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COMM386: Summer 2013

Journal

**Beginning (June 3 to June 14)**

As I walked into the office of the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), I could feel my palms beginning to sweat. I felt nervous taking the elevator up, not knowing what to expect. I entered the office and was greeted by the receptionist who seemed as if he knew I was arriving for my first day. After a few short minutes, the women who interviewed me for my internship position approached me. Marti Pupillo, Director of Communications, introduced herself again and welcomed me to the office. She gave me a desk space to work out and helped me settle in. I soon met Peggy Armstrong, the vice president of communications; and I soon became acquainted with everyone in the different departments in the office.

My first week at IDFA involved lots of administrative work such as setting up my email account, providing access to the website, social media platforms and the building itself. During my first week, I was titled with Communication/Social Media Intern at IDFA. I continued to meet more staff members including President Connie Tipton. During my first week, I spent time learning about who IDFA is and who its members are. I learned that IDFA represents the nation's dairy manufacturing and marketing industries and their suppliers. Currently, IDFA has more than 550 companies within a $125-billion a year industry. I leaned more about the three constituent organizations that makes up IDFA, the Milk Industry Foundation (MIF), the National Cheese Institute (NCI) and the International Ice Cream Association (IICA). Furthermore, I learned more about each individual member including Nestle Inc. and Chobani, in order to further understand the organizations and companies that IDFA associates with. I even sat in on two conference calls involving IDFA members listening to classified updates within the dairy industry from IDFA's knowledge.

After learning more about IDFA, I began to familiarize myself with their current social media platforms. I worked with the communications team to understand what they were currently doing in terms of using social media platforms. While I had background knowledge in HootSuite, I did not know how to use the social media platform in a professional manner. Marti familiarized me with the application and I began to practice setting up tweets and Facebook postings. I continued to learn more about IDFA. Marti gave me a list of all of the milk members affiliated with IDFA. Initially, she wanted me to record the Facebook and Twitter pages for each member, but I soon found that several members had more than two social media platforms.

**Middle (June 17 to July 12)**

I finally felt at home the week of the Washington Conference and the 31st Annual National Ice Cream Party. I witnessed the chaos inside an office to put forth an amazing well-attended event. I saw all the IDFA employees come together to push efforts forth for the passing of the Farm Bill. I worked with mainly the legislative department and the communication department to plan and execute the Washington Conference and Capitol Hill Ice Cream Party. I learned about the necessary preparations necessary to make events possible.

I created a media kits for the ice cream party and a briefing portfolio for the Washington Conference. While I had previously created media kits in my public relations class (COMM351), I was able to apply the skills I learned in class to my internship. My supervisors were impressed that I had previously created a media kit before, and they trusted me to compose the media kit for the ice cream party in a timely manner. I created new documents and edited previous documents in order to create the entire media kit. I learned how to use Adobe Reader, which will prove as a helpful skill in the future, and learned about the importance of a logo and brand. All the documents I created needed the IDFA letterhead in order to show that the media kit derived from IDFA. Within a few short days, I created the media kit and made the deadline my supervisor gave me.

On the day of the Washington Conference, there was a major car accident in front of the hotel where the conference was supposed to take place. The police blocked four streets and a major intersection on the corner of where the hotel stood in place. Several of the IDFA team heard and saw the car accident, which turned into a crime scene because several people died. Then, the IDFA team became worried that this would create difficulties for members who were shortly arriving to the hotel for the Washington Conference. While there was nothing the IDFA team could do, they allowed members to network more than expected to at the round tables just before lunch was served. IDFA President Connie Tipton walked from table to table and introduced different members. We started about 20 minutes later than planned to allow our members and guests to enter the conference in a timely manner. I was able to witness a crisis-like situation, which I had learned about in my public relations classes, but never fully experienced one. It was interesting to see how the IDFA staff handled the situation just before a major event happened.

Throughout the ice cream party, I felt that I was a part of the IDFA team. I walked around to all of the scooping stations and took photographs and videos of people enjoying the party. When I began to tweet and post to social media platforms, I remembered the skills that I learned from my public relations classes. My textbook from COMM231 and COMM232, “Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method” by Carole Rich provided information on how to write for social media platforms, and I found this useful when I began creating tweets and posts for Facebook. Throughout my internship, I saw that Facebook updated to include hashtags into the website. I quickly learned how to use new hashtag feature on Facebook, which was similar to Twitter’s usage of the same element. I integrated my skills from class and from my previous internship to create conversations and excitement on Facebook in relation to IDFA.

**End (July 14 to August 1)**

I didn't realize that the end date for my internship was approaching until this week. I only realized it because my supervisor stressed that she wanted to be sure that all the documents and files that I created were in a shared drive with the rest of the office. This way, my supervisors and IDFA staff could use any of the documents that I created throughout my internship period. When my supervisor explained the need to organize the files, I began to do so and realized how much I had accomplished at my internship. I looked through the hundreds of photographs from the ice cream party, the video clips I shot from the party and all of the documents I used and saved onto my computer. I was surprised by how much I had truly accomplished as I began organizing the files.

I soon realized how short my time had been at IDFA and how much I had learned about dairy products and the dairy industry. I began to think about how much my internship had taught me about communication and public relations. After spending nine weeks with IDFA, I was sad to leave my position as the social media/communications intern. I constructed some feedback for future interns to my supervisors so that they could plan accordingly when creating the internship program again in the future. I suggested that there were more opportunities for interns to write and help with the weekly newsletter. I thought that this would give future interns more writing skills as well as writing samples for portfolios. I discussed the transportation compensation with the human relations director and explained how much this helped me throughout the internship. Even though the internship was unpaid, I felt that I did not have to stress about arriving and leaving work because IDFA gave me the funds to do so.

I am so glad that I had the opportunity to spend my summer not only with IDFA, but also in the Washington D.C. area. While initially, I did not know much about IDFA, I am proud to say that I interned for an amazing association. My internship not only taught me about the professional world, but also how to commute using the metro system and how different Washington D.C. is from College Park and my hometown, Clarksville. I can only hope that future interns will gain the same learning experience that I did.