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Internship Skills and Development Assessment

Coming into college, I would have never believed you if you had told me I would spend my final two years at the University of Michigan working for the Football Team. But here we are, coming to the end of my time here at Michigan, and I would not change a thing. I have enjoyed my time here at Michigan, but the past two years have been my two biggest years of growth. My involvement with the Michigan Football Team along with my involvement in my Christian Fraternity, campus church, and SBA have kept me busy for sure, but my involvement with the Football Team has been the major catalyst for my professional growth.

The Michigan Football Program is one of the most storied programs in College Football history. It is world renown because of its success on the field and its ability to turn boys into men. Anyone who has the opportunity to work for it must see the opportunity as a blessing and a privilege. The majority of my internship was spent working with Coach McDaniels and the quarterbacks. I was coach's go to guy. Whatever he needed, whether it be for practices or games, I was always the one to which he went. He knew he could depend on me, and it was an honor working for him during this season. He treated the other quarterback managers and me with respect and was an example of how to be a good coach and leader.

I took this job for many reasons relating to my career. In the short term, it provided an awesome opportunity to work for Michigan Football, a great privilege and honor. The tough aspect of the job builds grit and resilience, two important traits translatable to any job. Long

term, this position had the opportunity to gain connections in the sport industry. The Michigan alumni network is vast as is, but gaining connections in athletics is vital for my future career. Michigan Football's network is expansive, and I will go into detail about my networking later in the paper. I will also discuss my leadership and operations opportunities along with my development of some soft skills before wrapping the paper up with how my classwork prepared me for this internship.

For the 2019 season, I was elected Head Offensive Manager by the other managers. This responsibility was one which brought many extra duties. My main duty was coordinating equipment and being the liaison between the offensive coaches and the offensive managers. I got in contact with Coach Gattis before the season, and I secured a new responsibility for the offensive managers: the ability to hold the offensive boards during practices and games. This is an extremely important responsibility as without the boards being correct and put up in a timely fashion, the offense could not operate. It was my responsibility to pick out the guys who would be our board holders. During Fall Camp, the board guys rotated quite a bit. During practice, my role was to get the plays to the signalers, so I was unable to do boards and get good at them. By the first game, I had three guys I could trust to do boards and had a system in place to be the most efficient in space. The evaluation process was definitely difficult, but I feel as though I made the best decision. Eventually, I was able to learn the boards and took over for one of the board guys when he could not go to the Maryland game. This role I stayed in the remainder of the season as one of the younger guys I had on boards volunteered to step down to allow me to start doing it. It was a responsibility I enjoyed doing the remainder of the season.

In the day to day of practice, I needed to coordinate the other offensive managers to make sure they were in the right spots to allow us to run efficiently. It took a lot of foresight into what

would be needed and when. While much became streamlined as the season got started, at the beginning, there was much coordination which needed to be done to make sure we had people at each spot. Another main task of mine along this trajectory was filling in for other managers when they were absent. It taught me to keep my head on a swivel, allowing me to learn how to work with many different positions away from my traditional QB manager role. My learned ability of adaptation to any situation saved our manager squad a few times during the year when shorthanded.

Another important thing I learned as Head Offense was the ability to be firmer in my decision making. When having to figure out traveling or who was doing boards or anything else, I needed to be firm in my decision. Everyone wanted the flashy job where they get the most TV time or the most clout, but only certain people were able to do these roles. I am someone who likes to please others, and it was really hard not being able to make everyone happy. Ultimately, the other managers understood my logic behind who I put in the most popular positions and respected my decisions.

From an operations standpoint, working with Mark allowed me to understand in a deeper level the event planning along with financial skills needed to successfully run a football program operationally. Mark put me in charge of getting managers for gameday bus checks and making sure the players were where they needed to be. From being around Mark, it was evident the amount of responsibilities he had. One of the more hidden ones I noticed was getting the police escort together to move the team from place to place before and after games. This was vital for player safety and team convenience, and if Mark just forgot to do it, there would be major issues. Just observing and helping Mark in little ways opened my eyes into the intricacies of team operations.

One of the experiences which had the most impact on me was the talk Coach Herbert gave the managers halfway through the season. It was a talk about his career and how he got to where he was. There were two main points he made that stuck with me. The first one was that you should always be searching and wanting to do more work. The more work you do in an organization, the more they trust you. Being trusted in the minor things and doing a good job with them leads to bigger responsibilities in the future. Also, seeking out work shows a desire to keep learning. Desiring learning new skills shows a desire for growth. The second thing which struck me was the concept of “Don’t tell me about the waves; just bring the boat home”. This quote means to get the job done, no matter what it takes. Too many times, it is easy to make excuses as to why we cannot get a job done and have someone else do it instead. Coach herb told us about how he moved his coach’s car without the keys by calling a towing company to move the car to where it needed to be. This experience has taught me to try to be more creative and disciplined in times of trials or difficult situations because of this principle. If there is a will, there is a way, and I have been using the principle more in my life.

There is much value in what I learned throughout the semester. First, as Head Offense, I learned some valuable coordinating skills. Especially in a complex work environment, it was vital to have everyone where they needed to be at all points in time. Practice and games could not run if we were not in the right places with the right equipment at the right times. Getting practice coordinating people is a valuable skill which translates to many leadership roles I will have in the future. Along with this, learning how to be adaptable was a vital skill I learned. As I have learned, not everything went according to plan. Being able to roll with the punches and adapt allowed me to have success, and knowing this for my future jobs will give me an advantage when things go awry. Finally, the value of learning to stand firm in my decisions was

great. It was difficult for me to not be able to please everyone, but staying firm in my decisions was a huge sign of growth for me.

The value of learning event planning and operational management was very important, especially when it comes to my career goals. I would love to work for a sponsorship company which puts on activation events for its partners. These events require much planning and coordination. Learning these skills now will give me an advantage in future interviews when asked about event planning and coordination experiences. There was so much that had to go on for the football program to run effectively, and knowing the logistics behind it will be very valuable for me.

Finally, the value in the Coach Herbert talk was immense. Learning how to ask for work and want to do more work is so important, especially since society trends toward doing as little as possible to get the job done. Having a little bit of grit to keep going the extra mile is for what future employers look. They want to see someone who goes the extra mile to do more than what is required. Learning the rewards of going the extra mile and knowing how it benefited the company and you was so vital for me to learn, and I was happy to learn that from Coach Herb. His other lesson of getting a job done by any means necessary was very valuable as well. Making excuses was very easy to do, but now, it is harder to do because I know I can do it if I put my mind to it and can come up with a way to get it done. Someone with a “can do” mentality is much more valuable to a company than someone who always takes the easy way out. Companies hire people with positive attitudes where the pessimistic and lazy do not have the success they desire because of their attitudes.

My internship with the football team provided many opportunities to connect my academic coursework to what I have learned over the past few months. The first was relating to

people. There were many people I interacted with during my time with the program, and it was not just all managers. I interacted with coaches, recruiting, operations, strength, and other departments. Because of how many people I interacted with, I had to use some of the skills I learned in Professor Heinze's Organizational Behavior class. One of the main points Professor Heinze emphasized during her class was how psychological safety in groups leads to better performance (K. Heinze, personal communication, 1/30/2019). A lack of psychological safety in a group leads to people not being themselves out of fear of other believing he/she is incompetent or ignorant. In the football building, it was important to always know what you were doing. We felt it would better for the managers to ask too many questions than not enough. We would rather make sure they knew what they were doing instead of not knowing what to do and messing up as a result. There was a high level of psychological safety, leading to a bond of managers stronger than it had been in past years. There were open lines of communication which were vital for success of our squad.

One of the things we dealt with as older managers was trying to minimize egocentric bias. Egocentric bias occurs when we overestimate our own positive contribution and minimize our negative contribution (K. Heinze, personal communication, 3/27/2019). Midway through the season, there were a few instances where people thought of themselves as "irreplaceable". His mindset needed to change from "no one else can do this like I can" to "I am one minute away from being replaced". While it took a while, his mindset shifted toward seeing it as privilege instead of an entitlement.

The Michigan alumni network is massive and is every growing. It is envied by students at other schools. You always hear stories about how extensive the Michigan network is, and working in the Michigan Football program boosted my network to include everyone in that

building. Growing your social network was one of the most important things I have learned during my time at Michigan. You always hear about how it is not about what you know but who you know. It was always emphasized to increase my social capital, the resources in and through my network of trusted contacts in diverse social works (K. Heinze, personal communication, 2/26/2019). Having a high social capital allows for me to extend myself. It allows me to specialize in a few skills while allowing others to use their skills to help me out. It allows my network to be more efficient. What was nice about Michigan Football was that not everyone started in Michigan. All the coaches have coached at other schools. All the operations staff has worked at other schools. They have connections in their previous schools, all of which could be helpful in the future.

While having access to all these connections is great in theory, they mean nothing if I do not keep in contact with them after I graduate and am no longer with the team. To do this, I need to be proactive and plan on when I am going to reach out to them. I also to make sure I am not afraid of the title of someone (R. Wade, personal communication, 12/9/2019). Most of the time, I have learned there are very few people who would turn away from someone asking for coffee or lunch to pick their brains. They typically love talking about their experiences and themselves. Being proactive in reaching out is something I plan on doing after graduation, but it is something I can do during my last semester as well. January is a typical hiring season for football because the season wraps up. Starting to nourish the connections I have made throughout the building will prove beneficial later in life.

Diversity is discussed much in many of my classes. Studies have shown groups work better when they are more diverse. While the University is unable to use Affirmative Action practices to create a diverse staff because of Michigan law, it has created a diverse staff anyway

(J. Basten, personal communication, 11/13/2019). Michigan seemed to be behind the curve when creating a diverse coaching staff, but recent hires have suggested the team has started to see the benefits of creating a diverse staff and diverse team. It is important to remember how diversity is not just racial. It includes diversity in experiences, economics, backgrounds, religions, and other classifications. Coach Harbaugh has done a good job hiring a staff full of diversity. Each of the coaches were hired to fill a purpose and relate to a different group of people. It has allowed Coach to hire some of the best recruiters in the nation. Coach Partridge is ranked 6th nationally, and Coach Gattis is ranked 22nd nationally with Coach Moore and Coach Brown ranked in the top 75 as well (“2019 Football...”, 2019). Each of these coaches have different ages, experiences, locations, and other intangibles that make them great recruiters. Coach Harbaugh must have been in some of my classes that have told me the benefits of diversity include gaining insight from different people about experiences, building affinity and prowess, and increasing group dynamic (R. Wade, personal communication, 11/20/2019). He also knew he could be missing out on potential networking and opportunities to grow the Michigan brand if he did not create a diverse group of coaches and players. It has worked out for him, as it has been evident his diverse team has had success this year. It was definitely something I will look at in the future when looking to build teams because I have seen how a diverse team works firsthand.

In conclusion, my time as the Head Offensive Manager for Michigan Football along as an Operations Assistant was very fruitful and will benefit me in the future. I learned how to be a leader and be firm in my decisions, especially when it came to defining roles for teammates. I learned the ins and outs of event coordination, something very important for me as I try to start a career in a field along those lines. Finally, realizing the importance of having work to do for an organization and being able to work through tough times to get a job done no matter what will

always be important as I start my career. I am thankful for my time with the Michigan Football Team, and it will be an experience I will always look back upon as one of my best in college.

References

2019 Football Recruiter Rankings. (2019, December 13). Retrieved December 15, 2019, from <https://247sports.com/Season/2019-Football/CompositeCoachRankings/>.