

Katelyn Garren

PUBR 4080

Term Paper

Internship With The American Cancer Society

For my PR internship, I decided to apply for a position with the American Cancer Society. I picked this position because I felt that it would most resemble the type of work I wish to do after graduation. After my interview, the position was offered to me and I started on May 29 and finished on July 24 with 127 hours.

At my internship, I had my own desk and a company laptop that I could use during my time. My job was to assist my supervisor, Anthony Piercy, in promoting events, reaching out to the community, and general tasks. The biggest projects I worked on were Paint The Town Purple, Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, Battle of the Batter, Light up the Night 5K and writing press releases.

For Paint The Town Purple, I was in charge of creating a plan to get businesses involved in helping us promote the Washington County Relay for Life. I had to choose businesses and go to them with promotional items for the event.

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer is an event that has a kick off breakfast in August. It was my job to call businesses and ask if there was someone there interested in finding out more about breast cancer and if I could send them an invitation to our invitation only event. I was also tasked with writing a press release to promote The Washington County Relay for Life, sending sponsorship letters, and creating promotional kits from the stock room.

For the Battle of the Batter and Light up the Night 5K events, I was mainly in charge of creating press releases and fliers and the going out to local businesses and promoting the events.

There are several benefits and skills that I have learned from this position. I have written press releases before for classes, but never for a job so that made me a little nervous, but that also made me concentrate more on writing a good press release. I also received pointers on it from my supervisor who has written many press releases. I know that I definitely obtained better networking skills because I learned how to walk in a business and speak with management. At first, I was really nervous about it, but the more I did it and the more I worked at my presentation, then the easier it got. I think that I also benefitted from being able to see how I need to approach situations when I am trying to promote or “sell” something to a complete stranger. Overall, this experience gave me more confidence.

We were asked to read an article by Chip and Dan Heath and were asked to apply their ideas to one of our duties during our internship. I decided to apply these methods to the Paint The Town Purple event that I worked on. I actually read this article half way through my work on this project and so I was really able to see the differences that the application made.

When I began working on Paint The Town Purple, I didn't have a lot of direction because my supervisor put me completely in charge of managing every aspect of this event while he focused on the main Relay for Life event. I was not sure how to approach the businesses, which businesses I should approach, or how to even really come up with a plan. This is something I have never really done before and it was a little intimidating.

When I was ready to finally go out into the community, I was given posters to try and persuade the businesses to hang, donation cans for them to set out, brochures for them to put out, and donation tags for them to hang in their windows. Having all of these different requests for the businesses was very overwhelming and I felt tongue tied trying to explain all of these aspects to a business manager while they were really just bored and wanting to get back to work. This

was not working at all. I went to many businesses and only one of them seemed to be somewhat interested in participating.

After the first day of this, I was pretty down about just getting a lot of negative response. Then I read about the Heath brothers six principles. I decided to look at this in a whole new way. I definitely needed to use the principle of simplicity. I decided to choose one of the promotional items, the event poster, to pitch to the businesses. It was too confusing to try and sell businesses four items in five minutes. It was confusing for both me and the managers. I decided that I would just talk about the poster and focus on that. Then if they agreed to use it, I would just ask if they were interested in using any more of our promotional items.

Another principle I utilized, was the credibility principle. The first day I went out, I would always start by saying, "Hi, I am Katie and I am with the American Cancer Society here in Johnson City." I stated who I was, but I still had no success. After reading the excerpt, on the second day I made sure to grab an American Cancer Society badge from the office before leaving and fastened it onto the front of my shirt. I used the exact same opening line and noticed that people would immediately glance at the name tag. I think that the extra visual really helped in my credibility because it helped in looking more professional.

Finally, in some of the establishments I visited, I tried to use the emotion principal if it seemed like the person I was speaking with was not fully sold. On the poster I was asking the businesses to hang up, is a 9 year old girl from Johnson City who is a cancer survivor. If I felt like it was going to be a hard business to persuade, I would change how I pitched the poster to them. Instead of saying, "we are contacting businesses to see if they will help us promote our Relay for Life event." I would instead say, "We have a local survivor who is age 9 and we were wondering if you could hang her poster to publicize the Relay for Life." As I said this I would

hold up the poster so they could see the child I was talking about. They would usually immediately agree to take the poster.

After putting these three of the six principles into practice, I had tremendous success. On the first day, I visited 9 businesses and got one maybe. After I changed my plans, I visited 13 businesses and all of them hung the poster and some of them agreed to use some of the other items as well. I felt really accomplished because I was able to reach some high profile establishments like Wal-Mart and Walgreens.

Overall, I have had an amazing experience working with the American Cancer Society. It has taught me a lot about what it is like to be out in the work force and to have the responsibilities of a real career. Having deadlines and meeting them was both exciting and left a feeling of accomplishment. Everyone that I met in the office was very nice and very helpful in making sure that I felt comfortable and had everything that I needed. My supervisor was great and very easy to work with. It was a great experience to finally be able to put everything from my classes into practice for real. My internship really gave me evidence as to what parts of Public Relations I most enjoy and gave me a better sense of direction for my career path. This opportunity has been great and it was rewarding to be able to work on a team that makes a difference in so many people's lives.