Saturday to Tuesday, November 16-19, 2019
Hyatt Regency O’Hare & Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, Chicago
Held in conjunction with PLMA’s Annual Private Label Trade Show
Did you know that private label is a $170 billion business and that one of every four items sold in supermarkets is a store brand? The growth of store brands over the past decade has been powerful. All signs point to that continuing: In 2018, store brands grew four times as much as national brands.

Personnel requirements of the industry are growing, too. Career opportunities with manufacturers and retailers abound. Can store brands be your first step upon graduation? To help you find out, PLMA offers an opportunity to learn the fundamentals of the store brands business.

Classes include an overview of retailing and store brands development in the U.S. and internationally, the role of store brand manufacturers and of the chains who sell them, generational marketing, e-commerce, and store brands innovation. There is also a tour of nearby retail stores who have developed superlative private label programs.

The mentorship phase connects each student, one on one, for a part of a day with a manufacturer representative whose firm is exhibiting at the Show. That experience is complemented by each student spending part of another day, one on one, accompanying a participating retail buyer while walking and at meetings on the Show floor.

Places in the 2019 class will be competitive. Space is limited to 60 highly-qualified students from colleges throughout the country who are interested in exploring a career in the store brands industry. PLMA covers related expenses, including transportation to and from Chicago and on-site hotel accommodations, during the program.

Students are identified as candidates by their university or department. The student completes an application to be reviewed by PLMA, which makes the final decision on admission. While experience in retailing is not required, it can be helpful. On the application, strong consideration is given to the student’s career goals and interest and curiosity to learn about the industry. For more information, please contact your university adviser.
Store brands. It’s a multi-billion-dollar business you’ve probably never heard of. Yet, odds are you not only know the products but buy and use them regularly. Most consumers do.

Store brands are not an intentional secret. It’s a business that’s been too busy expanding to shout about itself. It’s also an industry with burgeoning career opportunities and outstanding employers. Among them are manufacturing companies large and small, and retailers from coast to coast and around the world who are doubling down on store brands as a key strategy for success in a challenging marketplace.

You also know the key players in the space, they include supermarkets, drug chains and mass merchandisers, as well as club stores, dollar stores, convenience stores, specialty food chains and deep discount operators. Other retail channels, from health and beauty to sporting goods, from office supplies and home improvement and housewares to pet care, are also experiencing a surge in store brand development.

The process works the same in all channels. The store oversees the supply of products on which it puts its own corporate name or brand. It then positions the products to compete head to head on its own shelves against national brands. The secret sauce is a keen eye on product quality, innovation and shopper needs. The desired outcome is a win-win for both consumers and retailers in greater savings and sales.
As for career opportunities, a good place to start is with stores that sell store brands, or private label, products. Major retailers, including Aldi, Walmart, Amazon, jet.com, Target, Costco, Kroger, Ralph’s, Fred Meyer, Fry’s Marketplace, Safeway, Albertson’s, Vons, Acme, Jewel-Osco, Publix, HEB, Meijer, Wegmans, Giant, Stop & Shop, Food Lion, Trader Joe’s, Whole Foods, Walgreens, CVS, and Dollar General, among others, all offer comprehensive and sophisticated store brands programs as do many regional and local chains.

Supplying these retailers are manufacturers who produce products based on the retailer’s own specification. They fall into five classifications:

- Large national brand manufacturers that utilize their expertise and excess plant capacity to supply store brands.
- Small, high quality manufacturers that specialize in particular product lines and concentrate on producing store brands almost exclusively. Often these companies are owned by corporations that also produce national brands.
- Major retailers that run their own manufacturing facilities and provide store brands for themselves and, in a few cases, for other retail chains as well.
- Regional brand manufacturers that produce private label products for specific demographic markets.
- Large, nationwide manufacturers of store brands across a range of food and non-food product categories that supply a multiplicity of retail chains and channels in the U.S. and internationally.
Student and adviser comments

Following are comments from students who participated in the 2018 Program:

“I learned more from this program in a few short days than I learned in many of my semester-long courses. This program taught me so much about a career in private label and validated my career interests in working for a retailer in their private label sector.”

“This was the best experiential learning opportunity I’ve ever engaged in.”

“I think the program was extremely beneficial and I’m grateful to have attended. It was amazing and provided an overwhelming amount of insight and opportunity.”

And comments from advisers of participating colleges:

“Incredible opportunity. I learned so much as a faculty member and I am excited to talk about this industry as a potential career option for my students.”

“It was a program unlike any other, offering hands-on experience and education into an unknown industry.”

“The program was beneficial for myself and my students. It allowed us to learn about a large industry that we had very little knowledge about beforehand.”

“Great variety of guest speakers and relevant topics. Access to manufacturers and retailers was important to the students. The Trade Show booth and floor access was valuable.”
For more information, contact:

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