



Working at the GAP

The Gap, Inc. is America's largest specialty apparel retailer. The store was founded by Donald G. Fischer on one idea alone: "I created Gap with a simple idea: to make it easier to find a pair of jeans. We remain committed to that basic principle." Today, The Gap operates in almost 3,465 stores across the globe.

The idea for The Gap sprung out of frustration. Donald and Doris Fischer had bought and restored an old hotel and leased out one of its spaces to a Levi's salesman. The jeans Don bought did not fit and he made attempts to return them to department stores, but it was near impossible to find the 34 waist and 31 length jeans all in the same place. He thought he should make it possible, and the Fischers entered into the retail business. Doris came up with the store's name. Don had asked, "Like the generation gap?" and she replied, "No, just The Gap."

Founded on its simple idea in 1969, The Gap started out on Ocean Avenue in San Francisco, California on \$63,000. In just one year The Gap's sales reached \$2 million. Corporate headquarters then sprang up in Burlingame, California when a second location was opened in San Jose, California. In four short years The Gap has spread over onto the east coast of the United States with its 25th store in Voorhees, New Jersey.

The company evolved quickly and began acquiring other brands. In 1983, The Gap purchased the safari-themed retailer Banana Republic which was soon rebranded. 1994 saw the launch of Old Navy as a value chain. Forth & Towne came about in 2005 which was targeted primarily to women 35 and older. In 2006, The Gap ventured into online marketing, creating Piperlime, a footwear brand, and then in 2009 Athleta was created, focusing on women's athletic wear.

Today, the Gap employs more than 134,000 at more than 3,100 stores. The global company is worth \$15 billion. Company owned stores operate in Canada, France, Ireland, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Puerto Rico. Franchised stores operate in locations outside of those countries including Turkey, China, Australia, Oman, and many others.

The Gap brands are focused to target specific audiences. Banana Republic has always targeted upscale customers. The subsidiary has more than 500 stores globally and made \$2.5 billion in revenue in 2006. It is marketed as "modern, accessible luxury." Old Navy focuses on "fun, fashion, and value" and attempts to appeal to a younger crowd.

The Gap purports to support creativity and diversity in their workforce. The store offers positions at



their headquarters, as sales associates at their stores, as workers at distribution centers, and as call center employees at Gap Inc. Direct. Employees can expect merchandise discounts and the company offers medical benefits to include children, spouses and domestic partners. Part-time employees can even access medical coverage. There are 401(k) plans and stock purchase plans, as well as life insurance options and employee assistance programs which include counseling, guidance, and tuition reimbursement.

Social responsibility is promoted by The Gap. The company utilizes outsourced workers for clothing construction and manufacturing. The Gap has recently been awarded with a Just Means Social Innovation Award for the company's P.A.C.E. program. Personal Advancement, **Career Enhancement** targets the low-skilled females working in the garment industry and offers them training in order to advance in their industry. Nonetheless, The Gap has not escaped the typical sweatshop controversies surrounding most retailers. Despite The Gap's well-known desire to be socially just, the brand had been accused in 2007 of employing vendors who use child laborers in India. The Gap quickly denounced the claim, citing that they do not control every hiree by their vendors.

Today, The Gap remains America's largest specialty apparel retailer and continues to follow its original goal: making it easier to find the right pair of jeans.

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