JULIAN MERCER

CATEGORY MANAGER

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Category Manager with 12+ years across beauty, home, health, and office retail. Sets category strategy, negotiates vendor terms, and uses sales and margin data to grow share while keeping assortment, pricing, and inventory in balance.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Category Manager Mar 2022 - Present
Ulta Beauty, Bolingbrook, IL

- Own a skin care category with 140 vendors, resetting the assortment each season with merchants and lifting category sales 9% over two years.
- Renegotiated terms with 12 top vendors and secured added promotional funding, which improved category gross margin by 1.3 points across the year and kept service levels steady.
- Built a pricing and promotion calendar with finance and marketing that cut deep-discount events by a quarter while keeping store traffic steady.
- Reviewed weekly sell-through by store cluster and moved slow items to markdown early, trimming aged inventory by 18% before the holiday season.
- Present category results to the vice president each quarter, tying assortment and pricing decisions to sales, margin, and guest feedback.

Category Manager Feb 2019 - Dec 2021
Williams-Sonoma, San Francisco, CA

- Managed the cookware and tabletop category through a supply disruption by qualifying six alternate vendors, which held in-stock rate above 94%.
- Launched an exclusive collection with an outside design partner that reached 6% of category revenue in its first year on the shelf, with the design partner sharing launch costs.
- Rebuilt the category scorecard around margin, inventory turn, and return rate, giving buyers one shared view for weekly decisions and shortening the weekly review meeting.
- Coached two assistant buyers on forecasting and vendor negotiation, and both of them were promoted within eighteen months of starting.
- Partnered with the e-commerce team to align online and store assortments, which retired 90 duplicate and inactive listings in one season.

Senior Buyer Jun 2016 - Jan 2019
Walgreens, Deerfield, IL

- Bought for the cold and flu category, planning seasonal volumes against three years of sales history and regional weather patterns.
- Cut private label packaging cost by 7% by consolidating suppliers and standardizing pack sizes across eight items in the line while keeping shelf appearance consistent.
- Analyzed basket data to place complementary items together, which raised units per transaction in test stores by 4% over the control stores.

Assistant Buyer Jun 2014 - May 2016
Staples, Framingham, MA

- Maintained item setup, cost files, and purchase orders for 600 office supply items while keeping a clean record in annual audits and responded to buyer requests the same day.
- Built weekly sales reports in Excel that highlighted shortfalls and helped the buyer reorder before stockouts reached the stores and flagged risks in the Monday meeting.
- Supported two annual line reviews by preparing vendor comparisons, price benchmarks, and shelf space proposals for the buying team.
- Tracked vendor delivery performance each month and escalated late shipments, which brought on-time receipts from 88% to 94% across the 40 vendors on the buyer's list.

CORE SKILLS

Category strategy | Assortment planning | Pricing and promotion | Vendor negotiation | Margin management | Sell-through analysis | Private label | Planograms | Forecasting | Inventory turn | Excel | SQL | Tableau | Cross-functional leadership

EDUCATION

B.S. in Business Administration, Indiana University Kelley School of Business, Bloomington, IN

CERTIFICATIONS

Certified Professional in Supply Management (CPSM) | Six Sigma Green Belt