



Area Manager Q&A: Lucy Hutchinson, Brisbane

As an Area Manager for ALDI in Brisbane, Lucy Hutchinson is responsible for a network of 4 stores and 50 staff. In this Q&A she shares her insight into working at ALDI, the Area Manager role, and making an impact in the fast paced and ever changing retail environment.

How did you come to work at ALDI?

After finishing school I went straight to university in Glasgow to study English and psychology, before moving to Northern England to complete a degree in international business. In between the two I travelled a lot, working in hospitality and administrative roles.

In 2010, I moved to Australia with a degree in one hand and visa in the other. It was really challenging to break into the job market with overseas qualifications so I starting connecting with recruiters to help me get a foot in the door. My first big break was in community engagement and social impact for an energy company, but the resources sector was hitting a downturn and I was looking for something that would provide me with a really great career for the long term.

In 2013, my sister came out to visit me in the UK and said that she was considering leaving the police force to work for ALDI. And I said, 'ALDI? Like the supermarket?' But she talked a lot about ALDI's rapid expansion in Australia and why it looked like excellent company to work for. About a month later, she had gotten a job as an Area Manager at ALDI in the UK. So I thought I had better see what the fuss was about, and six weeks later there I was. So now we have that in the family, and it's the best job I've ever had.

What is a typical day as an Area Manager like?

No two days are the same at ALDI. On a typical day, I go into store and do compliance testing, like date and quality checking, ensuring that we have the right products in the right place in store and that they are priced correctly.

Once we have the general compliance testing out of the way, it's full steam ahead. I can be doing anything from posting a job ad, interviewing for staff, conducting training or sitting down with one of my Store Managers to plan for the month ahead. There are so many little things that can impact how a supermarket operates and it's those things you don't see that are the most important.

Some days at ALDI are about 95% people management – building a strong team, making sure everyone is working to the same goal, tapping into people's strengths and giving people opportunities for development. But at the same time you're running a business so you're also doing business analytics, strategic decision making, planning KPIs for the next year, reviewing targets for this year, working out what we need to achieve and what resources we have to do it.

What do you love most about your job and why?

Being an Area Manager fast tracks your career in teaching you how to manage people and manage multiple businesses. There is a huge amount of autonomy where you really feel like the business has instilled trust in you to perform the role to the best of your ability. That gives you such a huge sense of confidence professionally.

What I really love about the Area Manager role is its key function within ALDI of connecting our corporate office with stores. You also get a really great opportunity to experience different stores and the ALDI brand on a much larger scale, to ensure that our customers have the best possible shopping experience that we can provide.

But ultimately, the people that I work with are the best part about working for ALDI. I have some incredible colleagues who come from all different walks of life. We genuinely value each other's opinions and want the best for each other personally and professionally.

In such a fast paced role, how do you achieve work life balance?

At ALDI, you really know what you're in for and if you're up for the challenge it can be incredibly rewarding. Once you become an Area Manager the autonomous nature of the role does allow control over your own schedule and a degree of flexibility. I think it's really important that if you have a family or other commitments outside of work that you are really able to manage all of those commitments. Work life balance is definitely something that can be achieved at ALDI.

What are some of your biggest learnings on the job?

Once you become an Area Manager, what you realise really quickly – if you haven't already realised it – is just how important it is to learn the job from the ground up through performing the roles of your Retail Assistants and Store Managers. It really gives you the ability to empathise and manage your own expectations about what your team are capable of achieving and what they are up against on a daily basis. I've also learnt a lot about myself in this role, about what I'm capable and what I can achieve. You learn to back yourself because the business backs you so you have confidence in your decision making. And you're really able to quickly see the outputs of your efforts. In an industry that moves so quickly, that's probably one of my favourite things – witnessing a win that I've played a role in implementing at its foundations.

What advice would you give anyone interested in applying for an Area Manager role at ALDI?

ALDI is not a business that expects you to just specialise in one field. It implores its employees to bring with them their personalities, professional skillsets and emotional intuition and it's that one big package that makes a really successful Area Manager.

You get what you put into the Area Manager role, and if you're prepared to give it your all, it can be the start of one of the most rewarding career paths that you can choose. Even if you don't know where you want your career to go right now, ALDI is truly committed to investing in the personal and professional growth of its staff. There are a lot of opportunities to progress in so many different ways at ALDI.

To read more about the Area Manager role and to apply, visit;

<https://www.aldicareers.com.au/Careers/Corporate-Graduate/Area-Manager>