

Day in the life of an Operations Director

When I was invited to write this piece, it made me wonder how I could possibly sum up what I do, describing every aspect of my job, on just one page.

Yes, I'm responsible for 240 stores and their staff, 18 senior field managers, 2 head office functions, not to mention the supply chain review and strategy we're just embarking on, but what exactly do I do?!

This prompted me to consider the year ahead - our plans for the business - and my specific role within it.

I'm sure you won't have missed the less than positive coverage HMV's trading performance has attracted over the last year or two, nor for that matter the intense media scrutiny surrounding the whole sector that we operate in.

If we were to take every article at face value, we, and every other 'entertainment' retailer out there might as well shut up shop and throw in the towel.

I've been doing this job for just over 12 months now, and although it's been a bit of a 'baptism of fire' at times, let me tell you that no towel will be coming in from the HMV corner. With the far-reaching strategy and plans that we now have in place, I know that we will turn the corner.

So, anyway, what do I do?

Adapt

The key, of course, is to always be ready to adapt to change quickly, and to make sure that the people who work with me think 'outside of the box'. Like most people, I hate that cliché, but we must believe that nothing is impossible. I've always encouraged my people to come back to me on a regular basis with the ideas to implement and maximise any new opportunity for the business that comes their way.

The world of music, film and games has changed a great deal in just a few years, and we need to adapt to respond more effectively the future.

Communicate

Communication is absolutely critical - the key for me is making sure that everyone understands the objectives for the coming year, both strategically and at grass roots level. I'm sure you've heard the story of when JFK visited NASA, and asked the cleaner, "what do you do?", and she answered "I'm helping to put a man on the moon". Our Moon is "Profit before Interest and Taxation" improvement, to be achieved through improved management and control of our underlying base business, and a vision for the future of HMV via our strategic projects over the next 3 years.

Develop Talent and focus on motivation

Someone once told me to "Focus on your staff first, before the customer". Being a retailer since I was a young lad, I found this hard to understand. He then went on to

explain that happy, well developed staff will, at all times, give the best possible service. Of course, he was right!

I could preach customer service standards for ever, but if we have a demotivated team in any of our stores, the service in that store, will be poor, whatever I may say. A well developed and motivated team will give you great service.

Challenge everything in a positive manner

My job is driven by very hard and fast numbers. The buck (quite rightly) stops with me. To that extent, it's therefore essential that my direct reports and myself not only challenge each other and their teams to achieve any targets they're given, but we also challenge our support functions in the business to deliver a first class offer from a product point of view, great advertising to drive traffic from Marketing, and a comprehensive training package - both in store and externally - via our Learning and Development department.

So that's Adapt, Communicate, Develop and Challenge

AC/DC, that should be easy to remember for an entertainment retailer!

Rock n Roll!

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