

Internship Report: Northstar Destination Strategies

Looking back at it, I am confident in saying that the time I spent as an intern with Northstar Destination Strategies was and will be one of the best work experiences I've ever had. Northstar Destination Strategies (Northstar for short) is a community branding firm located in Nashville, TN which focuses its marketing and branding expertise on communities and cities in much the same way that a traditional marketing firm does with consumer products. Northstar has a process by which it employs meticulous research about the community; its past, reputation, potential and more, and then brings those elements to the forefront while developing a unique marketing and branding strategy which utilizes the community stakeholders' vision for their community.

While this portion of the firm is the most significant, Northstar also offers services specific to increasing the levels of tourism within a given community, as well as economic development services which review a client's economic standing and creates implementation plans for growth.

Because of the scope of work which Northstar offers as well as the amount of business it receives, I was fortunate enough to work in several capacities on a variety of

projects while at Northstar, which in turn is the greatest reason I developed and honed a number of skills by the conclusion of my internship.

As a marketing research intern (and later down the road, a community branding assistant) I was required to focus on a wide variety of projects which led to developing many skills in the process; the most important and beneficial of these projects and skills were the marketing research projects, ROI economic impact reports, and various data collection projects I completed. In completing the marketing research projects with which I was tasked, I learned how to quickly and efficiently identify the need of a client and how best to locate the necessary means to fill that need by utilizing proper research channels and expanding my critical thinking skills to bridge the gap between given information and the details necessary for implementation. With the economic impact reports I completed, I learned how best to gather quantitative economic data from online data stores in order to assess the impact of Northstar's services on the economic health of several of its past clients. I drew upon lessons learned from my economic classes at Sewanee ,as well as on-the-job training on how to hone the parameters of a search and thus the results. Because of such projects, Northstar can assure future clients of the tangible results of its services. Similar to my aforementioned economic impact reports, my data collection tasks required that I collect various pieces of information on select regions to be used in a plethora of different ways. In order to efficiently complete these tasks, I had to understand the data I needed and limit the scope of my search so that the

results were in accordance with the data I needed. In both these projects, I developed my research skills such that I can now more efficiently search for and analyze data.

Due to the general learning experience while at Northstar, I would speak of the virtues of both extra and hard work. While I was assigned many projects and tasks, those that I spoke about above I had requested. Though my daily assignments were a bit daunting and complicated, I continuously requested extra projects from various Northstar team members in various departments. Because of this, I was offered the chance to do projects from the research and clientele-projects divisions. This constant undertaking of extra work allowed me to expand my skills while allowing me to prove myself both within the Northstar office as well as to future employees, via a more impressive resume. In order to complete my extra responsibilities, I had to bolster my resolve and work even harder than I had at my previous internships so that I could complete my assigned projects and my requested projects. This I found to be the most enlightening element of the internship: though I'm no stranger to hard work, I wasn't initially adjusted to the level of demand that was needed to increase my workload. I found that my interests in the company, in the career field, and in the specific projects are what bridged the gap between what would be needed and what I was accustomed to and I was thus able to maximize my time at Northstar. These lessons in hard work and extra work were the most impactful of all those I learned this summer and I plan to continue learning and growing from them into this next school year and beyond, specifically improving my academic record and expanding my everyday workload to encompass the completion of projects from which I can grow professionally. In conclusion, the time I've spent at Northstar was transformative and

crucial to my personal and professional growth. This is important as I head into my final year at Sewanee. Beyond this, my internship was an amazing confirmation that marketing is the field into which I hope to enter upon graduating, with a specific focus on the research aspect of the field.