

Career Quest: Two Days as a Mad Man

Two days as a mad man. That's what I thought while I was gently falling asleep on my lucky double seat in the Amtrak from NY to DC. Of course, I do not mean one of those mad men who would end up in a psychiatric hospital, but one of those who layered the foundations of advertising, communications and public relations in the New York off the first 60s, as shown in the namesake award-winning series. For sure, I could not wear the tuxedo of a Don Draper nor drink all the cocktails and liquors his partners serve him during each episode of the show, but I felt that same success-leaning tension and exciting over-achieving mindset in all the places I have visited with other ten very brilliant colleagues from GW and our wonderful guides, Amanda, Jen and Sam.

The core of Career Quest is to visit and get to know the characteristics of several different media and Public Relations workplaces, and.. We actually did that! I was impressed by the diversity of demonstrations we had from agencies and companies with very different missions, and it was very interesting to see where and how these agencies and companies physically deploy talents in their everyday job. While visiting these amazing spaces and listening to the presentations, I acquired precious insights on what specific industry I want to be part of, and "pathways" to follow in order to pursue my job research, and what I can expect from its working environment.

The office that impressed me the most is the one owned by Time Inc., right at the end of Manhattan peninsula, gifted with a spectacular panorama as well as fancy yet innovative interiors that we could visit thoroughly. I was amazed by Time's long-standing and inspirational mission, which was carefully presented to us by passionate, smart and young employees who told us about their experience. The conversation went into deep when they talked of the future developments of Time Inc., which acquired The Viant, a big data-savvy digital start-up, and created The Foundry, a spin-off creative agency based in Brooklyn, in order to explore further chances in the world of advertising and content curation. I was particularly proud to have noticed out loud how Time Inc. is incorporating this data-driven approach to advertising and marketing with a real editorial strategy, differently from Facebook, for instance, which clearly does not want to be seen as a 'publisher'. Although I don't want to be a journalist, I think I would definitely love working at Time Inc..

We also had an amazing conversation with Dean Murphy, Business Editor at the New York Times, to whom I asked how newspapers are trying to tackle the disruption of traditional media unleashed by the Internet. The core concept of its answer was very interesting: disrupting the disruption, of course. How? By allowing reporters to add much of themselves, their opinions and experience, in order to make their work more authentic. *Authenticity* seems the most relevant buzzword in media and PR these times, and it is easy to understand why: any kind of media outlet is nowadays simply struggling to manage perceptions of authenticity in what comes out from their work.

I expected Google HQ to be cool, but not the coolest place ever: flexible workplaces, incredible benefits

for the employees such as free food, drinks, gyms, game rooms, tons of LEGO bricks and.. Of course, massage sessions! Aside from being the biggest and most innovative digital company in the world, it is really the place to be for people who not only want to be part of a tech giant with an overarching mission, but also go to work with a smile printed on their face. Oh, I just reminded: they have nap couches, too, in the middle of the hallway.

The last visit also got me to know a giant company whose existence I had any idea, which is *iHeart Media*. I particularly enjoyed the passion of its President, Darren Davis, who told us of his crazy career start at a local radio in DC while he was studying Journalism at GW. I was impressed by the size of the company, but most of all I was impressed by the fact I did not anything about it. Despite being massive in North America, iHeart is indeed not really known in Europe, leave alone a non-English-speaking country like Italy, where I come from.

To conclude, thanks to Career Quest I now have a clearer idea and at the same time way more ideas of where I may find myself in the next five years. Despite my intention to find a good job in my country overseas, I learned so much of what I need to improve and focus on if I want to land in impressive companies like the one I had the chances to visit. Although I would miss the *Mad Men* atmosphere that I felt while going up and down in Manhattan, I would definitely repeat the Career Quest experience in another location if I will ever have a chance to. Thanks GW!

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