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THE LARRISON GROUP (TLG) POLITICAL CONSULTING AND FUNDRAISING INTERNSHIP: LESSONS LEARNED

by

Sadelle Crabb

**Internship paper submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree**

of

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

in

**Economics
in the Department of Economics and Finance**

Approved:

Thesis/Project Advisor
Shannon Peterson

Departmental Honors Advisor
Frank Caliendo

Director of Honors Program
Dr. Nicholas Morrison

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, UT

Spring 2014



BUSINESS HONORS INTERNSHIP CONTRACT

This form must be completed by students registering for a departmental Senior Internship as part of an Honors Degree. The Honors transcript notation ("H") will be added to the internship course (BUS 4250) after the student completes Honors Internship Course requirements and completes appropriate paperwork through the USU Honors Program. This form should be completed fully prior to beginning of the internship.

TO BE COMPLETED BY STUDENT:

Student's Name Socielle Crabb	E-mail socielle.crabb@gmail.com
Student ID# A0217002	Student Phone # (775) 397-2808
Internship Company The Larison Group	Internship Location Washington, DC
Internship Beginning Date 01/02/12	Internship Ending Date 05/30/12
Internship Description Worked with a political fundraising and consulting firm in Georgetown, DC for 5 months.	
Date 4/1/12	Student Signature

TO BE COMPLETED BY FACULTY INTERNSHIP COORDINATOR:

I agree to supervise the Honors Internship to be completed by the above student. I will supervise the student's internship project and will attend/participate in the presentation made by the student at the completion of the internship. In addition to coursework I require of the student, I understand the Jon M. Huntsman School of Business Internship Program will administer standard coursework for BUS 4250 during the internship period.

Faculty Internship Coordinator Name Joseph Banks	E-Mail joseph.r.banks@usu.edu
Title Internship Coordinator	Department BUS
Phone # 435-797-0333	UMC 3500
Date 4/1/14	Faculty Internship Coordinator Signature

SECTION I: JOB DESCRIPTION AND EXPERIENCE OVERVIEW

Overview of Job Description:

The Larrison Group (TLG) is a boutique political consulting firm located in Georgetown in the District of Columbia. The firm was founded by the current president, Ms. Heather Larrison. TLG fundraises for various clients including several current Senators and Congressional candidates. Some past and present clients include: Governor Hailey Barbour of Mississippi, Senator Rob Portman of Ohio, and Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah. TLG also provides political consulting and event planning services for multiple CEO's in the New York City area. The internship is a paid position of two \$600 stipends per month. Overall, I spent roughly 1,050 hours working over a 21 week period. I intended to only stay 15 weeks, but was asked to stay an additional month to train the incoming intern that was also a student from Utah State.

Intern duties included:

- Working primarily with political candidates running for office
- Frequently following-up with donors and their offices via email and phone
- Maintaining the inflow and outflow of mail/FedEx and all office supplies
- Conducting political research as well as company and individual donor research
- Entering and updating information in the company's database
- Drafting event invites, event and travel briefings for hosts and clients, as well as correspondence notes (in both email and formal business letter formats)
- Coordinating catering, venues, and other event accommodations
- Acting as Heather's executive assistant by coordinating her travel plans, maintaining her calendar (meetings, personal appointments, etc.), and any other task requested
- Extensive use of Microsoft Office programs
- Staffing fundraising events as necessary

Skills important for this position:

- Strong organization skills
- Strong interpersonal communication skills (in person, phone, and email)
- Enthusiastic personal disposition
- Ability and willingness to take stringent orders/follow narrow guidelines
- Ability to take feedback and constructive criticism as well as high-stress situations
- Experience with Microsoft Office (especially Word, Excel, Access, and Outlook)

would not have been in the database for her reference. Also, I learned how to be creative and get results even when given very limited information (i.e. a first and last name and a city, or part of a company name and a city). I also demonstrated that I am organized and do a thorough job when entering in data.

Benefit to company:

While it is easy work, it is still important work and there is *a lot* of it! Since my time is less valuable in this office than my boss's, she can focus her energies on less time-consuming and more important things while she knows that I am doing my best to fill in the information that everyone depends on for the office to continue to run smoothly. I entered all of the data and then would print a "master report form" of the information and she would check over it to make sure it was done correctly and also to reference it for who she needed to follow-up with for outstanding pledges, etc.

Learning Objective 2: Appropriate time management

In this type of work where the majority of my work load consists of several very small, varied tasks, it could sometimes get overwhelming and I would not know where to even begin. This is where I had to learn to categorize and prioritize and then apply time management. First I would categorize my "To Do" items either by the type of assignment (i.e. Meeting Briefings, Data entry lists, etc.) or by the client (i.e. Republican Governors Association, etc.) I would then immediately send database entry as well as other long-term projects to the bottom of my list.

Next I would use my best judgment as to what needed to come next (i.e. which event was coming up sooner by date) or I would simply ask Heather. Sometimes there was more background to the assignment that changed its priority level. For example, an event might not be for a few weeks, but if Heather told the campaign staff she would have the invite out by COB

today, then it became a priority I would not have foreseen and our communication was key to getting it done on time. Lastly, this experience also taught me not to leave those long-term projects always at the bottom of my list or they would often not get done. I had to choose days where I would stick in segments of work that was of a “lesser priority” but needed to get done nonetheless. This was based purely on my own judgment as Heather always said “Oh, you can do that later” but often there was never a “later” time where I had nothing to do.

Time management skills developed:

I developed the ability to apply my critical thinking skills to a workplace setting (weighing assignment importance by date, client, etc. and prioritizing accordingly.) I learned general office efficiency (i.e. balancing multiple tasks concurrently... emails, phone calls, data entry, etc.) I also strengthened my workplace communication skills, which is covered in depth in the next learning objective.

Benefit to company:

My ability to complete my assigned tasks in a timely and effective manner made me a productive and trustworthy part of the office team. This obviously benefited everyone because they had less work to do than if I had not been a part of the team. With previous part-time interns, I have been informed that much time was wasted because they were inadequate and their work had to be meticulously checked-over. This was inherently inefficient because they spent more time fixing the other interns' mistakes than they would have spent just doing the added workload themselves. My employer has referred to me many a time as a “God-send” to her. This is of course very dramatic (although flattering), but I am happy that I have been able to be a productive contribution to this organization.

Learning Objective 3: Effective communication in the workplace

I wanted to learn how to communicate in a professional manner. I did so by watching and listening to the way that the others around me did things. When I started writing emails, I would look at the ones Heather carbon copied me on to see how she phrased things. I would also send all of my emails to her first (in the beginning of my time here) to be evaluated before I sent them out. I also listened to the way that she spoke over the phone; how she introduced herself, how she asked assistants for various pieces of information, etc.

When I first started making follow-up calls she provided me with a short script of something to say until I got the hang of it. I learned to speak over the phone in a fashion similar to Heather's, but of course with my own voice/personality. I also learned how to communicate between colleagues. This was very important in our office because we have almost 10 different clients and all 4 of us employees deal with almost each client. This means that frequent, clear communication is a must. We also all deal with tasks that are a mile wide but an inch deep, so asking content questions as well as "how-to" questions was a daily chore for me.

I learned how to listen for understanding when Heather would rush to my desk, drop off 5-10 random papers/assignments and briefly throw out some names and vague instructions. I had to first listen and jot down anything I caught her saying, organize my thoughts into concrete, structured questions, and then approach her for further information I needed. I became pretty good at asking the right kinds of questions during the 30-second exchange of her standing at my desk, and that was helpful. I always tried to put pieces together myself before asking questions to show that I was seeking my own answers and genuinely trying, as I never want to be portrayed as "the intern that can't think for herself". However, I did always (and still do) constantly seek clarification and validation that what I am doing is correct so I don't waste my time or anyone else's.

Communication skills developed:

The skill that I developed shortly after beginning my time at TLG was listening and speaking with understanding. I also learned how to request and how to give clarification in the simplest and most effective manner. I learned how to speak on formal phone calls as well as when composing work emails. I learned a lot of phrases that are helpful in an administrative position (i.e. "following-up", "reaching out", "per...", and spelling letters by "as in" phrases).

Benefit to company:

Once Heather trusted my ability to properly correspond with other offices directly (and thus represent our company) I was given a lot of responsibility in this respect. I was practically given the duty of one client's scheduling as well as following-up with other offices regarding event invitations/RSVP's/etc. sent out by other clients. This freed up a lot of time for Heather to be on more content-oriented calls rather than busy work calls.

SECTION III:
FIRST FULL-CYCLE PROJECT FROM PLANNING TO EXECUTION:
A BREAKFAST EVENT FOR SENATOR HATCH

While TLG is a consulting group that does political fundraising, a large part of the job description includes planning and coordinating events. I was lucky enough to participate in a few different events that we hosted in the District. Three out of the four events I attended were breakfast fundraisers for Senator Orrin Hatch. I would like to detail my experience with the first breakfast I helped staff. It took place in early February, when I had been out in DC for just about one month.

Attending this event was really enjoyable because it made the whole event experience feel complete. Although I had already worked on several projects by that point, this was the first one that I was involved in from the beginning. In a brief summary, I got to make the event

invitations, compile the guest list, and then I also got the job of following-up with all of the offices to secure an RSVP from every invitee (not exactly pleasant, but necessary). I compiled a briefing that detailed all of the attendees as well as event logistics (i.e. location, time line of events, etc.) I compiled two versions: a host copy with Senator Hatch's biography as well as a copy for the Senator with the hosts' biographies. Lastly, I was able to staff the event and meet all of the people I had been coordinating with for weeks.

The event was hosted at a private residence in McLean, Virginia and there were several beautiful mansions located in the area. I was able to meet many esteemed individuals including Ted Olson, who was the Attorney General under President Bush and also had just successfully argued against Prop. 8 in California only two days before the breakfast. Something I really admired about both Ted Olson and Senator Hatch is that although they obviously have some major differences in opinion, they can still come together and be respectful of each other.

I was really appreciative that I was able to attend this event because without experiencing the actual event, and the satisfaction of the client, there is no feeling of completion. Up until that point in February, it was one thing after the other and we never got to see the results of our labor; it seemed never-ending! I think that having no closure might have been enough to drive me crazy. Staffing these events was also a good experience with what it looks like to conduct yourself proper at a formal event, and how to interact with individuals in a friendly yet respectful manner.

SECTION IV: **CONCLUSION AND ASSESSMENT OF PERSONAL IMPACT**

My time at TLG really changed me as a person. Not only professionally, but also as a student. Upon my return to campus, I found myself feel as though I have received a second change at being an undergraduate student. The transition from 5 months of hectic city life as a

young professional is exhausting; I found myself often feeling like a young alumni, out in the world without many contacts. I realized the worth of personal/professional networking, especially when working somewhere like Washington. Upon my return, I immediately applied for the Business Ambassadors program and took advantage of as many alumni hosting events as possible. I have since taken a career exploration trip out to Washington through the business college. Upon conducting these business visits, I realized that I had already met a lot of our great USU network out there, and had already heard a lot of their career advice during my internship.

I think this internship really paved the way for me to putting myself out there in a new, more professional manner. It has definitely shaped my worldview, and I have become a more mature and well-balanced person because of my time in DC. Working with TLG was an incredibly challenging, and yet rewarding, experience. I would absolutely recommend an internship in Washington, DC to anyone even remotely interested—this metropolitan area has something for everyone with positions available in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors.