the donations are less. Regardless the company still manages to generate a good amount of money for The Salvation Army each year.

Overall and from the perspective of a current employee of BAM, working at the local store can be enriching and exciting, but like with any job it does have its good and bad days. I encourage reading a book and continue to support book stores!

**List of References**

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