

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FALL INTERNSHIP – ANDREW PROPER COMPUTER SCIENCE

Introduction

During the Fall of 2003 I worked for the Philadelphia 76ers as a New Media Intern. The Philadelphia 76ers are a National Basketball Association (NBA) franchise owned by Comcast-Spectacor, a Philadelphia-based sports and entertainment firm. My supervisor was Mr. Brian Kirschner, Manager of New Media and Communications.

At the beginning of the internship, I developed three specific learning objectives, along with appropriate resources for accomplishing them and methods to verify my ultimate fulfillment of them. My objectives were:

- 1) To develop my ability to write news articles for a professional sports organization
- 2) To observe and better understand the role of public relations in a professional basketball organization
- 3) To enhance my skill in web site design, development, and implementation

Through my three months as part of the organization, I believe I have accomplished each of these objectives and, in all, the experience has been an exciting success.

Work/Projects

Throughout the course of the internship, I maintained a daily journal of tasks and projects. A brief look at my journal reveals two distinct sets of responsibilities based on the time during which I worked – game night responsibilities and “nine to five” responsibilities.

My tasks during the 15 Sixers games I attended were generally consistent. Before the game I would select the Sixers’ “Fans of the Game” and bring them down to the court, where they would watch warm-ups and participate in the national anthem and player introductions. For the first half of the game I would print “Fans of the Game” photos and update the “Fans of the Game” section of the Sixers website (<http://www.sixers.com>) with the appropriate information. For the second half, I would watch the game and maintain a list of game highlights. During postgame, I updated the “Hometown Heroes” and “Eric’s Challenge” pages of the site with photos and information from that night.

On regular (non-game) work days, my tasks were much more varied. Some of my responsibilities included writing and deploying news articles, traveling to practice to interview Sixer players, designing new web pages, creating wallpaper in Adobe PhotoShop, and performing general content updates on the site.

Learning

I approached this internship with a lot of confidence in the web development aspect, but with some trepidation in the general public relations realm. I was unsure about the role of new media in public relations and about the role of public relations in the organization. In these areas I looked to gain understanding and I believe I have done so quite successfully.

I have learned that one of the most essential skills in public relations for a professional sports organization is the ability to write. During the season, the Sixers homepage can receive up to 60,000 visitors a day, with each visitor looking for the latest team news and information. With so many people reading your work, it is critical that your articles be clear and concise.

I believe writing for the web was the area I was weakest in at the start of the internship and the area I have made the most progress in. Observing the techniques of my supervisor and learning from his criticism of my work has made me a much stronger writer.

Although my academic background is in Computer Science and my position was not overly technical, I did gain some new computer-related knowledge as well, specifically in graphics development using Adobe PhotoShop, web page development using the NBA's publishing system, and general web development techniques.

Future Plans

As a result of this internship, I have learned that I certainly have an interest in working for a professional sports organization in the future. Although the sports industry will not likely be the one I enter immediately following graduation, I will leave the door open to it for later consideration.

I have also learned the value of an internship to the possibility of working for a sports organization, as the vast majority of current 76er employees began their careers as interns. I have discovered that, while the time commitment may be grueling and the salary unimpressive for entry-level employees, the sports industry is a fun and exciting field to work in.

Through my experience, I have also seen that it is possible to work in a web-related field without having to put in long hours staring at code. That is where many graduates in Computer Science end up, but it is not where I want to be.

At this point my objective upon graduation is to seek a full time position in a web-related field in the Harrisburg area that will provide me the ability to be creative in developing web solutions without being classified as a "programmer." Whether I will again work in the professional sports industry, I leave to God's calling, but this internship experience has been invaluable, regardless.

Preparation/Recommendations

My studies have proven to be very useful to me, especially coming from a liberal arts background that has allowed me to develop a variety of skills. I have had several classes requiring and emphasizing extensive writing, and I believe solid writing skills will prove valuable in nearly any occupation.

Within Computer Science, of particular use were the JavaScript and Java programming courses, as well as the course in Software Engineering. The programming courses taught more than just skills within those specific languages, but strategies and techniques that can be applied to any programming task. The Software Engineering course covered the broad area of software development, but I have found that it prepared me to look at any technical project from a process-perspective.

If I could make a recommendation to my academic department, it would be to focus more on new media and emerging web technologies, as these are areas of both interest and demand. A recommendation to the internship center at a Christian institution would be to better prepare students to face a work world in with differing, often non- or anti-Christian, perspectives are so prevalent.

In general, I have felt both well prepared and comfortable at my position. I believe my academic experience has developed both my knowledge and character to a point where I am ready and excited to enter the awaiting work world.