Orvis Social Media Internship

Orvis was founded by Charles F. Orvis in Manchester, Vermont, in 1856. The company is known as “America’s oldest mail-order outfitter and longest continually-operating fly-fishing business”. Since 1965, the company has been family owned by the Perkins family and today is an international, multi-channel retailer with more than $340 million in sales (2012) and approximately 1,700 employees. In addition to being the world leader in fly fishing, Orvis is also a lifestyle brand, offering a wide assortment of men’s and women’s sportswear, as well as fine gifts, dog beds, luggage and much more. This summer I was hired as a Social Media Intern for the Orvis company. My responsibilities began in the HR department, where I helped research and recommend the best strategies for utilizing social platforms in company recruiting efforts. This role quickly adapted as I began working with the social media manager, helping monitor various Orvis sites including, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and LinkedIn. One of my favorite parts of the internship was working with the editor of Orvis news, writing blog posts, editing stories, and sharing videos with the massive following that Orvis has created.

Throughout the summer I learned something new every day of the week. I had the incredible opportunity to shadow my boss throughout all of his meetings. Everything from conference calls, to managerial meetings with the CEO of the company. My boss Tucker, wanted me to see what it was like to be a social media manager of a big company. The social media industry is extremely interesting to me because of how quickly it is changing and growing. It is also a place where you are always meeting new people, talking with consumers, reaching out to brand ambassadors etc.. It is a job where you need to be a “people person” and connect with every department in the entire company. One of the first skills I acquired this summer was the
basic skill of organization. This began with a simple meeting scheduled on my computer. The entire office communicates on an email/web chat interface which allows us to set up meetings with other employees with the click of the button. My boss would tell me to schedule a meeting with the head of the Men’s department. Two hours later we were discussing how to push the “Buy 2 polo shirts - get 1 shirt free” special that was happening that weekend. In this particular scenario I volunteered to be the model and went out to the lake in the back of the Orvis Headquarters. I had a fly rod and took a few casts into the company pond while my fellow interns snapped some pics for the Instagram. Every once in a while I had to remind myself this was actually “work”.

One of my main objectives for the summer was to sort through Orvis’s “Evergreen Content”. Evergreen content is content we created in-house (a photo, video, article, review), that can be used multiple times. Basically stories, news articles or videos that never die. I was given an excel document with a few thousand blog articles from over the past 5 years. This is when my work began. My objective was to sort through these stories, and rank them based on performance (number of views, number of people who visited orvis.com, and % of new visitors). After I found a way to organize the content, I then began sorting out the content that would be considered “evergreen”. I chose evergreen content on a daily basis and scheduled 4 to 6 posts per day on all of Orvis’s Social Channels, this became a daily routine for me. My next objective was to help populate “The Tug”. The Tug is Orvis’s web based video platform for all of the fly fishing videos on the internet. It was my job to find new videos and upload them onto the site. This is where I used Wordpress and learned coding shortcuts to blog efficiently. Every day I was involved in something new. On some days the Orvis News editor would spin his chair around,
throw a piece of paper at me to get my attention, and then say “Hey Jared, why don’t you write up an article for us today”. So I would pull up a blank word document, and start writing. I often found myself writing articles about fishing adventures I was having that summer. One of my most memorable posts was titled “10 tips for fly fishing small mountain streams”. The article I wrote ended up generating the most sessions out of any other articles for that entire week. It was a little overwhelming to think about thousands of people taking advice from me, but kind of awesome! One of my biggest accomplishments this summer was becoming the first person in the Orvis company to really start utilizing, and monetizing Pintrest as a social platform for the company. After doing some research, I finally worked up the courage to promote a dog bed pin which had been selling well. With a $10 investment in promoting the pin, we ended up raising over $800 in sales while also generating a few thousand new visitors back to the Orvis site. I even impressed the CEO on that one...

What is interesting about the social media industry is that every student thinks they are qualified. Everyone who is 15 to 25 would consider themselves a “Social Media Whiz”, mainly because we grew up during the social media boom. If you want to get a job working in a social media department you really need to have an edge. My passion is fly fishing. I started the Trout Unlimited club here at Sewanee as well as my own fishing blog with over 40,000 viewers, this gave me that edge. Having the ability to go to work every day to work on something you are passionate about is extremely important. Not once did I feel like I was doing “busy work”, or getting bored. I constantly craved new assignments, and continued to work harder the more comfortable I became in the office. The greatest lesson I learned was that you need to be
passionate about your work. If you follow your passions and work hard, eventually doors will open. Then you just need to take advantage of the opportunity.