

Katrina Cronk
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Kristen Cvancara



Summer Internship Reflection

Internships are a very important part of every college student's career and I believe you should try to participate in as many as possible and not only that, but really put your all into them in order to get the full experience. You should do this because the experience is very valuable whether you enjoy it or not because it's important to find out things you thought you would enjoy, but maybe you really didn't as much as you thought you would. Internships can also lead to future jobs, not only in that line of work, but possibly even from people you meet along the way. I participated in a sales/marketing internship with Man Cave during the summer of 2015 and it was a very valuable experience for me.

Man Cave is a meat company that started in 2009 by a few University of Minnesota Twin Cities students because they were tired of brats and burgers that were plain and lacking flavor. They wanted to change up the game and they weren't exactly expecting what was to come. They sold their products at the Farmer's Market in Minneapolis and then had people asking to come grill for them at their houses – so they did. Then after years of people asking for their product year-round they decided to make the leap into Minnesota grocery stores in 2013. This summer of 2015 was their very first out of the state of Minnesota, so it was very cool to be a huge part of that and help them build up their success even more. I was responsible for a variety of tasks including grocery store demos, consistent use of Excel spreadsheets, running errands to get orders or miscellaneous shopping trips, assisting in taste tests for new products and for shelf life purposes, helping set up and work events such as the farmer's market, assisting in social media

postings including our email fan club, and also calling and emailing to set up co-promotional events.

Grocery store demos were one of our main tasks because they were the most important as we launched all of the new markets in other states. No one knew who Man Cave was outside of Minnesota so we had to get our name out and tell our story. Most people have the products they like and buy when they grocery shop so we had to get people just to try it in order to compare and try to get them to buy it or consider it for a future purchase over other products such as Johnsonville, Jennie-O, Oscar Mayer, or Aidells's. I traveled all summer long, 5 days a week for over half my summer to other states in many areas such as Iowa, Chicago, Missouri, and Kansas. We mostly did demos on our own but occasionally with another co-worker and had to share with our boss in Excel spreadsheets how much we sampled, how much we sold, and how the product was set up in the store, along with other important notes that had an effect on our sales that day. This could have included a variety of issues such as there was another brat or burger being sampled close to us, we were set up far away from product, the meat manager forgot to thaw product to sample, or outlets went out etc. This included a lot of brainstorming and problem solving to deal with these issues quickly and efficiently so we could keep making sales. We were given bonuses as well if we made certain sales quotas or generated buzz with Facebook likes or posts to Facebook. Events such as the farmer's market included a lot of the same tasks as grocery store demos – demoing products, making sales, telling our story, generating social media posts/likes. When we went on trips we had to post a certain amount of pictures with fans or of us doing random activities like going out to eat together at a barbecue place, going to the Kansas City Royals game, or taking pictures next to state signs when we entered them before starting our demos there. At the farmer's market we had props for fans to take pictures with and we even had

some fans take videos. I was also in charge of sending out a few emails for our email fan club. When we had new products our chef created we all got to taste test them to see what we liked and didn't like. New products called for new shelf life dates so we were also a part of smell/taste testing as a group.

I worked with a lot of people throughout the summer including other interns like me which were all around my age. There was a group of about 10 of us. My bosses were very young themselves only a few years older than me, so they were all very easy to get along with and would hang out with us interns on our trips too. I also had to work with all the meat managers and meat staff at all the different grocery stores I was at for demos. Sometimes this was great because meat managers were excited to have us there and their staff was helpful, but sometimes meat managers were not excited about our products to be in in their store and staff wasn't very helpful. This internship required each individual to have a lot of interpersonal communication skills to work with so many people successfully.

[Application of Communication](#)

These communication skills obviously did not happen overnight and for me they came with a lot of help from my Introduction to Communication Studies class and my Public Speaking class. As for my public speaking class that really just helped me practice continuously to help calm my nerves and the goofy exercises we did helped me to loosen up. My intro comp class helped me really understand how we communicate and why we do the things we do with all of the theories we learned. Every person in my class was assigned a theory and had to give a presentation on it so we got a variety of interpretations from a few individuals on each theory. I had the Social Information Processing Theory which I believe can apply to our email fan club and social media (April 2014). I wrote some of our emails out to our fans and we tried to be very

casual as if they were already our friends and we were already comfortable with them. Through social media we would have daily conversations with our Facebook friends and at events we would take selfies with fans, like they were already our best friends. This theory helps to explain how CMC is just as good as F2F for developing and maintaining a meaningful relationship and I think through our casualness and the interaction with fans online and also through pictures we achieved a relationship much deeper than “acquaintances.”

The second theory I would like to mention is the Social Penetration Theory which explains that relationships are formed out of consistent vulnerability from both parties (April 2014). This vulnerability is the sharing of personal information, whether it be extremely basic or very private. Each party shares information to get to know each other and feel empathy or a bond in shared experiences. This theory was seen in the relationships I developed with my bosses and especially my co-workers. My bosses were once college kids themselves and my co-workers were all college kids, so we all had similar experiences to share with each other and a lot of similar interests in common.

Another relationship development theory that was seen this summer was the Uncertainty Reduction Theory (April 2014). I think this theory was by far the most common because I constantly used it to make sales, along with my coworkers. My first concern with approaching a customer would be their general interests and I could reduce uncertainty I had about them by looking in their cart, looking at their surroundings to see if they had a husband/wife and/or kids, and also to look at their clothing. If there was kids I would go with a mild flavor because most kids don't like spicy or if there was a guy with a football jersey I would say he needs some good food for tailgating because brats and burgers are usually a staple football game dinner. By reducing my uncertainty about each individual I could make predictions that would help me open

up the conversation and make a connection with them. Once a connection was made they could try the product and if they liked the product and they liked me they would usually buy it or at least tell me very friendly that they'd consider it for next time.

Narrative Paradigm was another thing used very often for sales. Like the rhetoric says, people are storytelling animals and they like to not only tell stories, but to hear them as well (April 2014). When we went out of state on long trips and told people our brand's story, along with our own personal story of making the trip "just to sample Man Cave for them," they felt that we were genuine and dedicated to not only our brand, but the customers especially because they saw we made an effort to make the sale. They also liked to share stories with us or hear about our own personal lives to further the connection made and therefore deepen the relationship, referring back to the Social Penetration theory. People didn't want to sit and listen to you if you are going to "go all salesman," and talk strictly about the product begging for a sale. They want to make a connection with you and be personable with you because the relationship they have with you is more important than the product in the end because that's what they're going to remember and when they see it again in stores they'll remember how great or awful you were as a person and buy it again if they really did like it.

Speech Codes Theory was something I saw all summer long with not only my coworkers, but also with customers (April 2014). My coworkers and I spent a lot of time together since we were taking 5 day trips half the summer together. Because of all the time spent together we developed certain phrases or words for things we frequently encountered. I won't go into detail because there's too many but by the end of the summer we pretty much had our own language no one else but us would understand, or in other words, our own speech code specific to Man Cave interns. I also noticed when we went out of state that specific areas said certain phrases as well.

Clothing was something uniting certain cultures, such as the Chicago Blackhawks fans because there was a lot of support within their culture, so clothing was very common. Accents were noticed by me from them and vice versa as well, especially since Minnesotan accents are apparently very noticeable when you say “Minnesot-uhh.” This internship really got me to notice the small details that make up the theories used every day in communication, not only in the workplace, but in our own personal settings with friends and family.

Overall Experience and Application

As stated earlier, I found this internship to be a very valuable experience for me and my future. I found value in learning new things, the new people I met, the experiences I had along the way, and also about the company of Man Cave and what they stand for. I am someone who values honesty and quality and that was what Man Cave valued as well. I don’t think it would be possible for me to work for a company who does not possess the same core values as I do, especially if their values went against mine. The product was something I thoroughly enjoyed as well, and again, I think it would be hard to work for a company who made a product I did not enjoy.

Many times things did not go as planned and we had to think quickly to solve the problem. Many times we would ask our bosses a question and they would tell us “figure it out,” which meant we had to make some executive decisions for the company. We were highly trusted with a lot of responsibilities in our hands, unlike a lot of internships where you may just be an apprentice to someone who actually works for the company, or just someone who overlooks the office as a whole. I think this was important to our learnings because we experienced everything, not just the easy tasks at hand. I learned that traveling for work is not as glamorous as it seems. It required a lot of driving and living in hotels frequently, not seeing your family or friends often.

Man Cave being a newer and growing company we were also required to work some long hours, which could be exhausting, but it was also very cool to see how much the company grew just over the summer. I also learned I am not a huge fan of sales, or at least not in the environment I was working in. The environment you are in completely changes how sales are made or how many sales are made. At the farmer's market sales were easy because people came there to buy our product and we had no competition. At the grocery store we had a lot of competition and people were less willing to even listen to us pitch our product. I did not enjoy being in an environment where people were mostly unwilling to listen to me. Even though there were some environments and experiences I did not enjoy, I think it was important for me to experience them because it taught me more about myself and what I enjoy and don't enjoy in order to tailor a career for myself in the future.

Overall I really liked this internship, even with the experiences I did not like as much. My favorite thing about it was the people I got to work with. My bosses and co-workers were so much fun to be around and they made all the boring and tough work well worth it. Working with food was another thing I absolutely loved about this internship, especially because I already had previous experience with meat, working at my hometown meat market for the past four years. The tasks with social media and public speaking this internship required also provided a lot of good experience for a future job in the field of communication and mass media. Specific jobs I am interested in pursuing are a news anchor and a magazine column writer or editor. Public speaking is ideal for any and every job, but a news anchor specifically has to be excellent at public speaking. I believe social media is only continuing to rise in usage and advance in the things it can achieve for not only the users, but also the companies who use it. Social media is

only advancing and the opportunities are endless as we know it. I feel I am more prepared for a future career because of these skills I practiced throughout the summer with Man Cave.

This internship not only gained me a lot of learning experiences, but also many chances to get out of my comfort zone. You do not realize how different other states can be from Minnesota until you are there and forced to work in the environments with people you don't know. I met a lot of people each and every day, some who were nice and some who were not. Since our bosses commonly said "figure it out," we were forced to be in sticky situations and to do what we thought was best for not only ourselves, but most importantly, for the company. I really enjoyed the fact that this internship was so interactive compared to most, because I know I gained some of the best learning experiences. I am thankful for the opportunity and may even continue to work for Man Cave on the side, doing demos or working events such as the farmer's market or co-promotional events with breweries. This internship will help me for future internships I plan on taking on such as Mankato Radio and Kare 11 news station. My resume is now stronger too because of the experiences I got interning for Man Cave. Not only did I gain a lot of knowledge for myself, but I also gained new friends and relationships with my coworkers and bosses, which to me are the most important because these relationships can help me for the future maybe even more than the internship experiences itself. My bosses and I built a great relationship and the fact that they asked me to continue to keep them in mind for the future and continue to work for them on the side is more than great. If I had the chance to do this internship again I would because I believe it is one of the best internships as far as real life experiences go. Future internships are only going to help me build upon my current knowledge and experiences which will then help launch me into a career I hope to enjoy. I am willing to work hard and challenge myself to get to that dream job. "All roads that lead to success have to pass through

hard work boulevard at some point” (Thomas 2011). I am a strong believer in this quote because if you truly want something you need to work for it. Life is not going to hand you everything you want, but hard work does pay off so I believe you should keep working and keep learning no matter how old you get because I believe our minds never stop hungering for new knowledge and experiences.

References

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