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Comm 493

Internship: KCAC Marketing Department

An internships main goal is to introduce you to the real “working” world that our degrees prepare us for. My internship at the Kovalchick Complex Marketing Department on Indiana University of Pennsylvania’s campus was probably the most eye opening experience I have had in my entire college career. I experienced every emotion during this internship and I took it all on with a clear head and a full heart. In a lot of ways I think I bit off more than I could chew, but I know down the line that the experiences I dealt with will make me more successful in my future careers.

The Kovalchick Complex is owned by Global Spectrum a subsidiary of Comcast Spectacor. Global Spectrum manages public assembly venues in the United States, Canada, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia with an ever-increasing international presence. The company hosts a wide array of popular sports and entertainment, trade shows, performing arts, and other special events. This company is literally all over the world, and when I began this internship I knew little about its international business. I was so impressed on how they did their business and handled any situation that was thrown at them because their main goal was to solve problems as a team, so that everyone was on the same page. A company that works together such as this makes success an everyday occurrence, and working with such passion makes every day special in the office. I was working with Amy Stephen, Director of Marketing at the KCAC, and the thing that makes the KCAC special is that it is an in-house ad agency meaning all the promotion and marketing is done within the building for any such events. The general manager of the KCAC, Jim Grafstrom controlled a lot of what promotions and advertising went out to the public, but a lot of freedom was given to Amy Stephen and me when it came to promoting an event.

The first thing Amy told me when I arrived for my internship was that I was going to have to take the lead on a project she had started about two weeks prior to my start date, and that was planning a music festival called FUSE FEST 2012. Amy told me it was to be my “baby” and the project that would define my internship. Initially, I was pretty intimidated by the task, but the more and more Amy taught me the ropes the more comfortable I became with planning a big event like this. The project started with writing commercials/scripts for the radio that would be used by all the radio stations in the Greater Pittsburgh Area. I have never felt so in control after three weeks of working with Amy because I learned what it mean to be an event marketer and PR specialist. I was realizing that this is what I would like to do as a career. I prepared over the next two and half months for FUSE FEST 2012 on September 29th.

After reviewing my internship proposal I realized I met several of the tasks that I wrote down in the first week working at the KCAC. I wanted to experience the work of a professional in the Promotions/PR field. In the first week I was writing news releases about events that were coming up on the summer event schedule at the KCAC. It was a PR person’s dream because I was writing about cool events that I was interested in. I wanted to observe and participate in a promotional plan for a company, and at Global Spectrum I was able to write a promotional plan for FUSE FEST 2012. I had complete control over the event, and Amy and I made a very professional promotional plan that was deemed “full proof” by Jim Grafstrom the General Manager of the KCAC. I made a point to understand the functions of a promotions company, and in the KCAC marketing department you don’t have a choice to not understand the functions of their promotional plans because they have a distinct style that you must learn on the spot. There wasn’t any room for hiccups when an event is less than a week away and you need the promotional plan done in three hours. I made a point to say in my internship proposal that I wanted to work collaboratively on a promotional team, and I know for a fact that’s what Amy and I were. We worked long days trying to nail out the preparations for FUSE FEST, and teamwork was the most important thing during those long days in the office. And finally the most important thing I wanted to have from my internship experience was to receive feedback on all my completed tasks. I wanted to know if I was going to be able to do this job in the future, and I wanted feedback that would allow me to measure myself up to those within the company. Obviously, I found myself a little inadequate, but I saw improvement over the two and half months that gives me confidence for the future. I think the feedback will stay with me as a take the plunge into the real workforce this coming summer after I graduate.

In my internship proposal I mentioned I would like to meet other professionals in the field, and I was unable to complete this task because of some logistical issues as well as the busy schedule that I had. I made some great connections within the KCAC and some radio station promoters, but I would have liked to meet more marketing people from outside companies in order to make more connections within the field. I would have liked to get my name out there more, but I know that Amy and Jim both know I worked extremely hard during my time at the KCAC and will support me down the road. I believe I will attend events in the spring that will allow me to meet and speak to other professionals in order to gain connections for the future. That was the only issue I had with my internship, and I believe I was able to complete all the tasks I had on my internship proposal besides meeting other professionals in the field. I was very lucky to have the opportunity and the training that the KCAC gave me.

The most important classes that I took at IUP that prepared me for my internship would definitely be my Media and Promotions class with Dr. King as well as my Internship class with Dr. Schaeffer. Both these courses prepared me best for my internship because the skills I learned in those classes allowed me to be successful in my internship. The skills I used most often were definitely the creative and passionate thinking that Dr. King really stressed when it came to promotional ideas. We worked on a promotional plan in class for a radio station, and a lot of the ideas I used for that promotional plan I was able to use for FUSE FEST 2012.

Dr. Schaeffer’s internship class was extremely important when it came to my internship at the KCAC marketing department because I was prepared for pretty much any curve balls that the internship threw at me. On several occasions I would stop and remember what Dr. Schaeffer said in class, and I would apply the knowledge she gave me to the issue at hand. For instance, when Amy and I first met I made a point to give her my resume’ and the things I had been working on throughout my college career that would be comparable to the internship at the KCAC. Without the knowledge and the foresight to prepare for that initial meeting with Amy I don’t think I would have received the internship. I mentioned above that I think one of the most influential projects I did during my college career was the Promotional Plan for the radio station, as well as the Portfolio assignment in Dr. Wilson’s Portfolio class. Those assignments made me use all the knowledge I had learned over the three and half years spent in the Communications Media Department at IUP. It was one of the greatest feelings going into work over the summer at the KCAC, and realizing that I was able to be creative and use all the skills that I’ve learned to make a product that will mean something to people. It was very fulfilling and it made me realize the career path I wanted to lead.

I think my internship can be summed up into one word, and that is “focus.” I realized that every day I came into the office that my focus needed to be on a specific task, and making sure it was completed before I was able to move on to another task. I made a point to be “all in” on every decision, and to not just make choices based on only my head but my heart as well. I was able to find a passion for event marketing and PR, and I am forever grateful to the Comm. Media for allowing me to pursue this opportunity at the KCAC. I definitely grew as a professional throughout my internship experience, and I think what helped me grow so quickly was the mandatory staff meeting every Tuesday morning of every week. I was immediately immersed into the meetings as the voice of the marketing department, and I had to prepare myself for any and all questions that might be asked of me during the meeting. I felt what it is really like in the workforce and how you have to be on your toes and prepared for any type of situations. I had to grow up real quick after the first Tuesday meeting, and by the end of my time at the KCAC I was well prepared and ready for every meeting like I had been there for three years.

I loved my time spent at the KCAC Marketing Department because it gave me a dose of reality that not many people get as a senior in college. I was able to experience an intense working environment with people that made the tense situations lighthearted and fun. Getting work done wasn’t a pain, but rather an exciting task that made everyone involved feel like they had created something important. FUSE FEST 2012 was something I put my whole heart into, and at the end of the day I had to come to the realization that ticket sales were never going to increase, and I faced failure. I think facing failure and learning from your mistakes is what professionals do on a regular basis, and I learned first-hand that you need to keep working and to stay focused throughout it all. I made an impression on the company, and that was my main goal coming in as intern. I wanted to make a difference, and I am pretty sure I did.