

# MYSTERY RANCH Bozeman MT USA

Product Manager - Mission  
Recruitment Profile  
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## **The Mystery in MYSTERY RANCH**

*"The idea was to do something that matters. Not just to build some great stuff, but to build it in a way that made a difference."— Dana Gleason*

At its core, MYSTERY RANCH builds packs for men and women on a mission. MYSTERY RANCH packs are built for folks with a job to do, heading to extreme locations and carrying heavy loads. Their customers are their first priority. The team at MYSTERY RANCH thinks through every detail to make sure our gear performs as well as the users do and never gets in the way.

MYSTERY RANCH is built on a heritage of function, comfort, quality and durability. Since 2000, MYSTERY RANCH has been designing and manufacturing packs and load carriage systems for military, hunting, wildland fire, and mountaineering customers, with a focus on use-specific designs and hand-built quality. Based in Bozeman, Montana, MYSTERY RANCH is a global brand with worldwide production and distribution.

## **History**

In 1985, Dana Gleason and Renée Sippel-Baker founded Dana Design, the backpack company that would become recognized as the industry standard in load carriage technology. At its peak, Dana Design had three full-time production facilities in Montana, over 200 employees, and a global wholesale distribution network. Prompted by the need for capital to expand into wider markets and manage a growing company, Dana and Renée accepted an offer to sell Dana Design to the K2 Corporation in 1995.

After a few years of what they thought would be a skiing- and backpacking-filled early retirement, both Dana and Renée realized they still wanted to be in the business. When Dana's daughter, Alice, asked him to design her a new hip sack, he went back to the design room and found there were still some great packs that needed to be built.

Dana and Renée founded MYSTERY RANCH in 2000; they were officially back in the pack business. The hip sack Dana built for Alice was the beginning of what would become MYSTERY RANCH's patented Lumbar Wrap, and the designs for the NICE frame and SATL would soon follow. Though firmly entrenched in outdoor retail, Dana was approached by the Navy SEALs for custom packs in 2003, and MYSTERY RANCH began a relationship with the military that would significantly alter its business model and design strategy.

MYSTERY RANCH has expanded significantly over the years and continues to grow into new markets. Every product built is steeped in a history of innovation that spans four decades, and which is rooted in a dedication to designing the most functional, comfortable and highest quality packs on the market. With sales all around the globe, domestic and international supply chains and production, as well as a

burgeoning wholesale and direct-to-consumer business, MYSTERY RANCH has maintained their commitment to quality and innovation while continuing to grow and expand.

## **Product**

Great packs don't just happen, they evolve. MYSTERY RANCH packs begin as ideas from which prototype packs are born. These prototypes are then tested on the backs of users who provide both thoughtful feedback and rigorous use and abuse. Their input helps to shape several further rounds of prototypes until the team at MYSTERY RANCH reaches a product that meets their industry-leading quality standards. MYSTERY RANCH's quality and production teams then take over, with a dedication to making the highest quality backpacks available. It takes a designer with a history of innovative pack design and a dedicated team to orchestrate this evolution.

Simply put, MYSTERY RANCH packs are designed to help a person (whether a soldier, hunter, firefighter, or mountaineer) carry heavy loads with as much comfort as possible. To that end, MYSTERY RANCH packs are uniquely designed to support unusually shaped and unbalanced loads, like large weapons, firefighting gear, quartered game, or climbing equipment.

MYSTERY RANCH exists to serve people in the field who have real needs as users, users that expect their packs to provide essential functionality and that will last over the long haul. Distinctly made to serve a purpose, MYSTERY RANCH currently breaks down and focuses their product into four different categories:

### **Military:**

The military line of MYSTERY RANCH packs makes up half the revenue for the brand. The team works closely with top-tier groups of the military such as all elements of Special Operations Command (SOCOM), the Marine Corps, British SAS, and many other Tier 1 and Tier 2 forces around the globe. MYSTERY RANCH packs are well known in military circles for their superior quality and framing technology as well as their specialized design solutions for unique missions.

### **Fire:**

The Federal Wildland Hot Shot teams who take MYSTERY RANCH packs with them into the most extreme conditions are, not surprisingly, the hardest users of all the brand's packs. They are used to carrying water and fuel often for days on end in the most extreme conditions —putting MYSTERY RANCH's load carriage designs to the test each and every time. These packs do not disappoint and are continually sought after by the firefighters all over the world.

### **Hunting:**

MYSTERY RANCH hunting packs are made to handle heavy, potentially awkward loads for the Western Backpacking hunter. MYSTERY RANCH's patented frame technology is built to securely hold anything that needs to be carried, season after season. Whether a trophy mount, heavy loads of meat, or shed

horns, users are constantly raving about the comfort of MYSTERY RANCH hunting packs. Hunting has become the company's fastest growing category as the Hunting community has rallied around the innovative load carriage systems that MYSTERY RANCH is so well known for.

### **Outdoor / Mountain:**

With rapid growth internationally over the last 10 years, specifically in Asia Pacific, the Mystery Ranch Mountain line has begun to see strong adoption across the globe. While the MYSTERY RANCH brand is already a household name in Japan and Korea, the brand has begun to see steady traction in the North American wholesale market in both technical load carrying backpacks, as well as urban/everyday styles.

Once again, the most important aspect of the Mountain line is that it is built for the mission. Each pack is made with a specific end-user in mind and with a thoughtful consideration for what is being carried. MYSTERY RANCH packs are built to be exceptionally durable and efficient because they are made for people who depend on their packs in extreme situations and environments.

### **MYSTERY RANCH Culture**

The team at MYSTERY RANCH is youthful in age and spirit. They have been described as well-educated and eccentric outdoor aficionados who crave the expanse of wide-open spaces to play in, and a creative and dynamic environment to work in. It is safe to say that being in Bozeman is a huge draw for MYSTERY RANCH employees. In the summer, everyone is out taking in the endless opportunities for activities like hiking and mountain biking while winters have put Bozeman on the map for excellent skiing and other mountain adventure activities.

An important aspect to note is that MYSTERY RANCH believes strongly in taking a proactive and hands-on approach to product development and production. Quality and craftsmanship are highly encouraged across all aspects of the business, which is why they continue to prototype all designs in-house prior to production and continue to operate a production sewing facility at the Bozeman headquarters. It's not uncommon to see MYSTERY RANCH employees of any department whipping up a personal pack project on the production floor after work or on weekends. There is a deep respect for the quality and functionality of the packs made at MYSTERY RANCH and a true devotion to a pack built for the mission.

### **The Opportunity**

MYSTERY RANCH has built a company with a fierce and loyal customer following. Each MYSTERY RANCH pack is recognized for its quality, functionality, reliability and authenticity. The same terms can be used to describe the team at MYSTERY RANCH as well as the criteria used when assessing new employees at the Ranch. For this particular role, we are looking for a creative, thoughtful, and detail

oriented individual to guide the product creation process for the Mission business unit (Military & Fire product lines). At the heart of this position, we are looking for a proven leader who can continue the brand legacy of uncompromising load carriage, quality, and user-based problem-solving, while also adapting to the evolving market dynamics of different customer groups and the ever-changing process requirements of a growing business.

The Product Manager – Mission will manage all aspects of product line creation, design/development timeline deliverables, and go-to-market activities for the Military and Fire product lines. The Product Manager will perform careful data analysis and work closely with the Sales team and customers alike to understand the needs of the market. He/She will synthesize those needs into a cohesive product offering that meets brand and quality standards by working closely across all internal departments (Product, Marketing, Sales, Quality, Operations, & Finance) to deliver to internal business timelines and calendars. The Product Manager will manage a team of Product Designers and Developers to communicate the vision for each product and to oversee the accurate and timely output of design, prototyping, factory sampling, costing/pricing, and tech-pack deliverables. He/She will be a figurehead for the Mission business unit by inspiring those around him/her with creative ideas, thoughtful & data-driven analysis, a pragmatic approach to problem solving, and an inclusive, team-oriented style.

#### **Key Accountabilities:**

- Coordinate the process for sales & customer feedback and perform sales and market data analysis to scope new product opportunities within the context of broader business goals.
- Identify new product offerings and implement successful product line plans that deliver to category objectives for innovation, revenue, margin, SKU productivity, and brand image.
- Create & communicate clear and actionable design briefs for all new styles based on customer feedback, sales potential, market trends, and category positioning parameters.
- Develop & maintain a seasonal and in-process product plans in the Product Lifecycle Management system with achievable FOB target costs, suggested retail prices, and forecasted volume estimates.
- Manage Designers and Developers to calendar deliverables and ensure that all outputs are accurate and meet the requirements of the established Product Development processes and procedures.
- Maintain a comprehensive understanding of both material and production supply chain dynamics to inform the product design and development processes.
- Negotiate costing with factory partners to meet margin requirements and collaborate with Sales team members to establish pricing to maximize revenue and volume opportunities.
- Collaborate with the Quality team and Director of Product to ensure that all products have been strategically sourced to successfully balance quality and costing considerations
- Coordinate with the Operations team to ensure that up & coming product developments have been accurately accounted for in production capacity and purchasing plans.
- Work closely with the Marketing team to communicate up & coming developments and key feature sets in order to devise a successful go-to-market strategy for all new products.
- Present product ranges as needed at key sales launches and customer meetings, and industry tradeshows.

- Ensure that all designs have undergone the appropriate lab and field tests to meet both customer requirements and MYSTERY RANCH Fit For Use Guidelines.
- Maintain open lines of communication with all internal departments as they pertain to product within the Mission business unit.

### **Core Competencies:**

- Product lifecycle management, business unit management, and/or product development skills
- Understanding of calendarized product development and commercialization processes
- Expertise in manufacturing & product construction methods
- Commercial negotiation skills
- Public speaking and presentation skills
- Strong verbal and written communication skills
- Ability to navigate financial data and the key performance indicators of business growth and profitability
- Ability to work well with people and to maintain constant communication even when multi-tasking
- Familiarity with Microsoft excel and ability to perform data analysis
- Desire to work in a team environment
- Familiarity with sourcing and supply chain management

### **Qualifications & Requirements:**

- Minimum 5 years experience in Product line management, product development management, or business unit management
- 4 year college degree (or equivalent work experience).
- Experience working with factories
- Experience in packs, sporting goods, or tactical equipment development.
- Self Starter / Problem solver.
- Able to work/communicate in a culturally diverse environment.
- Flexible & pragmatic with a process driven approach to planning and execution
- Detail-oriented
- Dedicated to getting the job done while having fun doing it.

For additional information, please contact Adam Forest or Deb Mason at:

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