

Internships in Sport Management

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Chapter One

Self-Assessment

The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will.

---VINCE LOMBARDI---

The ability to determine who you are and the attributes you have to offer a sport organization is paramount for your future success. Components of this self-determination include examining your self-confidence; establishing a personal “game plan for success”; identifying your interests, needs, and wants; recognizing your strengths and weaknesses; and assessing your ability to use technology. Investigating who you are becomes essential because your cumulative life experiences help to shape your decision-making process, which will impact your career choices. You need to remember that the ideal internship is one that leads to a full-time position. Therefore, understanding who you are and how you intend to pursue an internship becomes part of your “game plan for success.” An important concept to remember is *proper planning prevents poor performance*.

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is an absolute necessity for future success. Believing you can accomplish a task is half the battle. If you believe in yourself, you will become more self-confident, which causes others to believe in you as well. Michael Jordan once said, “Some people want it to happen, some wish it would happen, and others make it happen.” You need to believe in yourself in order to make it happen! You are probably thinking to yourself, okay, so how do I “make it happen”? Actually, the process is not a difficult one. You need to identify positive and negative statements (i.e., internal messages) that you make to yourself. By identifying the negative thoughts, you can begin to work on them.

Ask yourself the following questions. If you answer in the affirmative, you can assist in *growing* your self-confidence, which as previously stated will enhance other people’s belief in you as well. So here we go...

- Do you regularly acknowledge your positive accomplishments?
 - Examples include the following types of positive internal messages: *I did an excellent in-depth analysis for my Sport Law research paper. I established a timeline and kept to it, which allowed for multiple drafts. By not procrastinating I was able to submit the paper three days early. My grade reflected all the hard work I put into the paper. Way to go!*
- When approaching a difficult task, do you give yourself a pep talk to ensure a positive frame of mind?
 - Examples include: *I submitted a high-quality résumé and cover letter. I have researched the internship and have had my roommates ask me multiple questions that I may be asked during the interview. I have prepared myself to the best of my abilities and I know what it will take to succeed in this internship. My preparation and planning have prepared me to for this interview. I am confident in my abilities.*
- Have you practiced your oral communication skills?
 - Examples include: *Establish good eye contact. Use hand gestures and voice inflection to emphasize important points. Exude an aura of knowledge and confidence. Update yourself on the current industry terminology and be aware of any recent changes that could potentially impact the internship.*

Now, consider any types of actions or beliefs that may undercut your self-confidence. Ask yourself the following questions. Each “yes” answer may mean that you are impeding your chance to *grow* your self-confidence. Unfortunately, this may negatively impact others’ belief in you as well.

- Do you criticize yourself for making mistakes or errors?
 - Examples include the following types of *negative* internal messages: *I can't believe I procrastinated again on that assignment in Sport Marketing! I didn't leave myself enough time to review the paper before submitting it. How could I be so stupid not to complete the assigned reading?*
- Do you sabotage your efforts with negative thoughts when approaching a difficult challenge? Examples include: *I don't have the necessary experience for this position. There are better qualified people for the internship. My interviewing skills suck.*
- Ignore or dilute your previous experiences?
 - Examples include: *If it weren't for Dr. Garcia, my résumé would be substandard. My girlfriend's father got me the internship, not me.*

Take some time during the next few weeks and analyze your thoughts. Are they constructive and therefore do they *positively* impact how you feel about yourself? Or are they *negative*, perpetuating your lack of belief in yourself? *You* are the only person who can control these thoughts. The process of eliminating these cynical attitudes is not easy. In most cases it is a marathon and not a sprint. It will take a great deal of perseverance and a lot of honesty on your part. Recognizing your pessimistic opinions and vowing to replace them with optimistic ones will lead to an increase in your self-confidence and ultimately maximize your results. Remember that nothing that is worthwhile in life comes easy.

We have provided some *Examples of Success* (below). In some cases these individuals faced insurmountable odds, but persistent self-confidence as well as a positive *attitude* helped them achieve a successful outcome.

Examples of Success

Review these examples of various individuals who successfully overcame challenges. Some of these individuals possess attributes we can only dream of, but others were normal individuals like you and me. Without self-confidence, their success would have been jeopardized.

- ▶ The people of New York City believing they could overcome the horrific events that took place on September 11, 2001.
- ▶ Nelson Mandela believing that after 27 years in prison, he could implement a multi-racial democracy ending South Africa's apartheid government's repressive regime.
- ▶ Brett Favre returning to the NFL at the age of 40, believing he could overcome the effects of old age and football naysayers who said he was washed up as a quarterback.
- ▶ Cal Ripken believing he could break Lou Gehrig's record by playing more than 2,130 consecutive Major League Baseball games.
- ▶ Michael Jordan, after retiring from a stellar career in the NBA to play Major League Baseball, returning to the Chicago Bulls to lead them to three NBA championships.
- ▶ Lance Armstrong, professional cyclist, believing he could successfully compete internationally after recovering from testicular cancer. He went on to become the only road-racing cyclist to win the prestigious Tour de France seven consecutive times.

Game Plan for Success

A *game plan for success* is something most people have not thought about. However, we challenge you to name a successful sport franchise or well-known corporation that does not possess such a plan. In business, these policies are termed "strategic plans," but they are similar in nature to a college athletic team's game plan for an upcoming opponent. How can you hope to complete a successful internship without understanding how it fits in your game plan? Possessing such a plan is important because it guides your efforts to succeed in the sport industry. A sound game plan for success allows you to determine where you want to go, similar to a road

map. Of course, in this highly technological society, we just plug in our GPS system, but you get what we mean.

Hopefully by this point in your sport management career you have a distinct grasp of what constitutes sport management. The most important item to understand is that sport management pertains to the *business* of sport. It has *nothing* to do with coaching a sport, working with professional athletes, or being an athletic trainer. Unfortunately even after taking sport management courses for several years some students continue to see the word “sport” and don’t see the word “management.” Supervising the ticket office of a professional sport team, directing employees at a sport arena, coordinating compliance information for an intercollegiate athletic department, or managing the marketing efforts of an international motor sports event are examples of sport management positions. A major (or area of concentration) in sport management prepares students for careers in sport event management, intercollegiate athletic departments, minor league sport, sport facility management, sport marketing, sport promotions, and other areas of the expanding sport/business and sport/entertainment industries.

To determine your game plan for success it helps to look ahead to where you want to end up in sport. The type of position you hope to hold in sport business 5–10 years from now will be contingent on what you are doing in sport 3 years from now. The type of sport management position you have 3 years from now will depend on your position in sport 1 year from now. Finally, the type of sport management position you have a year from now is ultimately dependent on your internship. Do you now begin to understand the importance of that first step (internship) in your game plan for success? Once you have identified the direction you need to follow to meet your ultimate objective as a sport manager, you will be better able to answer fundamental questions about your professional future.

Application

At this point, complete Application 1.1.

Application 1.1: Devising Your Game Plan for Success

After writing a one-page narrative describing your game plan for success, you should be able to better understand where you want to be 5–10 years from now and the direction you need to pursue to accomplish that goal. Anything is possible if you make an attempt. As Wayne Gretzky was fond of saying, “you miss 100% of the shots that you don’t take.”

Overall Career Goal Statement

<i>Area of Development</i>	<i>1-Year Goal</i>	<i>3-Year Goal</i>	<i>5–10-Year Goal</i>
Area of Sport Industry			
Specific Job Title			
Duties/Responsibilities			
Salary Range			
Benefits			

Thinking Outside the Box

As W. Edwards Deming once said, “It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory.” If, however, you want to survive—and succeed—soon you will be required to make a very important decision... in what area of the sport industry you hope to land an internship as well as where in the country you want to complete an internship.

First of all, we need to discuss the difference between “wants” and “needs.” For example, as a potential intern you must learn the difference between “wanting” a career and “needing” a job. *Careers* are long-term endeavors in a chosen field, but to be successful you need to have prepared yourself with the proper training and commitment to do whatever it takes to achieve that career. *Jobs* are temporary positions that individuals secure in order to pay the bills. Unfortunately, by not adequately preparing oneself, many individuals are relegated to a lifetime of “jobs” and they never achieve the “career” they envisioned as a sport management student. Some sport management students believe that all they need to do is finish their coursework, complete an internship, and a job in sport will magically appear. This will never happen. A career takes strategic planning (refer to your game plan for success), vision, sacrifice, and—every once in a while—the willingness to take a risk. However, not everyone possesses these attributes or they may not be willing to venture outside their comfort zone. If that is true for you... welcome to the world of jobs. You want a career? Keep reading!

Why are people stuck in the continuing “job” cycle? We believe there are three main reasons: Some students are what we term “geographically challenged.” They don’t understand that there are 49 states other than the one they reside in. Let’s go back to what we were saying... if you want a career in sport, then you need to investigate where those careers are located. Some areas of the country possess higher levels of unemployment than others. Some students’ frustration in not finding a career in sport is proportional to their stubbornness about leaving their local area.

As previously mentioned, the number of work-related opportunities in sport is extremely limited in some parts of the country. The competition for those careers that do exist is off the charts. Employers in the sport-industry (or any industry for that matter) want the “best” and the “brightest.” So what type of sport-related jobs are available near where you live, as well as in most other parts of the country? Go to any online job summary database (such as TeamWork Online) and see what 90% of the positions involve. You guessed it... that five letter word that some students shudder to see... S-A-L-E-S. So what is so wrong with sales? Sales is nothing more than selling someone on the idea of purchasing a product. This is exactly what you try to do during an interview... correct? During an interview, the product is you and most of us have no problem in selling ourselves. Gaining experience in sales provides an unbelievably solid business foundation upon which “careers” are built. So do *not* whine about wanting a career in sport and then say, “but I don’t want to sell.” How does one avoid these previously mentioned problems? By looking “outside the box”... by being creative... by being a visionary. What are going to be the “hot” type of jobs in sport? Where can a smart student armed with a degree establish a niche? Here are several possibilities:

- a) We believe positions working with sustainability (“going green”) will be hot for the next 2-3 years.
- b) Due to our aging population, anything to do with programming or fitness-related activities for seniors will be hot for the next 10 years.
- c) There are over 2,500 universities and colleges in the United States. Most have some type of campus recreation program. Each of these programs needs to be managed in some capacity. Current students can acquire a wealth of experience by completing practicums/volunteer hours at a variety of nearby locations, including your campus recreation center.
- d) Sport-related “service” providers will always have openings. Though they are a definite segment of the sport industry, these types of positions are not quite as attractive as others and therefore don’t have the large number of applicants, but they usually pay fairly well. These types of careers include food and beverage companies, as well as companies that provide products for facilities and teams (stadium seating, lighting, and scoreboards, to name a few).

Again try not to limit yourself... expand the possibilities so you wake up with a *career* in sport and not a *job* hangover.