

Networking, Applying, and Graduating...Oh My!

By Brianna Borghi

If Career Quest taught me one thing, it is that there are seemingly endless opportunities and career paths to pursue in the media industry. I came to college with a pretty clear idea of what job I wanted to land after graduation: on-air news reporter. As a senior (yikes!) in the School of Media and Public Affairs majoring in journalism and mass communication and minoring in political science, I've now held six internships in the broadcast journalism industry. I've worked as an on-air and production intern in newsrooms from New York to Los Angeles, Boston to DC, and always thought that I would continue pursuing this path when I graduated. And then I found out about Career Quest.

As much as I love the energy of a newsroom, I figured I should take advantage of the opportunity to visit multiple different types of companies that all offer unique opportunities just to see what other options were out there in the journalism in media industry. So, I applied to Career Quest, and I am so thankful that I was selected to participate in this one-of-a-kind program. I went to New York City with an open-mind about the companies we were visiting and the entry-level positions each had to offer, eager to learn about roles I may be suited for that I hadn't thought of before.

NYC wasn't new to me. I spent the summer interning at MSNBC and the American Red Cross and became very well acquainted with the city (and the subway and the traffic). So instead of focusing on what NYC was like as a place to work and live, I was able to focus on the companies and the people we spoke to. Facing the reality of the competitive job market is intimidating, but each person we met was incredibly open, honest, and willing to provide any and all information and help they could. Knowing that there were people at such incredible companies who were so welcoming in hosting us and answering our many questions calmed many of my nerves about applying to jobs and thinking about the future.

While each company presented unique information, there were a few pieces of advice that many of the industry professionals all shared: knowing yourself, being open to change and new opportunities, and the importance of networking and relationship building. We kicked off our trip at eMarketer, and the leader of our visit said something about applying to jobs that stuck with me through the duration of the trip: It is our job as the applicant to know ourselves, and it is the hiring manager's job to know the company and where you would best fit in. It is easy to get caught up in job descriptions, what you think you would be best at, and the job you hope to obtain, but as long as you know who you are and put your best and true self forward, you will end up in a position that is best suited for you.

Many companies also expressed value in being open to change, given that the media industry and technology is constantly changing, and being open to new opportunities. In thinking about where I want to see myself career-wise when I graduate, I often get caught up in the idea that my first job out of college has to be perfect. But that is far from the case. The most important thing, according to many professionals we spoke with, is landing a job that will allow you to

learn and grow the most in order to gain valuable experience early on in your career. That may require you to bounce around a few jobs and companies until you find what suits you best, and that is okay.

And finally, network, build relationships, and network more. I've heard this a lot, but until I visited all the companies on Career Quest I didn't really understand how invaluable networking actually is. So many people we spoke to described a time in their career where someone they met in one job or at an event connected them to someone who helped them get their next job, and so on. As soon as I returned from NYC, I connected with every single person we met on LinkedIn (with a personal message reminding them how we met, of course), and almost every person responded to my connect request offering to be a resource for me as I near the end of my college career and seek out post-graduate opportunities. I know these contacts will be priceless as I begin applying to jobs and launching my career in the media industry.

In a few words, Career Quest was eye-opening, exciting, encouraging, and exhausting (six site visits in two days, wow!), all wrapped up in one incredible program. I feel so much more prepared and better positioned to start my job search and truly feel that I will be more successful having participated in Career Quest. I can't believe I almost rounded out my senior year not fully understanding what other media-related opportunities were out there. And now that I have a better grasp of the industry, I am more confident in my ability to connect with industry professionals and obtain a job that suits my interests and skillset. To anyone who doesn't know what career path they want to follow, or even those who think they do, this program is for you!