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Informational Interview

Right now, I am an exploratory major, but I have always been interested in the field of communications. Advertising and writing have been academic interests of mine, but I am still unsure of what major or career path I want to pursue. I have considered the marketing major, but that is more business focused rather than advertising and writing. Since I started attending Ohio State, I have also developed an interest in the design aspect of marketing and advertising. Currently, I am taking a course where I have learned to use Photoshop, and it has been enjoyable to me. Because I have had interests in the advertising industry and the design aspects of marketing, I decided to interview someone who is involved in both. I interviewed Shannon Lieberman who is a lead campaign designer for a new up-and-coming company called Stream Digital. Prior to this company, she worked for Resource—a huge advertising corporation—where she worked for three and half years. She attended Anderson High School in Cincinnati and attained her undergraduate degree in Visual Communications at The Ohio State University. On the side, she started a company with her brother called Oyster World, which is a pre-travel company. This company is to help people become more comfortable financially and culturally before going on a vacation. For example, they will take people to a foreign restaurant to see if people like the food of the country they want to visit, or they will take them to events that showcase the culture of another country to help people see if that is where they want to travel. As of now, the company is non-profit, but she hopes that in the future she can turn this project into something profitable.

The office space she works in is quite small. There are about five employers who work in the office, and their workspace is in cubicles. The atmosphere of the workplace is very casual. In terms of attire, everyone is wearing jeans, and most of the employees were wearing either nice sweaters or button up shirts, but one of the workers was wearing a just a casual t-shirt. She mentioned to me as I walked in that the tone of the office is very easygoing. The employees are allowed to have tattoos, piercings, and can basically wear whatever they feel comfortable in. I found this atmosphere inviting. I am not typically and uptight person; I would consider myself easygoing, so I could see myself working in a similar workplace in the future. Even though the company is small, it had a personable atmosphere where I felt welcomed. The office is informal, which is the one of the reasons this company was started.

For a career in this field, having an undergraduate degree helps you get your foot in the door. A degree in visual communications, communications, or even in marketing would be beneficial to this career. In some cases, she talked about how a degree is not always necessary. If you can show a company that you have experience working with a particular program or can show them what you can do, they could hire you without any college degree. A Bachelor’s degree is the most popular degree rank people in campaign design have. She said that the only reason someone would need to get a Master’s degree would be if they felt like they needed to learn a new skill, but other than that it is not necessary.

There are many skills and abilities that are needed to succeed in campaign design. First off, you definitely need to be proficient in the Adobe programs. Photoshop and Illustrator are essential tools that are needed in any sort of digital advertising career. These programs are used to create promotional posters for mobile and Internet campaigns. Shannon said that she has done few hardcopy ads. Advertising is all Internet based these days, so being “tech savvy” is very important. You also need to have the hand skills to create the ads. Problem-solving is a key ability to have in this industry, as well, because sometimes it becomes frustrating trying to find the right design that fits what your client wants, but also fulfills what the client needs. Trying to figure out what works visually and what looks right is a daily struggle of the job. Currently, Shannon is working on an ad for Black Friday where she is struggling to draw the customer in on the sale without giving away what sale they are having, so people will still buy the products now at full price. Being able to work with and communicate with your clients is an important skill to have. Daily, you will be contacting clients via email or in person to check-in on sales. If you are not personable and are hard to work with, your clientele will become frustrated with you, communication is key. The best advice I received from Shannon about the career though is that it is fine to not know everything, and to stay humble. The ability to comprehend these concepts will help you excel in the field.

In the past, campaign designers were artists who developed everything by hand and who had to develop ads that were all hardcopies. Now, being artist is not just someone who can draw or paint; it is someone who can compose digital works as well. With this being a field centered on technology and digital media, it is a fairly new career. These careers will not being going anywhere anytime soon. Living in the digital age, people are constantly developing new ways to create and design, and there is so much more to explore. The job outlook is positive and is predicted to increase with the incoming generations. Advertising is a part of American culture that will be around for years to come, so this position will be around for a long time. As a campaign designer, you have the chance to move up in the career field to either a position as a lead design, like Shannon, or become the manager or campaign manager of the whole company. With this job, you have the responsibility to search for clients, and to oversee all parts of the marketing and advertising team; you approve the final ads that will be distributed. Currently, Stream Digital does not offer internships because the size of the company, but as the company expands, opportunities may become available.

Interviewing Shannon was very helpful to me. I had been curious about what a typical day is like at an advertising industry, it definitely helped me narrow down what possible careers I may want to pursue. I learned that having technical and problem-solving skills are also important in this industry and that is not all about communication and design. Going into this interview, I thought that all marketing and business workplaces were professional and formal, but I was pleasantly surprised when I was greeted with a hug from Shannon and was informed how casual the atmosphere is. Being an easygoing person, I thought that business and advertising would not be for me because I believed it to be a formal and uptight career path, but now I have a whole new view on the business workplace. Working with digital modes has always been an interest of mine, so pursuing a career where I could use passion would be incredible.