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## The Importance of Job Shadowing

Posted by Mollie Crist, event planning intern on Feb 18, 2010 in [Intern Posts](#), [Mollie Crist](#)



Have you ever been certain that you wanted to do something, only to try it out and find out it is not at all what you expected? Perhaps your freshman year you declared a major you were certain you wanted to pursue as a career. However, as soon as you started taking introductory courses you realized that it simply was not for you. Thus the importance of experience, my friends, and in particular, job shadowing.

There have been plenty of television shows and movies over the years that have showcased public relations professionals. Of course there is the well-known character of Samantha Jones played by Kim Cattrall in *Sex and the City* and most recently, a PR reality show, *Kell on Earth*, which gives viewers a glimpse into the world of high-powered fashion PR. As much as I enjoy these shows, at the same time I realize what I see on TV is probably not what my experience in public relations is going to be like. Thus why it is important to shadow a real life industry professional for a day or so, to get a feel for what that job is actually going to be like.

If you have had an internship, you may already have a pretty good feel for what your chosen career path is going to be like. However, maybe you want to see what another aspect of your chosen industry is like, or observe another career entirely. This is where job shadowing is extremely beneficial. You get to spend the day experiencing life as that person. You get a feel for what their challenges and responsibilities are and can apply them to yourself. For example, how would you handle what they are faced with on a day-to-day basis if you were in this position? You can learn a lot about yourself in a day participating in this sort of interaction.

For those of us approaching graduation, it's very important to shadow someone in an entry-level position. It might be more exciting and intriguing to job shadow someone in a higher level within the company, but shadowing an entry-level professional will give you a better perspective on what your career is going to be like following graduation.

*How do you feel about job shadowing? Is it important or inessential to your future career?*

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## Why Keeping It Simple is Effective

Posted by Mollie Crist, event planning intern on Feb 11, 2010 in [Intern Posts](#), [Mollie Crist](#)



If you are one of the millions of people who watched the Superbowl this past Sunday, you probably looked forward to the commercials just as much as the big game.

There were some pretty clever and memorable ads, but my favorite by far was the Google 'Parisian Love' ad. It was Google's first major step into television advertising, and in short, it was a huge success. If you missed it, you can find it on YouTube, but the point of this post is not to discuss the commercial but to use it as an example of why keeping things simple can be extremely effective.

The Google ad featured the search engine's simplistic design — the way we all see it whenever we go to Google.com. This was key because immediately it was relevant to all Google users. This is a major part of simplicity. Keeping the brand visible and easily recognizable right off the bat. It was aesthetically pleasing and uncomplicated.

Not only were the graphics of the commercial uncomplicated, but so was the message and storyline. The Google commercial proves that honest broadcasting is powerful and notable. This is something one should always keep in mind, whether it be networking, writing for a blog or improving your resume — the messages you send need to be significant but also straightforward.

Keeping your message simplistic is effective. We can all learn from the Google commercial in that uncomplicated and honest communication reaches the masses and more importantly, it sticks with them.

*What are your ideas and guidelines for keeping your messages simple?*

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## Peer Motivation

Posted by Mollie Crist, event planning intern on Feb 4, 2010 in [Intern Posts](#), [Mollie Crist](#)



As I have mentioned in a previous post, one thing that is for certain is the search for an entry-level job is a job in itself. The competition, is relentless and it can be very easy to find yourself discouraged and comparing yourself — possibly pretty negatively — to other individuals in the same position as you.

Here is a tried, but true piece of advice...you are your biggest critic. It's difficult to really listen to that, and myself included, it often goes ignored. You probably find yourself constantly sizing yourself up to those around you, in your classes, at work, in your internships, and so on. However, you can use these feelings in a positive way. Instead of thinking you are not “as good” as someone else, let them motivate you to work harder.

Often when trying to gain inspiration to write a new post, I come across some incredibly well put together blogs, both in content and design, often created by the very people I am competing with in the race for an entry-level job. For a moment I may think negatively about my own blog, but then receive a sudden surge of motivation to keep working to improve it. Not only that, but I also try to recognize what makes my blog stand out and is unique from the one I am comparing it to.

The same thing happens when I see incredible logos, resumes, and online portfolios. It makes me want to sit down and boost my Adobe InDesign and Photoshop CS4 skills, polish my resume, and refine the samples in and everything else about my personal online portfolio. However, I still strive to point out to myself what I can do just as well or even better.

*Have you found that your peers are your biggest motivating force to be better and stand out more? What sorts of things influence you to work harder?*

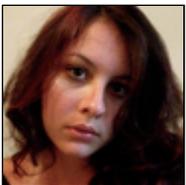
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## [Networking When You Are Introverted: How I Came Out of My Shell](#)

Posted by Mollie Crist, event planning intern on Jan 28, 2010 in [Intern Posts](#), [Mollie Crist](#)



For the most part, until my senior year of high school, I had issues with being shy. I did not really enjoy speaking in front of people and sometimes felt very uncomfortable when interacting with new people. However once I got to college, I quickly learned what is key in public relations, and that is networking. Networking can be difficult if you tend to be introverted, but the

connections you make can be vital to your future career. Even though I have come a long way since my high school days, at times I still have the tendency to be reserved. Here are some things I have done in order to pull myself out of my shell, especially in regards to networking.

- **Volunteered to coordinate an organization event.** I started becoming very involved in James Madison University's chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America during my junior year. One of the first things I volunteered to do as a member was to be a consultant for our organization with a large public relations firm, and arrange a visit for JMU PRSSA members with their Washington, D.C. offices. This allowed me to make a contact at this firm considering we planned the event for three months. Even if we did most of the planning through e-mail, I had the opportunity to meet the public relations professional I coordinated the event with beforehand. I made sure to connect with her after the event on LinkedIn, which brings me to my next point...
- **Began connecting with people via social media.** I believe that social media is an excellent way to network for introverts. Especially considering there is no face-to-face interaction, which can be the most intimidating thing for shy individuals. Twitter, LinkedIn, and blogs are excellent ways to exchange messages with industry professionals and to offer your opinion without feeling a lot of pressure.
- **Offered to attend an event where I would have no choice but to network.** Last semester, someone from the executive board of JMU PRSSA needed to attend a luncheon for our sponsor chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. I was elected as Historian of our chapter in April 2009. Every member of the executive board had a scheduling conflict and could not attend, except for yours truly. This meant I would have to attend the luncheon alone, with no peer support to rely on. Though I was a bit nervous about going by myself, I am glad I agreed to go. Not only was I forced to introduce myself and speak with people I had never met before, unbeknownst to me I had to speak in front of the entire luncheon and give a status report of what our chapter of PRSSA had accomplished in the past year.

Do you have the tendency to be introverted? If so push yourself to go out of your comfort zone and put yourself in situations you may normally be resistant to, especially when it involves networking. It will offer you a sense of accomplishment and a self-confidence boost, plus you will be making some great contacts that could possibly be very beneficial to you in the future.

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## [5 Simple Ways to Start Your Personal Brand](#)

Posted by Mollie Crist, event planning intern on Jan 21, 2010 in [Intern Posts](#), [Mollie Crist](#)



In my search for an entry-level public relations position I have realized the brutal truth...there is serious competition out there. With so many individuals in the same circumstances as myself, how do I make myself stand out? It's all in two words...personal branding.

“Logos and branding are so important. In a big part of the world, people cannot read French or English—but are great in remembering signs.” – Karl Lagerfeld

I found this quote from the genius fashion designer via his Twitter account ([@Karl\\_Lagerfeld](#)). In a world where it seems everyone is trying to land an entry-level job, I don't think there is a better way to rise above the fierce competition.

I first learned about the concept of personal branding when Heather Huhman, Gen Y author, columnist, mentor, founder of [ComeRecommended.com](#) (and now my boss), spoke to the James Madison University chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America. She had so many wonderful suggestions and ideas that I wanted to start branding myself right away. So, what sort of things did I do to create my personal brand?

**1. Created a personal blog.** This is one thing Heather mentioned that I previously had not thought of. However, for someone who wants to obtain a career in public relations, sharpening your writing skills should constantly be a priority, so it makes perfect sense. A blog is an excellent way to write about your passions in your spare time, and it can be immediately published to the Web. A lot of peers I have discussed this with have said, “But what do I write about?” The best topics are the ones you have strong opinions and feelings about. For me, my passions are public relations, music, and fashion, thus these are the topics I will continue to write about on my personal blog. It is also an excellent way to showcase your writing skills to potential future employers.

**2. Created an online portfolio.** While it is true that you should have a physical portfolio, sometimes it is more convenient to simply give a possible future employer a URL. Heather mentioned an easy Web site creator called [Wix.com](#). There are plenty of options out there, including buying your own domain name, however [I chose to use the free version of Wix for mine for the time being](#). On my online portfolio Web site, you can find my biography, my resume, as well as samples of work I have created in my college classes, my internship, and my current job. Also, there is a contact portion where you can send me an e-mail right from the site and find links to my LinkedIn profile, Twitter account, and personal blog.

**3. Created a business card.** You may be thinking, “I don't have a job yet. How could I have a business card?” Well, when you are out networking (which you should be doing, as much as possible), how is anyone to remember you without some physical representation of who you are? These contacts you are establishing are meeting individuals just like yourself constantly. Unless they have a truly extraordinary memory, they are more than likely not going to just remember a name and a face. However, if you add a personal business card to the equation, one that is eye-catching, it is more likely that they will remember you. So, what did I include on my business card? I tried to keep it as simple as possible, including a logo I created using my initials along with my name, phone number,

e-mail, and online portfolio address.

**4. Twitter.** I realize that there are some mixed feelings regarding Twitter, but the fact is that it's here, there are millions of users, and I do not believe it is going away anytime soon. It is an open forum, a great way to send your messages out to your followers and the rest of the "tweeting" world. Follow, follow, and follow! Find your peers, public relations firms, public relations professionals, people who you will be interested in what they have to say, and in turn will possibly be interested in what you have to say as well. A word to the wise: Keep it as professional as possible. I try to keep mine a good balance of tweeting about current events, retweeting articles from professionals, and exchanging quick messages with friends. However, I do my best to make sure all content is appropriate.

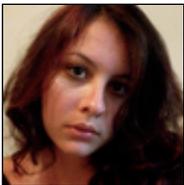
**5. LinkedIn.** For those of you not currently on LinkedIn, go register immediately! I once had a peer describe LinkedIn as "Facebook for the professional world." I think this is a pretty accurate description. With LinkedIn, you can post your professional experience, your resume, join groups that are relevant to your career path, and NETWORK. You can connect to your peers and professionals. Many employers use the site to discover potential employees, so you want to make sure your profile is as up to date and professional as possible.

*What other suggestions do you have for starting a personal brand?*

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## Finding Where You Fit: Applying for Jobs Based on Companies You Truly Like

Posted by Mollie Crist, event planning intern on Jan 14, 2010 in [Intern Posts](#), [Mollie Crist](#)



The search for an entry-level job can be frustrating. In my personal experience, I have tried to make sure I have all the bases covered. Checking sites such as Monster.com and CareerBuilder.com, following resources such as [@prwork](#) and [@GetPubRelatJobs](#) on Twitter, making sure my profile is always up to date on LinkedIn...and that's just to name a few. However, one thing I think is considerably important in your entry-level job search is making sure you really like the company before applying for the job.

My favorite public relations professor at James Madison University always reiterates to his classes that enthusiasm is vital for entry-level public relations professionals. What better way to be passionate about your profession than to be just as equally passionate about the company you are working for? Instead of just applying for jobs that are "available," why not first seek out companies that you feel like would be a good fit for you?

Here are my ideas when looking for companies and applying for positions with those companies:

1. **Know yourself.** This sounds fairly easy, however when was the last time you sat down and thought about what qualities you possess and how you could apply those to an entry-level position? Make a list and think about what you are looking for in a job, what your strengths are as well as your weaknesses, and what the company could offer you as well as what you can bring to the company.
2. **Know the company.** Obviously, it is necessary to do your research. Make sure you thoroughly read a company's Web site and other literature to figure out if you as both an individual and an entry-level public relations professional would make a good match for the company. Also, make sure to check and see if they are hiring entry-level employees at the current time. This is important, but if they are not, do not let it discourage you.
3. **Showcase your interest well.** While it is already essential to tailor your cover letter to your potential employer, this is a great way to make sure you showcase your interest in working for the company. Even if the company you desire to work for is not currently hiring, if you exhibit your enthusiasm, you WILL stand out. Making an excellent impression could possibly land you a position in the future, even if the company cannot hire you at the moment.
4. **Include a name.** Even if the company is not currently hiring, finding the right person to express your interest to is key. It is always better to send a cover letter that has a greeting with a name as opposed to "Dear Human Resources Coordinator." However, it is especially important to try and include a name in this case, it reinforces your passion for the company.
5. **Follow-up.** While this is important when applying for any position, this will allow you to once again show how interested you truly are in the company. Perhaps it will even put you in contact with someone who will remember you next time the company IS hiring, if they cannot hire you at present.

In this economy and current job market, I realize that for most entry-level public relations professionals any job sounds incredible...myself included. However, if you sincerely enjoy your job and the company you work for, you will enjoy working hard, doing your best work and pleasing your boss. This is key in becoming an enthusiastic and dedicated public relations professional, something all employers desire and appreciate.

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Mollie Crist

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