Alex Irby

11 April 2012

The Business of Sociology

Business school had always been the plan for me, I was going to come to Purdue and leave with a degree in whatever area of business my dad felt was the most important for my future. However, after a series of events, including a brief stint back home followed by an urge to graduate on time, I found myself a Sociology major, contemplating just how I could use my Sociology Degree to propel my budding career. After three semesters submerged in Sociological thought I’ve found multiple facets of my Liberal Arts education that will not only enable me to do well in the corporate world, but achieve any and every goal I choose to set throughout my career.

The first task I was faced with was an internal one; I constantly questioned if anyone would take me seriously in the business world because, to me, a Sociology major wasn’t who companies like Facebook and J.P. Morgan Chase were looking for out of a new hire. I realized very quickly that no one would take me seriously if I wasn’t taking myself seriously. I had to understand my resume was a mere synopsis of five short, though important, years of my life and in no way fully reflected the man I have become or the impact I could have within a corporation. With my confidence built upon natural ambition and desire I turned my sites on making myself as competitive as possible for the positions I wished to be considered for, however I had to present myself the right way first which meant figuring out just how Sociology would play to my advantage when faced with the rigors of the corporate world.

Succeeding in business requires more than just a grasp of math and economics, it calls for an understanding of people, large populations in particular. What Sociology attempts to do intellectually, and most importantly, is understand the big picture of society from both a broad and narrow view. Sociology integrates the findings of economist, political scientists, historians and psychologists, so rather than seeing the world from one specific view, I have multiple stand points, giving me a complete outlook of the world and its industries and markets I plan to one day impact. My Sociological studies have also given me the opportunity to learn how businesses work through the study of complex organizations, economic processes, institutions and human relations, some of which are discussed in my other writing sample on management practices. It also came to my attention that in recent years, sociology has expanded its focus, contributing to our knowledge of how people interact in specific institutions, as well as how people interact with technology like mobile phones and the internet, giving me a distinct advantage in business practices like marketing and sales. In addition, Sociology provides the educational background needed for managers to understand their employees and customers. Business leaders that understand Sociology are able to predetermine the needs of their customers and respond to employee problems in ways others cannot.

Just because I’m a Soc major doesn’t mean my presence can’t be felt in the corporate world. Just because I didn’t study Finance or Marketing doesn’t mean I can’t be an asset to a company in either of these areas for the simple fact that Sociology has prepared me for anything I might want to explore throughout my career. Another realization I had was that learning really never stops, there’s no end to my capacity for learning; it didn’t peak in college and begin to ascend after graduation, my education is just beginning. So when you ask me what I plan to do with my Sociology degree, I’ll look you confidently in the eye and say “Anything I want.”