

Over the summer, I worked as an Intern for The Daily Caller, a news website based in Washington, DC, that reports on political and national news to a largely conservative audience all around the world. The site attracts between six and eight million unique visitors every month, and has grown rapidly since its founding in 2010 by Fox News host Tucker Carlson and Neil Patel, a former White House aide to Dick Cheney. The company employs roughly twenty full time reporters and editors, with slightly less than that number also working on the business and marketing side.

Since its birth, the Daily Caller has offered unpaid internships to around a dozen college kids four times a year. I worked from late May to mid-August, and during that time, articles I wrote were published 52 times. This was by far the best part about my internship: I got published many, many times. Indeed, besides the fact that I wasn't paid and had to run packages to the post office occasionally, the internship essentially functioned as a temporary preview of what it would be like to actually work as a reporter in Washington.

My days went something like this: arrive at 8:30 in the morning, leave at 5:00 in the afternoon, and in between, scour the internet, other news sources, and the schedule of upcoming Congressional hearings and votes, for potential articles. Aside from mandatory duty sitting at the office's front desk once a week, we were given freedom to come and go as we saw fit, and to work in several different areas within the office. Though I would have loved to have been paid, this was one great thing about my internship: because our labor was free, the editors that supervised us gave us a lot of leeway to come to work when we

wanted to, to report on what interested us, and to exercise our "editorial judgment" in generating content for the site.

The freedom also meant that the internship was what you make of it. If you wrote one article the whole time you were there, you wouldn't get fired, and everyone was very friendly at all times, but in reality, you would be wasting your time: no one would write you a recommendation letter if you didn't make a positive impression on them, and you wouldn't have much in the way of clippings to show to future employers as proof of your experience. But if you took the initiative and proposed a lot of potential articles to the editor assigned to you, odds are you would get published a lot, even if many of your ideas were "spiked" or rejected.

As far as skills I developed, the days in the office sharpened me from a strong writer with an interest in journalism into someone who actually knows how to generate a news article. I learned how to form concise, accurate sentences that convey the essential details at the very beginning of the article, how to balance giving context with not getting bogged down in details, how to fact check effectively, how to get a sense for the important aspects of the story, what to emphasize as the "lede" (journalistic jargon for the summarizing leading sentence), what to relegate to background detail, and how to make a shapeless blob of information in my head into something interesting and "punchy" on the screen.

I also learned how to do all of the above quickly. Our deadlines weren't really set by editors so much as they were set by the incessant movement of the

24-hour news cycle that cable TV and the internet has enforced in recent years.

If a story that was as little as four hours old had already been picked up by sites like the Huffington Post, which is basically the largest and best-funded online-only news site of the type that the Daily Caller fits into, then it was not as worth publishing as a brand-new story, wouldn't get as many views, and then was worth less as far as advertising dollars go.

With this in mind, articles about less high-profile events like speeches made by Senators, or legislation introduced, or letters between different federal agencies with interesting information in them, were the interns' bread and butter in terms of finding subjects that had not previously been reported on. This was especially true because reporting on the details of the stories that dominated the summer months, like the Edward Snowden revelations, the George Zimmerman trial, and the "Gang of Eight" immigration bill, were normally reserved for the paid reporters.

The internship confirmed and refined my career goals. Previously, I had vague notions of working at a newspaper, but I was unsure of my desires because I knew that it can be hard to make a good living in a business that is changing so rapidly. Having gotten some field experience, as it were, I know that it is possible for a young, skilled writer to rise quickly, and to achieve a measure of prominence within the world of political journalism relatively quickly. However, it has also become clear the TV is where the real money is, which I hadn't thought about beforehand. I still like to write above all, however, and feel very lucky to have gotten this opportunity to improve my writing.