

Nicholas Protasiewicz

David McIntyre

Media, Marketing, and Communications Scholars

11/5/19

Informational Interview Report

For my informational interview, I chose to meet with Ryan Stalzer, a marketing manager in the Columbus area for Accenture, where he has been working for two years, leading a statewide marketing and communications strategy. Mr. Stalzer has been working in marketing and marketing management for over ten years, and most significantly, held a role as marketing manager at Nationwide Insurance. However, his background is in journalism, and only began to pursue a career in marketing after getting his MBA from Ohio State's Fisher College of Business. I decided to interview Mr. Stalzer for several reasons. At the broadest level, I wanted to talk with him because I was considering a career in marketing, and eventually would like to be in a managerial position. In addition, though, I found his career path to be rather interesting, first switching from journalism to marketing, and then from a lucrative top Fortune 500 company to a smaller, more local, one. Through this interview, I hoped to gain insight into these decisions as well as into the life and career of someone in marketing.

When I asked Mr. Stalzer what kind of person should go into marketing and why he decided to pursue it, he told me that marketing is a great way to use your creativity in business. People in marketing also must be flexible and adaptable, being able to think differently based on what project you are working on, what people you are working with, and what consumers you are trying to target. Several other skills that are needed for marketing include strong interpersonal

skills, organization skills, written and verbal communication skills, and sometimes numerical and analytical ability. Mr. Stalzer explained that his pursuit of journalism was also driven by many of the same things that push people into marketing, including the skill and passion for connecting with an audience and creativity. However, he said, journalism demanded incredibly long hours with a financial reward that was not proportional to the effort. Moreover, since a lot of the skills relevant to journalism are transferable to marketing, the transition from one career to another was relatively smooth, especially aided by an MBA. I asked Mr. Stalzer about his thoughts on graduate school and his decision to attend. He told me that he enjoyed graduate school, and that it was useful for learning and making connections, but he warned me against pursuing a graduate degree at night with daytime obligations, as it is extremely strenuous. Also, he explained, it is a large investment in terms of time and money, but in order to get to many high level business positions, it is almost necessary. There are also several other possible education paths to get into marketing. For example, specific marketing certificates can be obtained at either the undergraduate or graduate level and focus on specific aspects of marketing, such as multicultural marketing or marketing management. Associate degrees can be useful for people who want to start working as quickly as possible after high school, since they can take around two years to complete. And while rather uncommon, if you want to get into advanced consumer behavior research or quantitative marketing analysis, a PhD could be helpful.

I then talked with Mr. Stalzer about his career at Accenture specifically. I was curious as to what he thought about his current job vs. working at Nationwide. As it turns out, he said he enjoyed working on local or state-wide marketing campaigns as opposed to the national work he was doing with Nationwide. National marketing was more focused on simply drawing a wide

range of customers towards a particular brand, whereas local marketing has the job of furthering and developing those relationships as well as being able to target specific demographics. When I asked him about a typical day of work, he responded that his work schedule changes a lot depending on who is working with at the time, but much of his work includes answering emails, attending meetings, and approving marketing campaigns. He described how he does significantly less of the actual creative work of marketing, since he is in a managerial position. We then got into a discussion about marketing itself and how technology relates to the field. Mr. Stalzer explained how marketing is at its core about adapting to consumers and how they take in information, so as the consumer base changes so too does the technological aspect of marketing. As someone who worked in marketing during the enormous growth of the internet, he understands the role social media, web design, and other technologies play in a successful marketing campaign. Moreover, as marketing has become increasingly centered around technology, the role of specific marketers has become more specialized. There are many different aspects of marketing (he explained by gesturing to a random painting in the Panera we were meeting at: “even this is marketing”), and since technology necessitates marketing on more and more platforms, that number continues to increase. This insight led to another piece of advice he gave me, which was that if I were to pursue a career in marketing, to know what kind of marketing I was interested in. If an employer sees a job candidate who is just interested in “marketing,” that may not be very useful to them. Rather, marketers should look into specific types of marketing, such as digital marketing, social media marketing, and inbound marketing. In addition to more advertising-based marketing careers, we also discussed jobs such as public

relations managers, market researchers and analysts, and media buyers. Several of these careers require unique technological skills, such as coding.

Overall, the interview was a valuable experience and insight into the career of marketing. In terms of the information, the interview was about what I expected. I had already done a significant amount of research on marketing, both the skills and education required and career opportunities, for other MMC work, so what I was mostly interested in learning from the interview was how the information I learned worked into daily life in marketing, as well as Mr. Stalzer's impressions of the companies he worked for. My impressions of the field overall did not change much following the interview specifically, but I have been coming to the conclusion overall that marketing is probably not for me. I appreciate the creative and ever-changing nature of the field, but I think I would rather my creative outlet be a hobby than a job, and other industries such as finance have simply begun to interest me more. While I understand that marketing jobs are in high demand, many other business industries such as logistics management are as well, with just as many opportunities. Additionally, from the input of Mr. Stalzer and various other advisors, it is easier to transition from other careers to marketing than from marketing to other careers. Therefore, it would probably behoove me to focus my time at OSU on a different business specialization, and then if at some point in the future I decide marketing is right for me, I can always either transition directly into the industry or go back for graduate school.

My next steps in my career exploration/path are still relatively simple. I should keep doing research, as well as attending club meetings such as the Undergraduate Finance Association or Undergraduate Economics Society, to get more information about careers that I

could have a future in. I am already attending a professional development project group through MMC, and talking to various upperclassmen about what I should be doing to stay career ready. Additionally, I need to keep updating my resume constantly, as well as checking LinkedIn and AlumniFire to stay up to date on internship opportunities. Finally, I plan on conducting more informational interviews throughout the semester, hopefully learning as much from those as I did from this interview.