Final Synthesis Paper

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When I first started as a student here, at WVU, I really didn’t know what I wanted to focus on as a career path for my future. Throughout my four year venture I have been enrolled in three different majors offered by three different colleges at the university. I began as a pre-pharmacy major, which lasted one semester, then moved to computer science for three semesters before ending up in the communication studies major. I have taken communication studies courses since freshman year and they have always been very appealing to me. Once I finally entered the communication studies department, it made me feel like I had finally found the path I wanted to follow.

After getting some firsthand experience through the professional field experience class, I now know that I am meant to peruse a sales based occupation. I have had two sales based jobs in the past, and currently have one. I’ve always heard people say “don’t ever get a job that you don’t enjoy going in to and doing every day.” I now completely understand where they are coming from. I love a job that is challenging. It makes the feeling of success just THAT much better. By making work a challenge, it makes it more enjoyable. It’s almost like a game; trying to persuade customers to purchase products, especially when customers are hesitant about my reasoning. I have to dig down and give them that little bit more that makes the sale do or die. My favorite feeling in the world is that feeling of conquering a tough sale or turning a small sale into something huge. This is exactly why I know I’m meant for this field. I also feel more confident because there is always a demand for salespeople in today’s world.

In my coursework paper from this class earlier this semester, I mentioned six of my COMM classes, my four Spanish classes, and an advertising class to be my most relevant classes that I have completed. In Mass Media Communication, I enjoyed learning how each media industry functions so differently to reach their fullest potentials. I was enrolled in this class in fall of 2008, shortly after becoming a computer science major. I am a very media oriented person so I found this class very interesting. I think this is very similar to my advertising class that I am currently enrolled in. They both have to do with how advertising reaches people on a day to day basis. They also talk about what types are most affective and what is becoming extinct. In today’s world, social networking and the internet never stop excelling. I never realized how specific the industries were when it came to effectively reaching a specific target audience. Not everyone is affected by the same types of media in the same way. Some people are more influenced by newspapers where others are most influenced by the internet. This information would be useful for someone going into the workforce seeking a job such as sales, marketing, and advertising.

I enjoyed my theory and research classes because I have always enjoyed working with numbers. I enjoyed learning how to conduct surveys and how to assess the information that is acquired them and how to properly conduct them. These classes were also helpful when it comes to pairing a customer with a product that will suit them best. I have to understand the needs of customers and determine the best product based on their needs and the product’s capabilities.

In my nonverbal communication class, I was amazed at how much knowledge I had about nonverbal communication prior to having the course and how much I left the course with after completion. There are so many things about nonverbal that the average human looks right past. Taking this course allowed me to recognize significantly more about people and the messages they try to communicate to me. I now look at the person more as well as listen to their messages. The way a person is standing, their eye contact, and their facial expressions are very crucial when decoding the true meaning behind their messages. Not only did this class enhance my knowledge on others communicating to me, but I also learned a lot about how to communicate more effectively to others. Just as their posture and expressions affect their messages to me, mine does as well when communicating with them. Since I am very interested in sales and nonverbal communication is one of the most important types of communication in the entire field. I can say this as a fact because I have used my knowledge and skills learned in this class in my internship. I had to create a sense of confidence with many different body gestures in order to allow customers to become confident in themselves and the products I was selling. The better I became with these skills, the more successful I was with my job. Nonverbal communication has been very crucial in each sales job that I have had in the past, even with my phone based job. People can sense my confidence with not only WHAT I say, but HOW I say it also.

In my opinion, my most helpful course was been persuasion. This is by far my favorite class that I have taken during my four years here. I have always been very intrigued by how persuasion works. Every single lecture of this class, I took a new piece of information about persuasion with me when I left for the day. There is way more to this topic than most people would ever imagine. This class taught me how to use persuasion in its most effective forms and how to defend myself during times that I am being attacked with persuasion. Scarcity, wordsmithing, and liking are all topics that we thoroughly covered in the class and are all seen in the everyday world. As a final project in the class, we had to go to a local shopping mall or look online for instances of these techniques and explain how they were used and if they were used effectively in our opinion. Although I had to devote quite a bit of extra time to this project compared to others, it was easily the most interesting one I have ever done. It taught me how many instances of persuasion I had overlooked in the past and how easily I had succumbed to the different techniques. I have also found this class to be the most useful because of how effective its skills and techniques can be when used appropriately in real world instances. Again, with my internship, I used many different techniques of persuasion every single appointment with customers. Instead of asking the customers if they would like to purchase one or two items, I had them make a “wish list” before I told them a price of any of the items. Once they created their list, I calculated a price (we were able to flex total prices of larger orders) and asked the customer how much they though the price was. The actual price was always much lower than what they guessed and made them much more willing to place a larger order. I also use these techniques with my current job by considering the customer’s needs, and taking them to the next level. I also start with larger sales and work my way down. I have found this to by my most effective technique.

Outside of the COMM department, my Spanish courses have been most helpful. I feel like this can play a key role in setting me apart from my competition in future interviews. With the way the US population is currently changing, I felt that it was a great idea to learn a secondary language. You never know when you or a co-worker will encounter someone who is incapable of speaking English. If someone is able to communicate effectively with them, there’s a chance of completing a sale that wouldn’t have been possible otherwise. Even if it doesn’t end in a sale, then at least there’s a chance that the issue the customer presented was taken care of. I have also noticed that most job applications have a section to fill out regarding knowledge of a second language.

Throughout my venture at West Virginia University, there are definitely some things I would have done differently, but there are also things that I wouldn’t change for anything. First of all, I would have reconsidered my first two majors. If I would have exercised more intelligence, I may have been able to prevent hitting rock bottom. I could have simply evaluated my prior experiences in those fields and realized that it was going to be very challenging and almost completely new material that I had no experience with. I would have also exercised much better organization and time management skills my first 2 years. Coming from a small town, I wanted to get out and experience life away from home. At times, social life took over the top priority instead of academics. This proved to be fatal when final grades were issued at the end of those semesters. Although these mistakes were made, I believe that making mistakes is the best way to learn. I can now look back on exactly what I did wrong and the results that were achieved by doing so. I can then make changes to stay on the correct path. If I had it to do all over again, I would have chosen a major that I truly enjoyed learning about instead of choosing one based on the amount of money I could potentially make. These mistakes have also generated a much greater appreciation for people that have succeeded in the majors that I did not.

The COMM program has really helped me understand the things I need to focus on to be successful in my given field. In the professional field experience class, it was extremely useful for my supervisor at my internship to fill out and evaluation. This gave me an idea of what I need to work on in order to gain success in the field. My goal for this assignment was to prove myself better in the areas I struggled with in the beginning. Job training only gives you a foundation to build on. It takes time and tons of learning to be effective at what I do. Learning product specifications can take months at a time. It took me about two months, when working for Vector, to finally become comfortable discussing the products. It’s been just over two months since I began my current job and I am still learning new information on the products each day I go to work.

So far my relevant experience has been with the WVU Foundation, Vector Marketing, and Sears. At WVUF, I was a student caller. I was responsible for calling past, present, and future donors and updating them on the specific college that they are/ may be interested in. I feel like this experience was very useful because I can now say that I have worked for a non-profit organization. I can relate this job to sales because I was responsible for bringing in profits for all of the colleges/organizations within West Virginia University. With Vector, I was an outside sales representative. I was responsible for scheduling my own appointments with past, present, and future clients and demonstrating our products for them. I was also responsible for product maintenance for customers that had owned the products for over 2 years. This job was the reason I chose to go into the field of sales. I had a lot of fun at this job, but it also had its down points too. Building an almost constant customer base for someone who isn’t from around here was nearly impossible. I struggled with this aspect of the job and that’s why I had to leave. Currently, I am a sales associate at Sears and I really enjoy it. I like working on commission because it forces me to work harder than everyone else to be better. I’m all about being the best at whatever I choose to do. This job is teaching me all of the aspects of retail too. I actually interviewed my store manager about his job as part of my informational interview paper for this class. I find is job very interesting and may choose to pursue it in my future. With all of the experiences from each of these jobs combined, I feel like I am ready for whatever my future may throw at me. They have helped to shape me into the salesman that I am today.