**Social Media at TechBivvy: A Summer of Lessons**

Over the course of this summer semester, I have worked in an internship for a company named TechBivvy. TechBivvy, based in New Mexico, was founded by architect Julia Takahashi, and specializes in bivouacs for people in the tech industry. A bivouac is a temporary shelter or housing. It should be noted that TechBivvy does, however, also have an additional focus on getting young children and other people into coding. The company motto is “Live, Work, Learn, Play”.

I had gotten an account on Internships.com, and TechBivvy was looking for social media interns. Some time after an interview over the phone, I was hired. In fact, I was offered the position right away at the end of the interview, but for some reason, I suddenly felt uncertain, and asked Ms. Takahashi, to call back at a later date. It was on that date that I accepted the offer.

I would meet with Ms. Takahashi at least once a week, with us agreeing on Mondays at 2:00 PM Eastern Time. When meeting with her, she would give me an assignment for next week. Sometimes I would end up meeting with her again that Wednesday, and we would go over what I had done so far for the week’s assignment. I learned early on that over the course of the six-week semester, I would need to work for a total of 160 hours for a chance to receive full credit towards a Master’s degree.

**Week One**

Before the first week of the semester, my assignment due the start of the first week in which it did was to come up with a social media plan based on at least three web pages with lists of tips. Everybody around me said that my boss actually wanted me to look at how several other architecture companies handle social media. I ended up doing both. Ultimately, it turned out that I was correct, and Ms Takahashi proceeded to give me a few more assignments to do over the course of the first week of the semester. These assignments were to figure out three questions to ask her regarding the goals TechBivvy has for social media, to understand the target audience, and to learn who uses various social media sites. I managed to do the first task rather easily and quickly. The other two, however, gave me a bit of trouble. While I was given a couple search terms to start with, I ultimately only found a few resources, with none that were up-to-date.

We were intended to have a second meeting that week on Wednesday, but Ms. Takahashi missed the meeting because she had a chance to meet with a colleague of hers. She had failed to inform me because she did not know if the phone number I had given her was able to send and receive text messages or not.

I learned some things from the first week. One thing I learned was the general idea of what coming up with a social media plan entails. Another thing I learned was that my boss may miss meetings sometimes. What I learned over the course of week one would be reinforced over the course of the following weeks.

**Week Two**

At the start of the second week, I was able to find more information on social media demographics in general by searching for “Instagram demographics”. In hindsight, this indicates to me that one can sometimes find info on a broad subject by trying to find something specific related to that topic. The next day, while waiting for the meeting scheduled for that Monday, I was able to find more current information regarding social media demographics. Unfortunately, it seemed like no sites existed with up-to-date info regarding the demographics of start-up founders. Indeed, my attempts to find current statistics in that area would be frustrated for the rest of the semester.

Ms. Takahashi ultimately did not call on Monday, as she had an unexpected guest. She rescheduled the meeting to Tuesday. Some time before that Tuesday meeting was intended to happen, I was given the idea to do some research into initiatives to get girls and women into programming. I started looking into that topic, intending to give my boss the idea to have that be the assignment for that week during the meeting. She ended up not calling, so I continued going through information on the subject, and eventually e-mailed her about it. The next day, she e-mailed me back, approving of the idea and explaining that she had the flu. She asked for statistics to be included in my report, as well as to keep trying to find good info on social media demographics. She also ended up rescheduling the Monday meeting for the third week to Tuesday.

Overall, the second week of my internship taught me about being proactive, as well as reinforcing the lesson that my boss may not always be able to make it to meetings.

**Week Three**

For the third week of the semester, I was told, in addition to finding statistics on women in coding, that I was to make a list containing every social media website in existence.

While I was not able to find new sources for my report on women in coding, I was definitely able to find some statistics, as well as expand on what was already in the report. In fact, I had expanded to the point that I had effectively doubled the length of the report in question. Unfortunately, I could not find any new sources for my report on startup founders and social media demographics. What I did find sources for, however, was a report on what the various social media sites in existence are. Specifically, I had found the top 15 sites.

Something I learned from my third week was that adding relevant statistics to a report can make it seem much more substantial and professional.

**Week Four**

At the meeting which kicked off week four, I learned that Ms. Takahashi wanted me to try to expand the list of the top 15 social media site to a top 25. She also wanted a more detailed analysis of these sites, meaning their demographics and any post advertising programs (i.e. programs to allow businesses to promote their posts so they will show up for users, even if they are not following the associated account).

Any attempts I made to expand the list to 25 entries were unsuccessful, sadly. Any pages I found with more than 15 entries were rather unhelpful. This is because they were either (in one case) extremely outdated (by several years, in fact!), or in no particular order. The problem with a very outdated list is that popularity of the sites in question will have most likely changed dramatically within that span of time. A list that is not in any particular order, no matter how many entries are on it, will be useless for identifying trends among the more and less popular sites.

Thankfully, I was able to get demographic and advertising program information much more easily. Pages with demographic information for the top nine entries on the list were readily available (though I was not able to find any for the lower six). Finding info on the advertisement programs for these sites mostly involved going to the page for the program on the site in question. For some reason, looking up information on a Google+ advertising program did not seem to yield any information from the service itself. Instead, I ended up finding a blog post talking about the Google+ advertising program and how it works. The bottom five entries on the list did not have any ad programs. I noticed this and concluded that the less popular social media services do not use advertising, either because they do not wish to, or because of a lack of anybody wishing to invest in a relatively unpopular service.

This week reinforced what I had learned so far about research. It also reinforced the lesson from the previous week that adding more information will expand a report dramatically, in addition to making it more informative and useful.

**Week Five**

With the start of the fifth week, the semester was beginning to wind down, so to speak. On Monday, my boss wanted me to put everything that I have learned and done together into one final assignment. I was tasked with creating a whole social media plan, using an eight-step Wikihow article as a guide. I was to follow the first two steps in the article before that Wednesday. The article in question listed the steps as follows:

1. Know Your Marketing Objective
2. Know Your Target Audience
3. Develop a Content Plan
4. Determine Calls to Action
5. Tools
6. Execute & Experiment
7. Measure (the results)
8. Adapt

To make things easier, Ms. Takahashi told me right at the start that the marketing objective was to build traffic and readership for TechBivvy’s website. She also informed me that she wanted my plan to target girls and women in coding. What I had to do with this information was expand upon it to include more detail, such as what the target audience is interested in.

I had to request help with the second step, as I barely knew where to start with searches to find what interested the target audience. I was told by my boss to look at some articles on Forbes related to the subject, and while at first, they seemed to be unhelpful, taking a closer look at the articles did indeed show snippets in each one of what women in the computer industry are interested in. This shows to me that, even if an article seems mostly unrelated to a subject I am researching, it may, in fact, have some relevant info. I had also eventually managed to come across other articles about women in tech.

I managed to get quite a bit done before the second meeting of the week on Wednesday. Although I had personally considered my work on steps one and two not entirely finished by the time I had to send it to my boss for the meeting, she seemed pleased with it, certainly enough to give me the next part of the assignment, which was to do steps three and four. In order to assist me, she informed me of the “Live, Work, Learn, Play” motto, and sent me some documents to show what is specifically meant by each part. She also told me that she wants the plan to cover the use of three sites: Facebook, Twitter, and what she thought was a video site named Parachute.

It took me a while, but I eventually brainstormed some ideas which took advantage of the long-form blog-like nature of Facebook, the fast pace of Twitter, and the unique uses of the medium of video for Parachute. While I was not able to find a video site named Parachute (The closest I could find was a company specializing in social media analytics), I figured it would be like a typical video site (I had sent my boss a text message asking for help, but got no response). A lesson to be gained from this is that, when coming up with content plans, the content should fit the service you use.

**Week Six**

The final week of the semester had begun with my boss informing me on Monday that she would be busy, and therefore unable to call on that day. She did, however, give me an assignment to do for Wednesday: Filling out steps five and seven for the report (skipping step six and eight). She also wanted me to have it be fully written out.

The tools, as previously established, would be Facebook, Twitter, and Parachute. For step seven, I had found analytics tools for Facebook and Twitter easily enough, as SproutSocial provides the relevant information for Facebook, and while it provides such tools for Twitter as well, I had firsthand knowledge that Twitter has built-in analytics tools for each tweet.

It was at this point that I had another try at asking my boss for help with finding Parachute. She gave me a link to the website for Parachute, which turned out to be a visual effects company. With this revelation, we both agreed that Youtube would be used as the video site of choice instead. Conveniently, Youtube has a built-in analytics tool as well.

With all of those steps filled in, it was time to write out the report. As I did so, I actually put in a few suggestions which were not in the outline, namely a couple of content ideas for Youtube.

When the Wednesday meeting came, Ms. Takahashi liked my report overall, though she felt that some small adjustments needed to be made, chief among them being that the report needs the actual number of tech startup founders there are, among other small things. We agreed that we would have a final meeting the following Monday so that I can give her the revised version of the report.

A lesson I learned from this week was that I should really ask for help if I need it.

**What I Learned, In Summary**

I learned many things over the course of this internship:

I learned that my boss will not always be able to make it to meetings due to factors which are out of their control. It can be frustrating, but they are only human. It is important not to get angry when this happens. Instead, I should be understanding and move on.

I learned to be proactive in my job, no matter what it is. Going above and beyond the call of duty, such as performing relevant, unassigned tasks, can prove to be very impressive. It shows that I am a hard enough worker to go out of my way, and will open doors for me in the future.

I learned that adding statistics to a report can make it much more detailed and professional. It makes a report in question far more informative, giving the recipients of the report concrete information with which to make informed decisions.

I learned that even a seemingly mostly-unrelated article can have information on a subject. Whether it is a single sentence, or even a whole section, a text of tangential relevance to a research topic can have good information.

I learned that content posted to a social media service should reflect the unique aspects of that service. After all, if one puts a short enough post on Facebook, it might be best to just put it on Twitter.

I learned to ask for help if it is needed. I tend to be resistant to the idea of asking for help, even if I actually need it, which is something I need to get over.

Most importantly, I learned a lot about how to come up with a social media plan. Among other things, it requires a solid goal, a target audience, and the right tools. Without a goal, there will be no way to tell what should be done. Without a target audience, it becomes far more difficult to figure out what content should be posted. Without the right tools, the target audience may not be reached, or the content may be ill-suited for the chosen platform, neither of which is desirable.

In general, this internship was about two things: research and business-related communication. These lessons in these fields should prove to be very useful as I advance my career.

**Overall Feelings**

As a whole, this internship went rather well, in my opinion. Even the week when my boss was unable to come to any meetings was valuable. It not only helped reinforce the lesson that bosses will sometimes miss meetings, but it also gave me a chance to be proactive and do something which was unassigned.

There were a few things which I feel like I could have done better. One of those was my failure to find certain statistics. While part of it may be a lack of recent studies, it is also possible that I still need more experience in the field of doing research.

Overall, however, I feel that I did a good job on this internship. I followed my boss’s instructions, and she always seemed to be pleased with the results, which were usually quite comprehensive.