

# Survey Helps Prepare Students for Careers in Advertising

By Michael L. Maynard and Dana K. Saewitz

It's tough to navigate all the changes in the advertising business today. New technologies literally pop up daily. Older forms of media are waning. Many agencies rapidly grow, suffer through layoffs, and then rise to win new business again. The dreadful economic crisis has sabotaged advertising budgets and our 401(k)s. If you think it's tough to keep up with it all when you're actually working in the business, imagine the task of preparing young, fresh-faced college students to graduate and enter this challenging, ever-changing business. Well, we don't have to imagine it — we have to do it every day.

Temple University has over 400 students majoring in advertising. We offer four separate tracks: art direction, copywriting, account management/media planning, and research. We have eight full time faculty members and 22 adjunct instructors. How is it possible for us to offer a well-rounded education, prepare students well for their future careers, ensure consistency, accuracy and positive energy in the classroom, and meet the constantly changing needs of employers? It's not a simple task. The key is to collect lots of feedback: students' course evaluations each semester, graduates' departmental evaluations, and our advertising department's regular evaluation by the university administration.

To further our evaluation, we conducted a survey in the winter of 2008 of approximately 100 employers in agencies, corporate and media outlets. Here are some of the results:

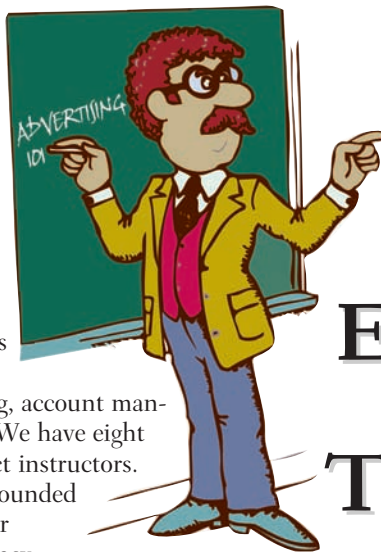
## Need for accuracy

Over 38% of employers said accuracy of work is of primary importance. One employer added "If an intern possesses good attention to detail and good interpersonal skills, all other skills can be taught." In today's culture of googling, text messaging

and multitasking, students often do not grasp the vital importance of accuracy in spelling, proofreading, meeting deadlines and organizational skills. It's our job to make sure they get it.

## Willingness to Seek New Tasks/Positive Attitude

Over 35% of employers indicated that willingness to seek out new tasks and display a positive attitude are of primary importance. One employer wrote: "We want people who are passionate about the business. .they read about it, they understand it and they want to be a part of it ... that enthusiasm provides a good basis for their willingness to get involved during the internship."



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## Job search skills needed

Besides interviewing and job search skills, several employers commented that students also need instruction on "how to

Is Advertising

By Marc Brownstein

I was in a meeting of agency executives recently, when one of the CEOs said, "I worry that

working in an advertising/public relations agency isn't appealing to young people anymore." Several of the other CEOs quickly agreed that young talent is going elsewhere for careers. I found that consensus alarming, as our industry has long been considered sexy by the (naïve) youth entering the business. I say "naïve" because agency life always appears more glamorous than it really is.

If the executives are correct, imagine what recruiting talent will be like.

My perspective, however, differs from theirs. It's been my experience that 18- to 22-year-olds really do still have a passion for this business. In fact, I've been inundated with requests from friends, clients, friends-of-friends and old acquaintances (who remembered what I do for a living) for internships, job-shadowing and job interviews.

I even have people reaching out to me on LinkedIn and Pulse, seeking entry-level employment or just an internship. And my teenage daughter tells me that her friends spend "hours on the Brownstein Group website." Hours? I didn't think that was possible!

But you get the point. Despite what some markets are experiencing, there is still demand for jobs as digital designers, public-relations account executives, copywriters and brand planners.



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dress and act in an interview." Another employer requested that we "prepare students as realistically as possible for what they will face as entry-level candidates in the working world. You have to work hard in order to earn positions, interviews and accolades."

### Changes to Curriculum

To address the issues raised by employers, we have developed several new classes and programs including: Internship and job search seminars, an Advanced Computer Software and Web Design class, and a new Introduction to Marketing class, so students gain, in the words of one respondent, "a strong grasp on the advertising cycle from sales outreach/cold calling to client manage-

ment, to research and results."

### Feedback on our internship program

Recruiting, interviewing and hiring entry-level employees is expensive and demanding. Employers have indicated that many of their current employees actually began as interns and then have succeeded in working their way up the ranks of the organization. One employer wrote "it is crucial for both the student and employer to have internship experiences ... it is helpful for the employer to get fresh ideas without adding the same pressure of an employee."

This survey has been a valuable learning tool. Overall, we concur with the

employer who wrote, "Internship experiences are the foundation of real life learning." In fact, one of the employers who filled out our survey graduated from our program less than two years ago! Through her experiences at Temple University and on the job, she has quickly become a highly productive member of her team at work, and a dedicated recruiter of our best students.

*This article is abridged from a full research study that was presented at the AEJMC (Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication) Annual Conference in August, 2008. The study was awarded Top Research Paper in the Internships & Careers Interest Group.*

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# Still Attractive to College Graduates?

## *Staying Close to Campus Can Keep Industry Brand Alive and Well*

The disparity between what those CEOs are experiencing and what I am may be a reflection of the markets in which our agencies operate. Our shop is in Philly and Seattle, and those cities are still managing to grow in this slow economy. So agencies remain attractive as career options. Philly, specifically, never took off in the dot-com boom, and therefore, never laid off a generation of young people when the digital dam broke. In some markets, like New York and San Francisco, many young people who received pink slips never returned to our industry.

In addition, here are three things we do consistently to connect with college students:



### Speak on campus.

We make it a point to visit colleges several times a year to speak on a variety of topics. It's our way of giving back, while

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recruiting. Each year, I teach an MBA and undergraduate class at Wharton. Our creative director recently gave the keynote commencement speech at Rowan University, which has an excellent marketing program. And I accompanied one of our younger account executives back to her alma mater, St. Joseph's University, for a talk to a marketing class.

### Host an open house.

It's tough to interview every worthy entry-level job applicant, so twice a year we host an open house for all those who send us resumes. Our managers lead the event with an interactive presentation of our agency, followed by a Q&A. Students and recent grads love it.

### Connect to a career-placement office.

We establish close relationships with colleges that have strong marketing curriculums, so that we stay top-of-mind with career counselors, professors and students alike. If we all make an effort to remain appealing as an industry brand to the next generation of agency talent, then I see no reason why we all

can't be inundated with entry-level resumes.



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