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SM 403- Internship Paper



## **Paragon Marketing Group -Road Warrior Internship**

### *Introduction*

Challenging, yet immensely rewarding. This sentiment is the essence of my internship this summer at Paragon Marketing Group. I know that this internship prepared me for a full-time career in many ways that I will detail later in this paper. As a Road Warrior, I challenged myself not only with a new job, but also with the added variable of traveling alone for the first time in my life. All in all, I am ecstatic to write about my tremendous experience this summer with Paragon.

My internship took place remotely. I chose to move back to Pennsylvania to be closer to my family and also because I was assigned many of the East coast markets to travel to this summer. While working remotely, I completed travel calls with my managing reps, brainstormed new ideas for on-site activations and completed many other housekeeping jobs (i.e., expense reports). While on-site, I handled and managed activations for national brands such as Gatorade and Pepsi. I learned many lessons about managing a team, designing activations for brand exposure through media, and ensuring a smooth activation from start to finish.

My supervisors as a Road Warrior were Matt Waitz, Elisa Simi, and Sam Katz. All three provided oversight and guidance throughout the duration of my internship. They all provided me with great advice as well, leading me into my next point. This internship is directly in line with my short-term goals of gaining enriching experiences in the sponsorship and marketing space. Being able to challenge myself as a leader in unfamiliar situations in order to successfully activate a partnership fits perfectly with my goal. My long-term goal of becoming an Athletic Director is also related in this internship because I gained valuable leadership experience and also because I learned how the marketing activations work within partnerships, a trait that is critical to climbing the ladder in college athletics. Additionally, this internship

helped to prepare me for my long-term goal through teaching me how to navigate large and complex sports events from conception to fruition. Throughout this report, I will discuss the specific skills that I developed and learned and also connection between my internship and academic coursework.

### *Body Section 1*

As a Road Warrior, I was required to manage the on-site activation of our partners in order to fulfill our obligation to our clients. My main tasks included:

1. Managing national sponsorship activation at various elite youth sporting events and showcases of around 12,000 athletes.
2. Leading a team of around 5-10 Gatorade Brand Ambassadors in executing Gatorade promotional activations and product dispersion to ensure optimal performance of clients activation target goals.
3. Creating and implementing strategies to ensure on site placement of Gatorade signage, premiums and products assist in the enhancement of the national brand image.
4. Managing and troubleshooting inventory/supply shipments for clients while on-site.

As a first-time intern, all of these tasks and duties taught me many great skills and new knowledge of the partnership space within sports. One of the interesting pieces of this internship as far as the development of my skills and knowledge are concerned, was that I was able to travel for a multitude of different clients. All of these clients had unique activation elements and designs. Throughout the rest of this section, I will discuss the clients that I traveled for, and the specific duties and skills that I gained while traveling for a host of different clients.

#### *Gatorade Youth Partnership*

Our Gatorade partnership is by far the most expansive partnership I had the opportunity to work on. Our main goal was to provide Gatorade activation support at youth sporting events. Throughout my various Gatorade activations, I primarily handled three to four Brand Ambassadors (BA's), activation premiums (tents, table covers, and signage), and finally the product.

## Locations

The various events that I traveled to a Gatorade activation were as follows: Christian Pulisic Youth Clinic, Philly Summer Slam Tournament, Nike EYBL Peach Jam, and the Under Armour All-America Lacrosse Game. At all of these locations, I worked with the managing staff to ensure a proper and successful activation.

### *Beverage Sampling*

As a subset to our Gatorade partnership, we also handled the grassroots marketing and sampling of their new product, Bolt24. Our team participated in sampling tours around the country to try and gain feedback on the new product and also to reach as diverse population of consumers as possible. Another sampling partner we just acquired is Evolve. Evolve is a plant-based protein shake that is vegan friendly. Both of these samplings contributed to the breadth of marketing experiences that I had during my time as a Road Warrior.

## Locations

For Bolt24, I traveled to Pittsburgh, PA to handle sampling outside of PNC Park (home of the Pirates). For Evolve I traveled to Buffalo, NY, where I handled sampling and product distribution at various locations around the city and at their famous Taste of Buffalo event.

### *Pepsi Zero Sugar (PZS) Partnership*

Our PZS partnership is one of the more premier partnerships we have at Paragon. I managed two different PZS activations, in order to get the product maximum exposure in certain geographic target markets.

## Locations

I had the opportunity to travel to Canton, OH and also Cleveland, OH for our PZS Partnership. While in Canton, I managed the activation on-site at the Pro Football Hall of Fame during Enshrinement Week. In Cleveland, I handled the execution of exit sampling following the conclusion of Cleveland Indians games.

### *Skills and Knowledge Developed*

Throughout the duration of the internship, I learned valuable skills and knowledge that I will leverage in my future career in sports. The first skill that I gained was the ability to manage staff with diverse backgrounds. While on-site, we hired three or four local BA's that helped to assist in the activation. What made this very interesting for me was the challenge of managing staff that was often ten or more years older than me. I was able to achieve success and feel comfortable in my role as a manager because I treated everyone like an equal member of the team. They each had their unique skills and abilities and I delegated tasks based on their abilities and motivations to do certain tasks, thus resulting in a successful and functioning team. One example of my leadership skills in action occurred while I was traveling to the Philly Summer Slam. I had three BA's who were all under the age of 18. Two of them I could tell were comfortable talking to athletes and consumers about Gatorade products after I provided them with an education sheet (See Appendix A). The third was very shy, but definitely a hard worker. After deciphering these abilities, I delegated the each of the talkative BA's to handle their own activation station. The third BA I used as a 'runner' to make sure that the other two had the products and premiums they needed at each hydration station. Overall, this provides me with great value, as I feel comfortable handling diverse teams and I have experience using the abilities of others to form a successful team who achieves their common goals.

The second major skill that I learned was how to target consumers and create a lasting impression. While managing the activations, our clients often had targeted demo- or psychographics that they intended the activation to target. This allowed me the flexibility to adjust the activations and sometimes even the locations in order to capture the target market. Then, a key component of partnership activation is generating a lead after initial contact with the consumer. I was able to often accomplish this by encouraging the consumer to connect with the brand or product on social media or by directing them to find the product at the nearest store. One great example of this skill in action occurred while I was in Buffalo for Evolve sampling. Evolve was intended to target those who had an affinity for plant-based products, often very earthy folk. Due to this, I directed our team to sample at a local farmers market and

along an eclectic street full of art and hip coffee shops. This helped our team achieve immense success; we gave out our sample within half of the time we had planned for. As far as lead generation goes, I helped our team at the NFL Hall of Fame achieve this with our unique photo booth activation element. Once we captured pictures of NFL fans in our Pepsi Zero Sugar photo booth, we then encouraged them to use the photos and post them to social media. This drove tremendous engagement for Pepsi Zero Sugar, especially at such an elite sporting event. All in all, this skill also has critical value in my future career. It will help me in developing marketing campaigns and also to craft meaningful partnerships, because I am able to understand the on-the-ground work involved in touching a specific target market.

The last major skill that I developed was the ability to process inventory, while gaining an in-depth knowledge of how activation logistics work. On my first few trips, I was left to figure out how to process product and premium inventory. This was not terribly difficult if everything had arrived on-site properly, however that was rarely the case. I gained knowledge of how shipments are processed and executed, how product can be ordered, and most importantly the ability to troubleshoot logistics issues. One example of where I had to put this skill and new knowledge into action occurred in Canton at the NFL Hall of Fame. When I arrived at our storage site to pick-up all of our activation materials, I quickly realized that we were missing the base to our step and repeat banner. I first had to troubleshoot by cross-checking our shipping information and confirming that we had ordered the correct materials. Once that was confirmed, I had to contact the vendor. After they were not answering, I finally made the decision to set-up the activation without the base and to create our own base. While this required engineering skill, it also showed that I had gained the skill of troubleshooting complex issues while activating a partnership. The value in this knowledge is immeasurable because it will help me handle operational problems that occur in venues or in the event management sector of the sports industry.

### *Body Section 2*

The connection between what I learned in my internship and what my academic coursework aligns perfectly; affording me a great experience and validating my education. I learned that most

importantly, team management is a critical skill to being successful as a leader in the sports industry. Other than management skills, my internship was a first-hand experience about the proper techniques and approaches to reach a target market in an activation and develop the ability to think critically and troubleshoot logistics issues, a skill that cannot be taught in a classroom but rather learned on the job.

I have learned about the values of leadership and organizational management, all of which have culminated in my education being put to the test as a road warrior managing a marketing team. While learning about the theory behind management in Dr. Heinze's (2020) organizational behavior class, it was instilled in me that management is only successful when each member of the team feels their work is valued. While on the ground, I put this mantra into action, thus striving to empower all of those whom I worked with. I quickly learned that putting the theory to work was much harder than it seemed. Early in my internship, I struggled to decipher the motivations of my team members. Fortunately, I was able to grow quickly in this ability as I made it a focal point for myself. After all, it has been proven many times that collaboration is best achieved through a leader who is adaptive (Salas et al., 2019). Combining leadership and management theory and practical experience is difficult, but I know that over the course of my internship I have grown in my ability to become more effective as a leader.

During my time at Paragon, I learned the tactics behind reaching a target market, and conducting a grassroots marketing campaign. For example, I applied what I learned in class and found solutions to create a memorable connection with the consumers. In 2021, Dr. Kwak taught me in his sponsorship class that activation is the tactics used to reap benefits from a sponsorship. Because of this knowledge, I knew that I would have to develop effective tactics to achieve a successful activation. The most effective way to achieve this emotional connection is to employ an emotional motivator that drives consumer value of a product (Magids et al., 2015). I applied these findings while I was on-site, particularly on my sampling trips. One instance of this occurred in Buffalo while I was sampling for Evolve. I noticed that many of the consumers had the motivation to achieve a sense of well-being. I leveraged this emotion by encouraging them to drink Evolve, as it would create a healthy balance of nutrition and protein in their life. Another key connection between my coursework and on-site experience comes in my handling of a

beverage partner activation. While managing the activation for Pepsi, it dawned on me that many of the younger athletes that attended the Hall of Fame seemed drawn to this beverage. Due to them not being our specific target, I wondered why this was occurring. I came to the conclusion that many young athletes are enticed by free, branded sweat towels (which was one of our giveaways). Because of this, it almost seemed as though Pepsi wanted to target younger athletes as a secondary market. This reflects the industry trends of youth being targeted by brands that are deemed unhealthy. These brands love to attach themselves to younger phenoms who will showcase their product for an entire life span (Kelly & Chapman, 2016). One final connection that I made was the objective of gaining consumer feedback as part of the activation. In all of my activations that I handled; my recaps always emphasized consumer feedback. Whether it was product-based feedback or activation-based, I took all of it into account when I completed my travel recaps. Chris Baylas (2017) supports this when he noted that the first step of sports sponsorship activation should be to, “Ask your audience what they love about your event, program, team, space, festival etc. Ask them what they hate.” Overall, my internship allowed me to apply the theory of activation and reaching target audiences in a real-world setting.

The other skills that I learned are critical for any career within sports; the ability to think critically and solve logistics nightmares. The logistics that are involved in my job as a road warrior will serve me well in the partnerships space, but also the operations space as well. Critical thinking is a key tenet of my academic coursework as many assignments are developed to mold this ability and way of thinking. Critical thinking is key to fostering teamwork and thinking of innovative solutions for issues (“The Role of Critical Thinking in the Workplace”, 2016). One key example of bridging this gap between academic coursework and practical experience started my sophomore year in SM 246. Jay Basten (2019) engrained in his sports marketing class that, “our best asset to putting any marketing plan into action, is the ability to think of all the possible reactions and then strive for the most memorable outcome.” This made an impression on me so much so that when I was faced with a difficult decision in Pittsburgh, I was able to recall this and apply it. In Pittsburgh, I had to determine the best method to distribute Bolt24 product to a diverse audience. I thought of the various reactions those of the Pirates

organizations, their fans, and the surrounding businesses would have based on how I distributed the product. I decided that the most memorable experience would be for my team to distribute the product through encouragement, rather than with an informational tone. We encouraged consumers to “hydrate with electrolytes” and “change their day around”, as opposed to luring them in with informational facts. Ultimately, this created a more memorable experience for the consumers, resulting in us distributing product quicker than we had planned. All in all, the management, problem-solving skills, and marketing tactics that I both learned and honed during my internship are a great culmination of applying the theories in class to a real-world scenario.

### *Conclusion*

Overall, my internship as a Road Warrior at Paragon Marketing Group has proven to be a fruitful experience where I have meshed on-the-job training with the ability to take the concepts that I have learned in academia and apply them to actually perform a job with immense pressure. Being a Road Warrior has taught me great management skills, has developed my critical thinking abilities, and has helped me to understand and execute specific marketing tactics to make a sports partnership successful. I have learned how to handle my initial stress related to a dire situation which is eventually what breeds the ability to perform at a higher level in a stressful environment over time (Morin, 2014). Traveling all around the country to experience the hard work that is involved with activating partnerships for a variety of clients has truly opened my eyes to the agency side of sports. It has given me an appreciation for all of the behind-the-scenes action in sporting events. But most notably, it has prepared me for a career in the sports sponsorship space, as I have developed the tools necessary to execute a successful activation. Surely, I will carry what I have learned and developed with me throughout my career because after all, Paragon has helped me to ignite a remarkable journey of my own.

Best Regards,

Lukas Stauffer

Road Warrior at Paragon Marketing Group



## Appendix A

# Product Information

## Gatorade 101

# FORMULATED TO PERFORM

Backed by the latest in sports nutrition research, the Gatorade portfolio of products is designed to better meet your athletes' needs by providing sports nutrition before, during and after activity.

### GATORADE PRIME®

#### CARBS TO FUEL THEIR MUSCLES

##### GATORADE PRIME® ENERGY CHEWS

- CARBOHYDRATE: 24g
- VITAMINS: 20% DV B6
- CALORIES: 100
- FLAVORS: Cool Blue, Fruit Punch, Green Apple, Strawberry

##### GATORADE PRIME® SPORTS FUEL DRINK

- CARBOHYDRATE: 25g
- VITAMINS: 10% DV B6
- CALORIES: 100
- FLAVORS: Fruit Punch, Berry, Orange, Pierce® Grape

### GATORADE® THIRST QUENCHER

#### HYDRATION WITH ELECTROLYTES

##### GATORADE® THIRST QUENCHER & POWDER

- CARBOHYDRATE: 36g
- CALORIES\*: 140
- FLAVORS: Gatorade has a variety of flavors to meet various taste preferences

##### G2®

- CARBOHYDRATE: 8g
- CALORIES\*: 30
- FLAVORS: Visit GATORADE.com for information on flavors and sizes

##### GATORADE® ZERO

- CARBOHYDRATE: 8g
- CALORIES\*: 0
- FLAVORS: Visit GATORADE.com for information on flavors and sizes

\*based on a 20 fl. oz. serving size

### GATORADE RECOVER®

#### PROTEIN & CARBS FOR MUSCLE RECOVERY

##### GATORADE RECOVER® WHEY PROTEIN BAR

- PROTEIN: 20g
- CARBOHYDRATE: 38-43g
- CALORIES: 340-360
- FLAVORS: Cookies & Crème, Chocolate Chip, Chocolate Caramel, Mint Chocolate Crunch, Peanut Butter Chocolate, Chocolate Pretzel, S'mores, Vanilla Almond

##### GATORADE RECOVER® PROTEIN SHAKE

- PROTEIN: 20g
- CARBOHYDRATE: 45-47g
- CALORIES: 280
- FLAVORS: Chocolate, Vanilla, Cookies & Crème

##### GATORADE RECOVER® WHEY PROTEIN POWDER

- PROTEIN: 20g
- CARBOHYDRATE: 4g
- CALORIES: 110
- FLAVORS: Chocolate, Vanilla, Cookies & Crème, Chocolate Caramel

##### GATORADE RECOVER® WHEY PROTEIN ALMOND BUTTER

- PROTEIN: 20g
- CARBOHYDRATE: 24g
- CALORIES: 2
- FLAVORS: Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough, Salted Caramel, Almond Butter

### GATORADE® SUPER SHAKE

#### 30G OF HIGH QUALITY CASEIN & WHEY PROTEIN

##### GATORADE® SUPER SHAKE

- PROTEIN: 30g
- CARBOHYDRATE: 12g
- CALORIES\*: 180
- FLAVORS: Chocolate, Vanilla

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## GATORADE

THE SPORTS FUEL COMPANY

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