Quality Control of Spices  
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About the Workplace

I completed my practicum at a local spice company called “Vanns Spices” located at 1716 Whitehead Road in Gwynn Oak, Maryland 21207. I chose this company mainly because I agreed with their mission. As stated on the company website, it is a family owned business that strives to provide high quality spices as well as seasoning blends to their customers whether they be a fan of cooking or a professional chef. In addition to this, the company is also committed to sustainability, health, developing new products, and more. (About Vanns)

Impact

During my time as an intern at Vanns Spices, I would say that I impacted the company in an educational way and it had a very personal impact on me. The education impact was that I was able to help make the company more organized as well as bring in a new perspective.

One way I did this was by making the training slides. In doing this task, I also taught myself a lot of the material that was important for the employees to know. Another task I did was fill out spec sheets, this was very important because the sheets provided a way for customers to know what to expect from each of the blended products. Educating the customer is very important for any business and I feel that from the work I did I was able to help in this area.

Some evidence of my impact on the company would be the articles from the UMD library database that I added to the company server that I thought were interesting so my supervisor could read them since I was asked to conduct some research on sanitation in my free time. The spec sheets I completed were also on the server so that they could continue to be revised and filled out in order to provide better customer service.

However, I do believe the company had a bigger impact on me than my work on the company. I learned so much that I couldn’t learn anywhere else like people skills and what it takes to be in the quality control department. By observing how the company was able to utilize sustainable ideas, I was very inspired because I always struggled with figuring out how I could connect food science and sustainability. Through this experience I was able to grow into a better student.

Future Work

Since I have completed this practicum, I hope to go on and continue interning in other aspects of food science like perhaps research and development, more specifically product development. This stems from the fact that one of my favorite parts of this practicum experience, once conducting the sensory analysis on the different blends of spices and working in the test kitchen coming up with new blends. In addition to product development I also hope to go on and work with a company with a larger food science department so I can see more of what people in that field do. There might be aspects I still don’t know about. However, in my coming experiences in interning, I hope to discover these.

Issue Confronting Site

Food security and environmental stewardship were very important issues to the company I worked for during my practicum experience. The company’s commitment to these issues was evident throughout my practicum.

The company valued food security by providing a number of organic products to its customers. Although, organic products are more costly, they are made with organic crops and usually contain fewer additives than non-organic spices so they are generally healthier for you. The U.S. organic industry continues to grow as you see more and more organic products on the shelves in supermarkets all over the country. With this however comes a high demand for farmers to meet, and thus shortages of organic products do become an issue.

One way that the company embodied environmental stewardship is by encouraging recycling of all sorts. There are a number of recycling bins in the cafeteria as well as a box in the copy area. During my time there, I saw the company recycle their old phone system when a new one replaced it and they also recycled all of the wrapping paper from the annual holiday party. Recycling is important because it is a step towards reducing the company’s ecological footprint.

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