Yanbal International: Business for Social Impact
GU Impacts Fellowship – Lima, Peru
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About Yanbal

Yanbal-UNIQUE, as it is known in Peru, is headquartered in Lima and was started by Fernando Belmont in 1967. Since then, it has grown to become a multinational corporation selling both cosmetics and jewelry primarily in Latin American markets. Yanbal uses the direct sales model in which its salesforce sells products to the final consumers in order to make a profit. Yanbal has instituted a ladder of advancement for its salesforce involving higher profits, better incentives and increasing benefits in exchange for loyalty to the company, incorporating more salespeople and increasing sales. While direct sales cosmetics companies have struggled from competition by storefronts and shopping malls in the United States, this model is still profitable and popular in Latin America.

A Corporation With A Social Mission

For the most part, Yanbal’s salesforce is comprised of women of low socio-economic status. Many did not have the opportunity to receive a quality education and do not have flexibility in finding work because they must care for their children. Additionally, machismo and traditional perceptions of women belonging in the home are prevalent and present a barrier to female financial independence. By working with Yanbal, many women have become empowered by helping to support their families, gaining leverage in household dynamics and eventually managing their own group of salespeople within Yanbal as Directoras.

Life in Lima

The majority of Peru’s population lives in Lima, a sprawling city with distinct neighborhoods and a vibrant culture that is reflective of Peru’s diversity. Lima is a place you can find ruins in the midst of office buildings and an incredible cuisine influenced by the Amazon and flavors brought by Asian migrants. I found myself frequently visiting the malecón, the sea wall with beautiful ocean views, exploring art museums and enjoying the delicious food.

Commercial Operations: Capstone Project

I worked within Yanbal-UNIQUE’s Commercial Operations division with the commercial quality team. After an initial orientation and opportunities to learn about the company and its products through visits to its factories and distribution centers, I began to focus on my project.

Yanbal uses Salesforce software to maintain communications with the salesforce and keep track of cases. In doing so, Yanbal is able to identify primary complaints, doubts, potentially unclear policies and frequent problems. This data is essential to help the company become more efficient and increase the value of employment for its salesforce.

The payments division has resisted using Salesforce, which means there is a delay in communication regarding cases of problems with pay and resolution processes are inefficient. My task was to research why the salesforce was contacting the company with regard to their monthly commission payments, when they made contact and what their frustrations were. The goal of my research was to develop qualitative data to support the use of Salesforce as well as identify key issue areas and possible entry points for additional solutions.

Key Takeaways

I think it is important to continue to think about whether corporations with a social mission can always maintain focus on their higher goal when confronted with the desire to increase profits.

However, I found that Yanbal has had a real impact on the lives of many of the individuals within its salesforce. Many women expressed having new levels of confidence and feeling a strong sense of pride in their work. Many Directoras I met spoke of the ability to support their families in new ways, such as by sending their children to college. I intend to continue learning more about how companies can align their business model with social impact.

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