

Marketing, Media and Me: Lessons from the Grand Theatre

It is very difficult to sum up my experience interning at the Grand Theatre. I know because I have been trying to figure out how for the past few months. But for your sake, I will try. You have clicked on this link because, unlike me, you did a better job of researching this opportunity. To begin, let me tell you a little bit about myself.

My name is Lana Khudhur. I am currently in my final year of the Honours Specialization in Creative Writing, English Language and Literature program. I completed my Marketing and Communications Internship at the Grand Theatre from January 2024 to April 2024. Come June, I will officially be the first person in my family not to pursue STEM.

Like most of you, when I was first admitted into my program, I was asked, "What are you going to do with a degree in English and writing?" Or, even worse, "So you are going to be a teacher?" In entering this program, I unknowingly decided to pursue what I felt passionate about instead of what I was expected to pursue. I carried that with me, choosing to take classes and join clubs based almost entirely on what I found most interesting. By the end of my fourth year, I realized that I had created a marketing and EDI repertoire. I did not step foot into University College with any intention of pursuing either field, but over the years, by evaluating classes that lulled me to sleep versus those that excited me to write my essays, I ended up here.

Now about the internship. With graduation approaching, I suddenly felt like someone was pushing me off a cliff, expecting me to know how to swim. I know how to swim. But no one enjoys being pushed off a cliff. This internship helped ease my anxiety as I began the transition from student to employee.

My first day at the Grand was amazing. I was able to sit in on my first table read and later engaged in a media day. Media days are when the press is invited to the Grand to promote a new show. That day we were promoting *The Invisible - Agents of Ungentlemanly Warfare*. Later, I was given complimentary tickets to see the show. Media days are some of my favourite days at the Grand because the theatre is filled with immense energy. It often represents the culmination of weeks of work. I found it wonderful to observe so many different members of the community in the same room. As a London Local, I could not help but be starstruck at seeing journalists I had seen in my youth in person.

Most of what I did at the Grand was research plays and write copy. I also created advertorials and rewrote website pages. My biggest challenge in this role was learning to understand and translate the Grand's voice into my copy. This process involved a substantial amount of research and annotations of previous media releases. In my program, I learned how to be very good at close reading. When it came to adapting to the Grand's theatrical voice, this was essential.

Repeatedly, I felt incredibly grateful to have developed the skills I learned through my English literature classes. This was especially important because at times, I wondered if I had developed any actual skills or had improved as a writer. You hear the phrase, 'transferable skills' often in my program. But it never clicks that you are developing transferable skills until you are looking at your old English notes to help you with your marketing internship.

The transition from the educational space to the professional space can often feel daunting. That is certainly how I have felt with graduation approaching. Having this experience has prepared me for the transition into the working world. I urge you to step back and look at the skills you have built through your experiences in and out of the classroom. I did not believe that being in a comedy club for four years would help my writing, but it in fact taught me how to write strong hooks. I took almost every single writing class that Western has to offer and received every level of criticism, but nothing made me work harder than reading out my work to comedians, only for them to look away awkwardly.

Learning to write good hooks is part of why I even got this internship—because I knew how important it is that the first section of my cover letter be anything but boring. Seeing this element in my cover letter led to my coordinator hiring me and asking me to write the hooks of nearly every writing assignment I was given at the Grand. I doubted myself often during this internship and even when applying for it. Even when I succeeded, I questioned whether I could be a writer or a marketer or whatever else I decided to pursue. Someone once told me I was not the Mark Zuckerberg of exceptions. Never let anyone tell you that. At this point in your life, you have not appeared in front of the Supreme Court whilst using a booster seat. That is progress. Pushing through my doubt every time I faced a challenge was essential in this internship and will likely be essential in yours.

Now if you were to ask me, was this internship successful or not? I would say perhaps not. I was sick almost the entire time. I embarrassed myself more times than I can begin to fathom. I was a catacomb of anxiety. However, I had the kindest and most understanding supervisors and coordinators. If you were to also ask me, would you do it again? I would say absolutely—anxiety and all. I cannot guarantee that you will succeed in this internship, but I can guarantee that you will learn something. Please do yourself the kindness of taking a chance on yourself and applying for this role. Good luck.

Lana Khudhur