

## Insider Careers Conference

### Volunteer Brief: Business case study Group Activity Workshop

Thank you for volunteering your time to contribute to The Brokerage's Insider Careers Conference hosted by Deutsche Bank.

The support of volunteers is vital to these workshops, giving students an in-depth insight into the various careers in the city. During the conference, our young people will experience a variety of workshops, which have been designed to help them maximise their key skills and past work experience so that they can make the most of the opportunities available in the city in the future. Most of the young people who are taking part have had some work experience in the past, however they lack confidence in their ability to communicate the skills that they acquired from their past experiences to help them secure future roles. Similarly, although the students have some idea about the industries in the city, they are unsure about the variety of roles available and would like to gain further insight into where they could go in the future.

We are expecting around 60 young people between the ages of 17 and up, who are about to go to university or straight into work. All our young people come from local state schools and meet our eligibility criteria. They come prepared to make the most of the conference as they have all self-selected to be here.

The group activity session is the final workshop of the day and comes after a networking lunch. In the morning, the young people undertook a session on recruitment processes and psychometric testing, where the young people were helped to develop their skills by assessing their competency and confidence in completing psychometric tests. This was then followed by a session on interviews, where the young people were asked to consider how they present themselves to employers in interview situations. The group activity session you will take part in follows on from this, in that it helps the young people to better understand the reasons behind different recruitment processes and enables them to put into practice any feedback received from the interview skills session.

Assessment centres can be a minefield of tests, and there are many pitfalls that young people can fall into without knowing. The aim of this session is for the young people to experience an assessment centre style group activity and receive some valuable feedback.

#### Session Breakdown - Auditorium

<b>5 min</b>	<b>Introduction to Assessment Centres given by The Brokerage</b>
<b>40 min</b>	<b>Case study activity</b>
<b>40 min</b>	<b>Presentations of the case study and feedback from volunteers</b>
<b>15 min</b>	<b>Final words to wrap up</b>

The group activity follows a general format of the type of activity often found at recruitment selection days and will last one hour, followed by 25 minutes for the presentations. The young people will be given a case study in small groups, (you will receive this prior to your participation) to read through. There will be 5 minutes for the young people to read the document silently by themselves, and then 55 minutes for them to work through the case study together. Their aim is to give advice for the fictional company Kutztown Meat Packing Corporation and deliver a presentation which details their

recommendations for the business based on the information they have been given. **You will be acting as an assessor on the day.**

Prior to your participation, The Brokerage will give a general introduction to Assessment Centres and we will then divide the participants into small groups for the activity, the size of the groups depends on how many volunteers are taking part but ideally each group will have 4-5 participants, with 2 volunteers overseeing each group.

## Your role

As an assessor your role will be to observe the teams as they work through the case study, picking up on positive behaviour and areas for improvement. When you are first assigned to your group, note down the names of all the young people in your group. They will be wearing name badges, but please ask the people in case they prefer to be addressed by another name. Each time you spot something that would be noted by an assessor, please note it down on the feedback sheet you will be provided with at the beginning of the workshop. As this is a mock assessment centre, please also provide ongoing feedback to the group so the young people can correct their behaviours as they go along. Stay engaged with the group and offer assistance within reason.

## Things to look out for may include:

- Showing leadership through paying attention to the timings given, guiding the discussion, setting a clear plan of action
- Drawing quieter team members into the conversation to get their opinion
- Listening to instructions – (e.g. 5 minutes will be given for the teams to go through the document by themselves, look out to see if the teams immediately start collaborating or if they run over time)
- Taking over and dominating the group discussion, speaking over others, ignoring other people's points
- Being able and willing to compromise
- Positive body language
- Failing to practice their presentation

Please note anything else that stands out to you as being particularly positive or negative.

At the end of the case study section, the young people will be asked to present their findings to the room in a formal presentation lasting no more than four minutes. Presentations will be strictly timed by Brokerage staff and they will be given a time check when they have 30 seconds remaining. **During the presentations you will take on the role of a judge, evaluating their judgements and findings, asking a question (each group must receive one question from the judging panel) and giving feedback to the groups at the end.**

## Advice on potential challenges and problems

The challenge most commonly arising in this sort of activity is shyness amongst the participants. Please encourage any especially reticent participants, by gently pointing out how this may come across at an assessment day. Equally, you may need to ask any particularly confident or talkative young people to take a step back or invite others into the conversation so that everyone in your group can have their turn and they can demonstrate their team work and communication skills.

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## Providing feedback

You will receive one feedback sheet to use in the workshop, where we suggest you note any comments/advice you would like to give to the students directly. After the conference, you will also be sent an online feedback form to complete, which is for your overall thoughts on the conference itself and your volunteer journey with The Brokerage thus far.

## Tips for providing student feedback

- Be solutions-focused
- Be specific
- Talk about the situation, not the individual
- Balance positive with negative

## Case Study

### Introduction

It is close to noon on March 20, 2000, and Leo Altamari, CEO of Kutztown Meat Packing Corporation, has just come back from his Monday morning staff meeting. The major agenda item was the discussion on irradiation of meat products. Leo was only too aware of the recent events surrounding the fatal incident due to the consumption of hamburgers contaminated with E. coli. Earlier in the week, he and the company's attorney, Al Cooke, had discussed an article in the journal Food Technology (Robeck 1996) about potential personal injury lawsuits and liability issues related to the sale of processed meat products. There had been an increasing threat from personal injury lawyers representing people who became ill or died from eating microbially contaminated food products. The article had suggested that food companies could be held responsible for failing to take advantage of advanced technologies, such as pulsed light and food irradiation, to enhance the safety of processed foods.

Reports issued by the Centres for Disease Control (CDC) suggested that anywhere between six and 33 million people are stricken with foodborne diseases each year. Although the food industry was doing all it could to prevent E.coli contamination of fresh meat, Leo was convinced that Kutztown Meat Packing should stay a step ahead by using advanced technologies. He believed in the hurdle concept as a means to decrease the risks associated with processed food products. He had done his own research over the past several months on the various technologies available to the meat processing industry to destroy E. coli in processed meat products. Along with Ken Franc, Vice President for Finance, he had met with consultants and vendors to evaluate irradiation and other technologies, such as electronic pasteurization developed by Titan Corporation, for possible use in meat processing. Titan had developed the "Surebeam" technology, which used electron beams generated from regular electric currents as a means to "sterilize" the product.

### Company Background

Kutztown Meat Packing Corp. is a medium-sized manufacturer of processed meat products based in eastern Pennsylvania. The company currently produces hot dogs, chicken frankfurters, sausages, and luncheon meat products. Their major markets consist of Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland. The company employs approximately 120 full-time employees and sales for 1998 came to over \$72 million.

John Altamari, Leo's grandfather, had started Kutztown Packing in the 1940s and the company had been in the family now for three generations. John Altamari had established a thriving local market for his processed meat products. Back then he also sold fresh meat from his store. With increasing demand for processed meat products, John built a larger processing facility in 1955. The local bank assisted the construction of this facility with a loan, and thanks to John's ability to keep overheads under control, the facility was paid off within seven years.

John's older son, Ken Altamari, took over the operation in 1961. He had a degree in Dairy and Animal Science, and had acquired good business acumen through years of experience working for the company. He focused his attention on expanding the market base within the north-eastern United States. The company's sales grew 225 percent during his tenure. His market expansion strategies had to be curtailed in the early 1980s, however, when the processing facility reached its maximum production capacity.

Leo Altamari, Ken's oldest son, took over the reins of the company as CEO in 1998. He had obtained a degree in Food Science from Penn State in 1985 and an MBA from Cornell University in 1987. He joined the family business after graduation. His father had ensured he was exposed to all aspects of the business by making Leo work his way up in the organization right from the processing floor.

## **Staff Meeting**

At the staff meeting Anita Alright, Manager of Research & Development, described some of her findings. She began by giving a brief history of food irradiation, pointing out that it was not a new concept. Research on the technology had begun shortly after World War II, with a series of studies conducted by the U.S. Army on the irradiation of fresh foods for use as troop rations. Since 1963, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had passed rules permitting irradiation to curb insects in foods and microorganisms in spices, and to retard spoilage in fruits and vegetables. In terms of the process itself, irradiation involved exposing food to a source of radiation, such as gamma rays from radioactive cobalt or cesium or x-rays. However, no radioactive material was ever added to the food product. The surgical products industry used the same technology to sterilize medical devices. Anita pointed out that research conducted at Iowa State University had shown that food irradiation was an effective tool to eliminate E. coli in meat products. The spice industry was already using the technology in the U.S. It was true that there were some earlier studies that showed development of "off flavours" in high fat food systems from irradiation, but Anita was convinced that could be controlled by reducing the dosage.

Ken Franc mentioned that it would require a rather steep investment to build an irradiation facility, but that it might be worth it if the benefits warranted it. His preliminary calculations showed that irradiation would not considerably increase the total processing cost of the product. However, he was unable to use any of the conventional rate of return calculations on this investment due to lack of reliable data. He stressed that it was relatively hard to get a good handle on the actual costs and returns from the investment, and that as a result the net present value calculations for the adoption of this technology were somewhat sketchy.

John Ford, Production Manager, pointed out that the employees might be a little concerned about working in a facility that had irradiation equipment—they might worry about their own personal safety. He was also concerned about how to store the highly radioactive sources and how to dispose of radioactive waste. John pointed out that instead of building

an irradiation facility at the plant, another approach might be to use a subcontractor's facility on a unit cost basis until the market was determined to be viable for irradiated products. He agreed to work with Ken to explore this option and to evaluate the related costs associated with it.

Sally Trump, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, was concerned about consumer acceptance of irradiation technology. Having worked for a food processing equipment company before, she was well aware of the benefits of this technology but she worried that the consumers might not be ready for it. She shared Dr. Bruhn's article (Bruhn 1995) from the Journal of Food Protection. A lack of general awareness of technologies and a strong consumer advocacy movement had plagued food irradiation technologies from their inception. Leo was aware of the hysterical responses from consumers whenever the word "irradiation" was mentioned. The idea of irradiating food seemed to signal a "gamma alarm" with the public according to some journalists, although many of these same people wouldn't flinch at the thought of sun tanning at midday and potentially exposing themselves to greater health risks due to UV irradiation. According to Sally, it was all a matter of perception, and of course the consumer was always right. She recommended that the company consider taking on a leadership role within the industry to educate the consumer and set the record straight on the facts of irradiation.

## Finale

Leo was aware of the difficult decision he had to make: Should the company pursue irradiation of meat products? As an MBA student, he had taken a course on the management of advanced technologies in which the instructor had stressed the need to walk a tightrope when adopting new technologies ahead of the competition. At the time he had thought it was all dollars and cents; but in his present job he appreciated the vagaries associated with the adoption of new technologies by food processing companies.

Leo wondered if his company should first educate consumers on the facts related to food irradiation. Here was an opportunity to set an example within the industry by initiating consumer education programs in order to twist the arms (and the minds) of consumers into accepting irradiation as a safe technology. There might even be some financial assistance available for this pioneering task from the American Meat Institute, the major industry trade organization, and perhaps from some federal agencies as well. But the big question was: Would consumers "bite" into it?

Leo thought a chat with Paula Green, the County Extension Director, might be helpful. Traditionally, consumers listened to and trusted extension agents more than all of the hype from the food industry. The Cooperative Extension Program at Pennsylvania State University had in the past put together excellent workshops to educate the public on current topics. He wondered if he should also talk to Alan Burnett from Metromedia, the company that handled print, radio, and television advertising for Kutztown Meat Packing. He would need to do that before the staff meeting next Monday, where they would discuss and formulate

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what steps to take next on this project. He also thought of talking to Suzie Dell from the company's Information Technology Department to further explore how they might put some of the educational materials and links up on the company web site. He pondered what plan of action the company should take over the next few months.

## Questions:

1. Describe the problem in this case?
2. What are the preservation methods currently used for packaged meat products?
3. How does irradiation preserve food products?
4. What are consumers' concerns regarding food irradiation?
5. What is the cost of irradiating food products and what is the payback period for the food company?
6. What communication strategy would you use to educate consumers on irradiation?

## Volunteering Timings

Volunteer slots	Careers Panel	Mock Interviews	Mock Assessment Centre	Networking Lunch	Careers Fair
9:30-11:00	(10:30 start)	(9:45 start)	(9:45 start)		
11:15-12:45	(12:15 start)	(11:30 start)	(11:30 start)		
12:45-13:35				(12:45 start)	
13:45-15:15	(14:45 start)	(14:00 start)	(14:00 start)		
15:45-16:30					(15:15 start)

Please read through our [Volunteer Code of Conduct](#) before the session.

We hope you enjoy the session! Please approach a Brokerage member of staff if you have any queries or concerns throughout the session.

## Volunteer Code of Conduct

The Brokerage ask that all volunteers contributing to our workshops carefully read and follow our code of conduct below.

- Volunteers will not be responsible for the welfare of participants and should immediately inform Brokerage staff of any concerns they have regarding the safety and welfare of a participant at a workshop.
- Business contact details can be exchanged however volunteers should not disclose their personal contact details to a participant or accept the personal contact details of a participant. If such a situation does arise, a Brokerage staff member and/or the accompanying adult with the participants should be informed. Any contact with participants after the workshop should be directed through the Brokerage.
- Volunteers are not required to answer any question they feel uncomfortable with; in return they should be sensible with regards to the information they provide and the questions they ask participants.
- Volunteers must not discriminate against, or show discriminatory attitudes towards, any race, religion, gender, sexuality or disability.
- Volunteers should be aware that they are in a position to which many participants aspire and should therefore behave appropriately and show respect to all participants and staff members.

NB: Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities and Child Protection Policies for The Brokerage are available in full on request.



## Volunteer Expectations

We have outlined the expectations of volunteers to make sure our opportunities are meaningful and successful. What we ask from you:

- I accept that I take part in the volunteering opportunity at my own risk, but participation is voluntary, therefore I have the right to withdraw at any time should I feel uncomfortable.
- Full guidance and instructions will be given, and I will comply with all instructions in relation to the programme in which I am participating, with note to safeguarding requirements and data protection.
- If you are unsure as to whether an approach or action is appropriate or not, I will first consult the facilitator or lead organiser before taking action.
- I understand that during my participation in the programme, I must take reasonable care for the health and safety of myself and reasonable care of the property of others.
- I accept that The Brokerage will not be liable for any loss, damage, action, claim, costs or expenses which may directly or indirectly arise as a consequence of my participation in the Insider Careers Conference
- I understand that The Brokerage will not pay any compensation or reimburse any associated costs, expenses or losses or accept responsibility for any changes deemed necessary relating to the volunteering programme. This includes cancellation if necessary.
- I agree to inform the appropriate Brokerage staff member as soon as possible if circumstances change and I am no longer able to participate in the volunteering programme, with ideally no less than one week's notice.
- I understand that I am representing my company within the Insider Careers Conference so I will act as an external ambassador for my organisation and uphold my company's core values.
- Whilst volunteering, I understand I need to keep work emails and calls to a minimum, and only responding if it is a business emergency.
- It is expected that you are expected to read any briefing notes sent out in advance of your volunteering opportunity before the opportunity commences.
- I accept that any photographs and video footage taken at the volunteering opportunity may be shared with The Brokerage and any partnering organization and may be used for promotional materials by the Brokerage. Therefore, I consent to the sharing of

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those photographs or films in which they feature, unless I otherwise specify at the event.

## **Data Protection**

The information you provide to The Brokerage will be treated in the strictest confidence and will be used only for the purposes of the administration of the activity and volunteer participation in it. The Brokerage will hold the names of volunteers in accordance with its internal data retention policy and only for as long as is reasonably necessary, for the purposes for which it has been collected.

For more information about The Brokerage, please visit: [www.thebrokerage.org.uk](http://www.thebrokerage.org.uk)