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## Sports internships: How students can best be prepared during the application process

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### Abstract

Sport internships are a crucial component to the success of students both in the academic and post-graduate workforce settings. Oftentimes, students do not know what organizations are looking for when they apply. Similarly, they are also unsure of what responsibilities they will be tasked with, the qualifications they need to have, the skills and expectations that are needed, and the experience they need to possess. The purpose of this study was to help students learn how they can identify what the best internship is for them, while also helping educators and practitioners understand what students, or prospective interns, are looking for. For the study, one hundred and thirty job descriptions were collected from two different job sites and depicted multiple types of roles and different organizations across the United States. This paper utilized a content analysis, more specifically, a coding and analytical approach, that breaks each job description down into the categories of responsibilities, qualifications, skills and expectations, and experience. The results indicated that depending on the role, the top responsibilities varied, however, top overall qualifications were related to previous knowledge as well as school and schedule attributes, while having professional characteristics was the most sought-after skill and expectation, and having previous experience was highly valued. This study explored various kinds of jobs and their respective job descriptions in the sport industry to help students better understand what they can expect while going through the recruitment and application process when looking for internships.

**Keywords:** Sport internships, job descriptions, responsibilities, qualifications, student experience

### Introduction

#### The Background of the Study

Internships have become an integral part of sport management university programs in recent years, holding significant importance particularly for interns, but also for organizations and universities themselves. Similarly, internships have grown to be a crucial part of the success of a sport management student pursuing opportunities in the sport industry post-graduation. Currently, sport management internships are in high demand with over 5,300 students working in the industry. Recently, the demographics of interns have been shifting and have become more diverse regarding gender, race, and ethnicity. Similarly, the majority sport management interns are in the process of earning a bachelor's degree at their time of their employment. The majority of internships are typically with the private sector and very large companies of over 1,000 employees; however, interns usually only stay for less than a year's time. Generally, most interns seem to work in and gravitate towards a variety of roles in sport media or education. In recent years, sport management internships have been growing across the United States, making them more geographically appealing to more students who are located all over the country (Zippia, 2021) <sup>[26]</sup>.

Internships can be found and obtained year-round, but often have lots of different criteria, requirements, and offerings to students, while also being highly competitive. Due to these criteria and this competitive nature, it has become increasingly important for sport management students to be able to understand the job descriptions that they are reading, especially while pursuing the jobs that are best suited for their personal lives and capabilities. Outside of the classroom, internships play a crucial role in the development of many skills and

attributes that student must possess in their future workplace, which makes them an essential part of the college experience. While they play such a crucial role, internships have often been viewed by students as confusing, hard to interpret, and difficult to find, which makes learning about the application and hiring process of internships essential.

### **The Problems of the Study**

Despite the importance of internships being seen throughout many sports management programs, the main problem of this study is that it has not been explored to its fullest potential. Research regarding sport management and the importance of internships is not only still in its infancy but is also still evolving as time progresses. In the last few decades, internships have grown into what they are known for now in most sport management programs, meaning there is still a lot of room for learning, growth, and change. Another problem of this study is that it aims to cover the perspectives of both students, also known as prospective interns, and organizations that may hire them. Studies similar to this one usually only have the perspective of one or the other and can offer slightly more in-depth information than what may be obtained through this research. With the evolving nature of internships and their roles in sport management programs, there is still more that can be learned by students, organizations, and educators alike.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to help students navigate being able to find, understand, and acquire an internship that best suits them, their needs, and their skill set with a sports organization. This study aims to identify a few important aspects of the internship process, including the impacts internships have on interns and their respective organizations as well as what an organization looks for, the hiring process, student expectations, and key components of a job posting. The study also aims to identify and explain the varying perspectives of both prospective interns and organizations during the process. As previously mentioned, students often have a hard time finding internships that suit them and find it confusing to understand what organizations are looking for based on their job postings and descriptions. Navigating internships can be seen as a daunting task, but it is critical to the future success of students, as well as the ongoing success of sports organizations since internships allow the student to build skills while also allowing organizations to look for potential employees. This study provides a broken-down, step-by-step overview of job postings, which highlights what students and organizations alike are looking for and expecting when going through the hiring process.

### **The Significance of the Study**

For students, educators, and hiring personnel alike, it is extremely significant to learn about the hiring process, job descriptions, and the expectations of the application process. For students specifically, it is of high importance to learn about what organizations are looking for when they apply to a variety of jobs in the sport industry. Students are often faced with job descriptions that are daunting or ambiguous and vague, making the process more confusing. On the opposing side, hiring managers also have the ability to learn what students find confusing and expect when going through the application process. Finally, for an educator, it is always extremely important for them to have the ability to aid students and clarify issues they may encounter. By allowing them the opportunity to learn more about an area where

students often have questions, educators are better suited to help students find roles best suited for them.

## **Review of Literature**

### **The Importance of Job Descriptions**

When looking for an internship, the first step is to locate and read through job descriptions that interest students, however, the hardest part is reading and understanding what they are looking for. Job descriptions often include some variation of an overview of the company, an overview of the job itself, necessary qualifications, requirements, job location, and compensation. For sport management internship listings specifically, the job descriptions can look slightly different. In each section noted prior, there will be a different set of qualifications and requirements listed that are necessary to handle day-to-day tasks (Bae & Miller, 2011; Cuneen & Sidwell, 1993)<sup>[4, 10]</sup>. The job description should also incorporate challenging work assignments that complement a student's academic program in order to match the student's goals. It should also tie in the needs of the practice by reflecting specific duties and tasks required of the intern (Oetjen & Oetjen, 2009)<sup>[13]</sup>. The job description should also offer where the intern can find more details about the "small print" beyond what can be seen. Since students have enough on their plates, the description should also ensure that the internship supports students rather than adding additional pressures (Pratt, 2017; Sattler & Achen, 2021; Taie, 2010)<sup>[15, 17, 21]</sup>. Nationwide, many sport management programs have an internship requirement that students must fulfill. Oftentimes, this leads to increased levels of competition, making it more critical for students to know what they're looking at (Cuneen & Sidwell, 1993)<sup>[10]</sup>.

### **Top-Listed Requirements and Abilities**

Certain qualifications and abilities tend to make an average applicant look more desirable and stand out to potential hiring managers. In a study conducted by Cuneen & Sidwell (1993)<sup>[10]</sup>, nine top qualities stood out to job recruiters and made prospective interns the most desirable. These qualities included finding an intern with marketing and promotion experience, computer skills, writing skills, sales experience, strong goals, practical work experience, athletic and sport backgrounds, versatile skills, and sports reporting experience. Similarly, recruiters appreciated applicants who had both an academic and practical background including things that they learned during their courses and outside experiences. Among specific skill sets, it was also favorable for applicants to have and list skill sets that were specific to certain programs or areas, rather than having a vast statement and skill set. In order to gain these qualifications, many applicants had ample volunteer experiences, high remarks in school, and clear goals they wanted to achieve (Bae & Miller, 2011; Cuneen & Sidwell, 1993)<sup>[4, 10]</sup>.

Additionally, Ross & Beggs (2007)<sup>[16]</sup> explained more as to which different intern abilities are deemed important. Both students and practitioners strongly believed that interns should be able to lead and develop programs. It was also found that interns should have a good job taking initiative and be highly motivated to get the job done. Students and practitioners also believed that interns should act like professionals and be able to have good communication skills. Marketing skills, human relations skills, and computer skills were also deemed to be important qualities for an intern to possess (Ross & Beggs, 2007; Taie, 2010; Williams, 2013)<sup>[16, 21, 25]</sup>.

The discussion of political skills also became prevalent through research conducted by Brandon-Lai *et al.* (2016) <sup>[6]</sup>. Politically skilled individuals are known to have the ability to understand and influence social situations to achieve their goals. Since students use their education to acquire, adapt, and refine a number of skills to prepare them for their careers, they are known to be great examples of politically skilled individuals. Political skills have become extremely important in relation to sport management internships and what employers look for when hiring student interns. Networking ability, social astuteness, interpersonal influence, and apparent sincerity are all qualities that employers value in their interns not only for the benefit of the company but for the intern's individual growth as well (Brandon-Lai *et al.*, 2016; Sutton, 1989) <sup>[6, 20]</sup>.

### **The Application Process for College Student Internships What Companies Look For**

While students are trying to prepare for college internships, it is also important for students to understand what companies are looking for. Companies are looking for specific qualifications for a student so that the student will be a good fit for the position. Internship positions are already extremely competitive, which makes it even more critical for prospective interns to know and understand what companies are looking for in order to apply for these positions and interview potential employers (Bae & Miller, 2011; Sattler & Achen, 2021) <sup>[4, 17]</sup>.

There are often different factors that employers look for when it comes to employing high-quality interns. Many organizations have developed preferred criteria beforehand during the recruitment process. Such criteria can include skill sets, preferred languages, and prior experience. Companies also want to have access to a large pool of interns to increase their chances of finding the best fit. There are a number of recruitment methods that companies employ to achieve this goal; referrals, reaching out to universities, and networking are a few popular methods. Companies also have to look towards the availability of students since most prospective interns are students. These companies rely on class schedules and work schedules to see if a prospective intern would be able to satisfy the requirements of the role that they are trying to fill. High-quality interns are known to show interest and enthusiasm toward filling the role since companies want someone who can fit in with the team and contribute to the company culture. Companies also believe that a high-quality intern shows good communication and team skills, independence, initiative, a strong work ethic, and a good attitude (Bae & Miller, 2011; Sattler & Achen, 2021; Williams, 2013) <sup>[4, 17, 25]</sup>. Companies also look to the students' self-development to enhance their skills. This attribute is viewed to be useful since it is something that is learned through commitment rather than in a classroom (Surujlal & Mji, 2011) <sup>[19]</sup>.

Prospective interns also need to be aware of whether the company they are looking to apply to has created a specific structure for the internship. Companies often consider whether interns who are applying are doing so to fulfill a school requirement, gain experience, or simply appreciate the opportunity (Verner, 1993) <sup>[24]</sup>. For example, interns must see what the company is also expecting as some internships may not be used for college credit. Compensation is also an important factor considered by companies in deciding on whether an internship will be paid or unpaid. While unpaid internships may be less favorable to students, applicants may

stick out more since it shows that a prospective intern is not only focused on compensation (Williams, 2013) <sup>[25]</sup>.

### **What Students Should Expect**

While companies are looking for specific qualifications and abilities to find a well-suited match, there are also many factors that students need to consider as to what is expected of them. To start, not all companies are willing to pay a student during their time at an internship. If students are going to be taking on an unpaid internship, they must see whether it matches their personal factors. Prospective interns must consider how far away the internship is from where they live, to consider travel costs, and also whether the internship is happening at the right time for them (Perretto Stratta, 2004; Sauder & Mudrick, 2018) <sup>[18, 14]</sup>. On the other hand, students also need to expect that although an internship might be paid, it still might not be the right fit for them when it comes to other personal factors. While these personal factors must be considered, students valued their experiences and helped secure employment regardless of whether the experience was through a paid or unpaid internship (Hoy, 2011; Williams, 2013) <sup>[12, 25]</sup>.

Students also expect that while looking for an internship, it is important to find one that meets their professional goals as well. Students want to be challenged professionally during their time at their internship, making it necessary for students to understand what their professional goals are. Prospective interns expect to determine how much of their work is related to what they desire while also determining if they are respected in their role. It is expected that some companies and employers might try to exploit interns since students are not as experienced as adults, but students are expected to handle such situations if they arise (Perretto Stratta, 2004) <sup>[14]</sup>. Students also understand that they will be going through a learning cycle during the time of their internship. This learning cycle includes transforming experience into meaningful learning and reflective observation (Sauder & Mudrick, 2018) <sup>[18]</sup>. Recent research has also revealed that experiential learning experiences, such as internships, are one of the most beneficial components of the curriculum. These studies found that interns reap the greatest rewards since they have opportunities to network with professionals, acquire and develop skills, and apply what they have learned to practice (Bae & Miller, 2011; Brown *et al.*, 2018) <sup>[4, 7]</sup>.

Prospective interns also expect to make different kinds of professional and personal relationships while at their internship. These relationships would contribute to the student's professional growth during the time of their internship (Perretto Stratta, 2004). According to Hoy (2011) <sup>[12, 14]</sup>, student internship experiences helped them form relationships with supervisors and mentors, which was essential to build a profile for future employment. Students can be expected to show off their abilities to get feedback from supervisors regarding what they are doing right and what they could improve on. It also gives students the ability to establish a professional network. Through the number of people that the student will meet, through their school and internship progress, they will have access to other professionals in the sports industry (Perretto Stratta, 2004) <sup>[14]</sup>.

### **How A Student Can Best Be Prepared**

Student preparation prior to applying to and obtaining an internship is the key to success because of how highly it is looked at when programs are selecting their interns. First,



agencies expect interns to have a broad understanding of the sports industry as an overall business. This is crucial to help an intern understand the departments they will be working in and around during their program. Prospective interns must also be prepared to work on both meaningful and very routine tasks throughout their internship, especially with equal amounts of enthusiasm. While meaningful tasks can be more exciting to work on, routine tasks are some of the most beneficial components of running a department. It is always recommended for interns to have a better understanding of what an organization does before considering any form of an internship since the work is not always fun, but oftentimes more routine (Perretto Stratta, 2004) <sup>[14]</sup>.

Student preparedness often starts with the faculty coordinators they are around while in their school programs. The faculty and professors that a student is around play significant roles in preparing their attitudes, professionalism, and appreciation toward an internship opportunity. While taking their courses, students learn the importance of timeliness, deadlines, wearing proper attire for events, and many other professional skills that are necessary for an internship or job experience (Perretto Stratta, 2004; Williams, 2013) <sup>[25, 14]</sup>. Students can work with their career services center to help prepare them for interviews. The career services center can provide input as to the appropriate dress code for interviewing while also providing opportunities to participate in mock interviews. These opportunities allow students to practice and observe themselves and improve their interview techniques (Ayers, 2007) <sup>[3]</sup>. Usually, it is recommended for students to also attend events held by career services or internship coordinators to best be prepared for professionalism prior to applying to and accepting an internship (Williams, 2013) <sup>[25]</sup>. Professionalism also plays a major role in what is expected of an intern. Professionalism might not be something that students understand completely or are able to apply during their time at the internship (Chinomona & Surujla, 2012) <sup>[9]</sup>. Faculty, teachers, and other professionals and coordinators can help prepare student interns to act in a professional manner. By taking advantage of additional resources on professionalism, students can understand and appreciate the opportunity an internship provides and the responsibilities it entails (Williams, 2013) <sup>[25]</sup>.

### How Sport Management College Programs Help Students

Many internship programs believe that the preparation of a student begins within their universities from their professors, career services, and campus coordinators (Williams, 2013) <sup>[25]</sup>. For a student to become the most successful in their internship, they must have a basic understanding of concepts that begin in the classroom. A student must be able to apply concepts and reflect on things they learned in their previous courses. It has been recommended that college programs also implement a strategy type of phase in the semester prior to students working a full-time internship. The idea behind this phase is that professors and career counselors would be able to help students learn about writing resumes and cover letters, improve interview skills, understand the requirements of an internship, and complete tasks that an internship may require of them. Through observations, role playing, and guest speakers, students will be prepared for an internship at an even higher level because they will begin it with the best possible preparation, as well as increased skills and knowledge (Brown *et al.*, 2018; Surujlal & Mji, 2011) <sup>[17, 19]</sup>. Similarly, it has also been recommended that particularly larger programs help with internship placement before and

after a student graduates. In a study conducted on hospitality management, many programs found that their students were not able to find internships and utilize their degrees because they struggled to find a job (Chi & Gursoy, 2009) <sup>[8]</sup>. By creating their own services, connections and hosting fairs, they were able to help place students in beneficial internships where they were utilizing skills they had learned (Chi & Gursoy, 2007; Sauder & Mudrick, 2018) <sup>[18, 8]</sup>. Students also have the capability of creating a better understanding of the relevance of the education that they are pursuing. By experiencing what it is like to work in the industry, and get hands-on experience, students develop a clearer picture of what they do and do not want in a career (Sauder & Mudrick, 2018) <sup>[18]</sup>.

Throughout the internship process, students have the opportunity to learn not only about resume items, career opportunities, and job prospects but also be able to go through self-growth. With a successful internship, students can gain a sense of professionalism, feel pride and satisfaction in developing meaningful work, and earn respect and approval. Students are also able to learn how organizations work and how they adapt to the different cultures that exist, which can broaden their experiences by gaining a new understanding of collaborative work. Similarly, when students apply to and obtain internships, the faculty and coordinators on campus working with them also gain new connections and opportunities for the future. New connections with sport companies can lead to partnerships and relationships as well as increased opportunities to be offered to future students in the programs. By doing so, students are building clinical skills and broadening their network. In turn, when one student gains an internship, they are helping both their university and future students gain a potential internship as well. It is important for faculty to maintain relationships and connections in order to benefit their students (Anderson *et al.*, 2020; Bae & Miller, 2011; Tovey, 2001) <sup>[1, 4, 23]</sup>.

### Methodology

#### Samples and Data Collection

One hundred thirty sport management internship job descriptions were collected from two different online job sites: TeamWork Online and Indeed, between July 2023 and January 2024. The first site that the majority of the postings were collected from was TeamWork Online, which is the number one site for sport management job postings (TeamWork Online, n.d.). The second site that some of the postings were collected from was Indeed, the number one job searching site worldwide, which is used by a wide range of individuals looking for new work opportunities (Indeed, n.d.). All of the postings were searched for and collected straight from both of the websites listed previously.

The job descriptions collected from both sites were comprised of a variety of roles, organizations, and leagues across the United States. Of the total job descriptions collected, the majority of internships were related to marketing, social media, and content positions (25.38%) followed by communications (23.85%), which included positions in relation to production, broadcast, and public relations, operations (13.85%), general sport management internships (11.54%), which included all descriptions that were not specific to a department, tickets and in-venue sales (11.54%), sport-specific internships (5.38%), which included descriptions relating to a single sport, and sport organization specific (3.08%), which included descriptions that were specific to an individual organization. The remaining

internships were classified as other (5.38%) and included job descriptions and titles that could not be classified into a larger category and were each only counted one time in the collection.

### Instrument/Analysis

A content analysis was performed to identify sport management internship job descriptions because this study focused on utilizing coding approaches and an analytical method. The content analytical method has been applied to a variety of communication forms including books, newspapers, magazines, journals, diaries, company documents, letters, television shows, internet message boards, and websites, but they have been conducted most frequently on popular publications, dissertations, and academic journals. Specifically, regarding sport management, content analysis is the self-effacing and nonreactive way that communication is examined (Andrew *et al.*, 2011, pp. 119-120) <sup>[2]</sup>. According to Holsti (1969) <sup>[11]</sup>, content analysis should be objective, systematic, and generality. Even though the content analysis looks like a simple method, it can be possible to change to a complex method like any other research method (Bordens & Abbott, 2008, p. 247) <sup>[5]</sup>. In quantitative content analysis, there is a systematic, objective, and replicable way that the communication is examined, meaning it examines manifest data that has been collected. Coders are used to measure,

examine, and replicate the found data in the study (Andrew *et al.*, 2011, p. 121) <sup>[2]</sup>.

This study focused on utilizing a coding approach and an analytical method to find the results. To validate the coding sheet, it was reviewed by three different sport management professors. After review, some information in the sheet was rewritten and changed based on their comments. The validated sheet was then used to identify job descriptions of sport management internships. In the coding sheet for sport management internship job descriptions, one hundred postings were reviewed and divided into four different areas: 1) Responsibilities, 2) Qualifications, 3) Skills/Expectations, and 4) Experience. To analyze the job descriptions for this study, Microsoft Excel was used to determine the results.

### Results

One hundred and thirty job descriptions were collected from two online job sites over a seven-month time period. The job descriptions were broken down into four separate categories after collection. Of the jobs collected, marketing roles made up 25% of the total amount, followed by communications (24%), operations (14%), general sport management (12%), sales (12%), sports and sport specified (8%), and unspecified (5%).

### Internship Job Responsibilities

**Table 1:** Internship Job Responsibilities

Job	Responsibilities	n	%
Marketing	Content Creation	69	38
	Gameday and Fan Experience	35	19
	General	30	17
	Managing Social Media, Websites, and Emails	26	15
	Management	8	4
	Partnerships and Grassroots	8	4
Communications	Photography	6	3
	Media, Social Media, and Community	47	47
	Venue and Scheduling Commitments	23	11
	Other	21	10
	Production	15	7
	Hosting and Broadcasting	15	7
	Research and Data	13	7
	Project and Program Assistance	9	5
	Fan Experience	8	4
	Event Planning	3	2
	Venue Maintenance	40	36
	Miscellaneous	26	24
Operations	Community, Customer Service, and Fan Experiences	15	14
	Management and Planning	15	14
	Inventory and Deliveries	7	6
	Professional Characteristics	7	6
	Venue, Operations, and Schedule Availability	33	32
	Other	21	21
	Marketing Related	15	15
	Communication, Engagement, and Customer Service	13	13
	Data and Research	7	7
	Registrations, Contracts, Reports, and Evaluations	7	7
General	Professional Development	5	5
	Customer Service and Selling	41	38
	Assistance of Various Tasks	30	28
	Venue, Event, and Schedule Availability	17	16
	Other	10	9
Sales	Technology and Relevant Applications	9	9
	Assistance of Various Departments/Tasks	26	31
	Assistance with Events/Activities	18	22
	Research, Data, and Statistics	13	16
	Maintain Office and Venue	10	12

	Customer Service and Communication	9	11
	Professional Characteristics	7	8
Unspecified	Assist with Various Tasks	23	43
	Data and Research	10	18
	Assistance with Athlete Nutrition and Performance	7	13
	Communication, Customer Service, and Community	7	13
	Game Day and Practice Assistance	4	7
	Professional Characteristics	3	6

As shown in Table 1, sport marketing job descriptions were broken down into seven responsibility categories. The top marketing responsibility at 38% was content creation. Other responsibilities include gameday and fan experience (19%), general responsibilities (17%), managing social media, keeping track of the website, and dealing with emails (15%). Surprisingly, less than ten percent of the responsibilities included management (4%), partnerships and grassroots marketing (4%), and photography (3%).

Almost half of the communications jobs gathered dealt with working with the media, social media, and the community (47%). This was followed by dealing with scheduling and venue commitments (11%), as well as various other tasks (10%). All other communications jobs had responsibilities that made up less than ten percent of the job descriptions. These included production (7%), hosting and broadcasting (7%), research and data (7%), project and program assistance (5%), fan experience (4%), and event planning (2%). For operations job descriptions, the most common responsibilities an intern would be tasked with were venue maintenance (36%) and miscellaneous tasks (24%). Other key responsibilities for an operations role include community, customer, and fan experiences (14%), management, planning, and coordination (14%), inventory and deliveries (6%), and having professional characteristics (6%).

General sport job descriptions were comprised of many different responsibilities, but the most common area was venue, operations, and schedule availability (32%). Other responsibilities included varying other tasks (21%),

marketing-related tasks (15%), and communications, engagement, and customer service (13%). Interestingly, under ten percent of the responsibilities include data and research (7%), registrations, contracts, and reports (7%), and professional development (5%). In a sales role, the most common responsibilities an intern would be tasked with were customer service and selling (38%), as well as assisting with various related tasks (28%). All other responsibilities were mentioned under 20% of the time, but included having schedule availability and being in traveling distance of the venue and events (16%), being able to use technology and relevant applications (9%), and other various tasks (9%).

For a sport and sport-specified position, responsibilities were split up between six different categories, with the most common responsibility being helping various departments with various tasks (31%). This was closely followed by being able to assist with events and activities (22%), research, data, and statistics (16%), maintaining the office and venue (12%), customer service and communication (11%), and having professional characteristics (8%). As noted in the table, the top responsibility an intern will have in an unspecified role is to assist with a variety of tasks (43%). This is distantly followed by data and research (18%), assisting with athlete nutrition and performance (13%), community, customer service, and communication (13%), game day and practice assistance (7%), and possessing professional characteristics (6%).

### Internship Job Qualifications

**Table 2:** Internship Job Qualifications

Job	Qualifications	n	%
Marketing	Previous Knowledge, Abilities, and Proficiency	61	40
	School Related	34	22
	Professional Characteristics	34	22
	Location and Schedule Availability	16	16
Communications	Technology Proficiency	45	30
	School Related	38	25
	Schedule and Location Commitments	27	18
	Professional Characteristics	19	13
	Knowledge	17	11
	Other	5	3
Operations	Venue and Schedule Availability	28	41
	Capabilities	18	26
	School Related	13	19
	Personal Characteristics	10	14
General	Knowledge	21	38
	Professional Characteristics	18	33
	Venue and Schedule Availability	9	16
	School Related	7	13
Sales	School Related	23	24
	Professional Characteristics	21	22
	Technology and Relevant Applications	19	20
	Venue and Schedule Availability	15	16
	Capabilities	10	11
	Career Driven	7	7
Sports and Specified	Venue and Schedule Availability	15	28
	Knowledge	14	26

	School Related	13	24
	Professional Characteristics	12	22
Unspecified	Professional Characteristics	4	31
	School Related and Availability	4	31
	Technological Applications	3	23
	Knowledge	2	15

As depicted in Table 2, 40% of the qualifications for a marketing internship were based on previous knowledge, abilities, and proficiencies. Other qualifications for sport marketing jobs included various school related attributes (22%), professional characteristics (22%), and specific location and schedule availability (16%). Of the communications job descriptions reviewed, the qualifications most highly desired were having proficiency in technology (30%), school related requirements (25%), and being able to fully commit to the schedule and location of the job (18%). These were closely followed by having professional characteristics (13%), having various relative knowledge of the field (11%), and other attributes (3%). Almost half of the operations qualifications reviewed were most focused on an intern being able to have full schedule availability and be in the location of the venue for the duration of their internship (41%). This was distantly followed by having various capabilities to assist others (26%), school related qualifications (19%), and personal characteristics (14%). For general sport management jobs, the two highest sought after qualifications include having knowledge of relevant areas (38%) and having professional characteristics (33%). These were both highly followed by having schedule availability and being in travel distance of the venue (16%), as well as school

related specifications (13%).

As depicted in the table, qualifications for sales roles were pretty evenly split. The top qualifications included those related to school (24%), having professional characteristics (22%), and being able to use relevant technology and applications (20%). Other qualifications listed include having relevant schedule availability and being in the vicinity of the venue (16%), having various other capabilities (11%), and being career driven (7%). Sports and sport specified role qualifications were evenly split and distributed. Listed qualifications for candidates to have include having schedule availability and being in the vicinity of the venue/events (28%), having prior knowledge of related areas (26%), school related attributes (24%), and possessing professional characteristics (22%). Of the sports roles reviewed categorized as unspecified, the most sought-after qualifications include possessing professional characteristics (31%), being able to commit to the schedule, and having the proper school related specifications (31%). These qualifications were followed by prospective interns having a knowledge of relevant technology and applications (23%), as well as various relevant knowledge (15%).

### Internship Job Skills and Expectations

**Table 3:** Internship Job Skills and Expectations

Job	Skills and Expectations	n	
	Marketing	Characteristics	79
	Various Knowledge	3	%
Communications	Professional Characteristics and Skills	147	96
	Other	3	4
	Technology Proficiency	2	96
	School Related	1	2
Operations	Personal Characteristics	53	1
	Professional Skillset	26	1
General	Professional Characteristics	61	67
	Technology and Relevant Applications	4	33
	Knowledge	2	91
Sales	Professional Characteristics	65	6
	Knowledge	7	3
	General	2	88
Sports and Specified	Professional Characteristics	54	9
	Other	2	3
Unspecified	Professional Characteristics	86	86
	Knowledge	14	14

As shown in Table 3, the most common skill that recruiters looked for in sport marketing job applicants was for them to possess professional characteristics (96%). This was only followed by less than ten percent of applicants needing to have knowledge of various things (4%). In a communications role, it is important for applicants to have professional characteristics and relevant skills (96%). This was distantly followed by various other attributes (2%), school related requirements (1%), and being proficient in technology (1%). Of the specific skills sought after in operations roles, the most common ones related to specific personal characteristics (67%), as well as having a professional skillset (33%). The majority of general sport management jobs were

interested in candidates with a professional skillset (91%). This was distantly followed by a candidate being technologically savvy and having relevant knowledge of technological applications (6%) and being knowledgeable in various areas (3%). Similarly, the most common skill that recruiters looked for in a sales role was for a candidate to have professional characteristics (88%). Recruiters also looked for candidates to have general knowledge of various related things (9%) and general related skills (3%). For a sports and sport specified role, the highest sought-after skills were those related to a candidate having professional characteristics (96%). These skills were only followed by having relevant knowledge (4%). Similar to previous roles,



professional characteristics (86%) were highly important for a prospective intern to have when applying to an unspecified sport role. This was solely followed by a candidate possessing

other various capabilities (14%).

### Internship Job Experience

**Table 4:** Internship Job Experience

Job	Experience	n	
	Marketing	Previous Experience	8
	Marketing Specific Experience	7	%
Communications	Previous Experience	14	53
	Other	1	47
Operations	Previous Experience	4	93
	Other	1	7
General	Previous Experience	6	80
	Other	5	20
Sales	Other	4	55
	Previous Experience	3	45
Sports and Specified	Previous Experience	6	57
	Other	3	43
Unspecified	Previous Experience	5	67

As depicted in Table 4, experience was highly sought after in almost all different job types. For sport marketing job applicants, recruiters looked for general previous experience (53%), as well as experience that was specific to the field of marketing (47%). In a communications role, having previous experience (93%) was highly valued in an applicant. This was only followed by various other attributes (7%). Similar to previous jobs, operations roles sought after applicants who had some sort of previous experience (80%). Many job descriptions also listed various other attributes (20%) that they looked for in applicants as well. In general sport management roles, recruiters valued previous experience the most (55%), as well as other general capabilities (45%). In a sales role, a little more than half of the job descriptions reviewed looked for applicants to have a variety of other general capabilities (57%). Surprisingly, a little under half of the recruiters looked for potential interns to have previous experience (43%). Like other roles, previous experience (67%) was seen as extremely important for a prospective intern to have when applying to a sports and sport specified position. Many recruiters also looked for candidates to have other general capabilities (33%). Lastly, in unspecified roles, surprisingly, the only thing recruiters looked for in a prospective intern was for them to have previous experience (100%).

### Discussion

Various internship job descriptions from different sport organizations were collected over a six-month time period. After collection, the job descriptions were broken down into four different categories commonly found in job descriptions before they were then organized by the type of job. The four commonly found categories in job descriptions included responsibilities, qualifications, skills and expectations, and experience. The job type categories included marketing, communications, operations, general sport management, sales, sports and specified, and unspecified. Each job type specifically mentions a variety of different jobs related to their specific area. Specifically, communications jobs encompass public relations, broadcast, and production; general sport management jobs encompass any job posting that was titled sport management; sports and specified include job postings relating to a single sport as well as job postings that are specific to the organization that posted them; unspecified incorporate job postings that did not fit in with any other established category and were one of a kind in

relation to all one hundred thirty job postings that were analyzed. Many companies analyzed in this study were looking for candidates who could handle the listed responsibilities, had the qualifications they deemed suitable, had a strong skillset, and had previous experiences.

Among the most important responsibilities found for each type of job, the top ones include content creation and gameday and fan experience for marketing, media, social media, community engagement and commitments for communications, and venue maintenance and miscellaneous tasks for operations. In other job type categories, top responsibilities similarly included schedule availability, operations, and venue commitments and other for general, customer service and selling and assistance of various tasks for sales, various department and task assistance, and event and activity assistance for sports and specified, and finally, various task assistance and data and research for unspecified. It is important to note that categories such as general, other, or miscellaneous and varying refer to general responsibilities one can expect to perform in their designated role. These can include technology related tasks, clerical work, inventory, following guidelines, and strengthening oneself professionally. While it is not always favorable, interns must remember and be prepared for the fact that they will work on both very meaningful and very routine and mundane tasks during their internship. Meaningful tasks will more directly relate to their chosen field and be more exciting, but it is just as important and beneficial to learn the routine ones because they are key to running their department (Perretto Stratta, 2004) <sup>[14]</sup>. Similarly, categories labeled as venue and scheduling commitments specifically refer to an intern being able to commit to the full schedule as designated in the job posting, as well as being in the vicinity of the venue or being able to relocate to be in the vicinity. When choosing to pursue an opportunity, it is highly important for students to consider where the opportunity is in relation to where they live, as well as if it is happening at the right time for them personally and academically so that way, they are able to fully commit (Perretto Stratta, 2004; Sauder & Mudrick, 2018) <sup>[18, 14]</sup>. When referring to categories labeled as professional characteristics, they are designated to mean any characteristic a professional should have in the workplace including being organized, being a hardworker, having a positive attitude, and being able to work with others. Professionalism is one of the most important things that a prospective intern could have in their toolkit. While it may be hard to fully understand and apply



due to the time it takes to master the skill, it plays a major role in what is expected during an internship (Chinomona & Surujla, 2012) <sup>[9]</sup>. Despite its complexity, interns are still expected to act like professionals and have certain professional characteristics such as leading projects and developing programs (Ross & Beggs, 2007; Taie, 2010; Williams, 2013) <sup>[16, 21, 25]</sup>.

Some of the top qualifications listed for all job type categories include previous knowledge and school related for marketing, technology proficiency and school related for communications, venue and schedule capabilities and capabilities for operations, knowledge and professional characteristics for general sport management, school related and professional characteristics for sales, schedule and work location attributes and knowledge for sports and specified, and professional characteristics and school related and availability for unspecified. When referring to certain qualifications, it is important to note what they mean. Qualifications listed as school related encompass having certain GPAs in order to be eligible to apply, being a current student, using the internship to gain college credit, and having a high school diploma. Academic preparation before an internship is key to being successful in the future. Students who have high remarks and a strong academic background are highly appreciated by recruiters (Bae & Miller, 2011; Cuneen & Sidwell, 1993) <sup>[4, 10]</sup>. Similarly, in their courses, students learn how important it is to be on time, work with deadlines, and dress professionally, all of which help them in internships and their future careers (Perretto Stratta, 2004; Williams, 2013) <sup>[25, 14]</sup>. With this, many companies are also aware of and consider whether students are applying to an internship for credit and fulfill college requirements (Verner, 1993) <sup>[24]</sup>. Similarly, qualifications listed as knowledge or capabilities refer to the applicant having relevant knowledge of the job and specific listed capabilities that would assist them. It is also important to note that qualifications are referred to as professional characteristics, and venue and schedule availability are the same attributes as stated in responsibilities. Among the top skills and expectations listed, professional characteristics were the most important for every job category except operations. For the operations job category, personality attributes were the most important for a potential intern to possess. Categories referred to as professional characteristics, knowledge, other, general, and school related are referred to the same as previously listed under both responsibilities and qualifications. However, professional characteristics and personality attributes are not the same. While professional characteristics refer to things found in a professional skillset such as communication, organization, and hardworking, personality attributes include being friendly, honest, and respectful. For any applicant, having a versatile skillset including both professional and personal attributes is important. Similar to those found in the results of this study, these skills can include technology, writing, having goals, (Bae & Miller, 2011; Cuneen & Sidwell, 1993) <sup>[4, 10]</sup>, taking initiative, being motivated, communication, strong work ethic, good attitude, independence, and relevant skills to their desired area of work (Bae & Miller, 2011; Ross & Beggs, 2007; Sattler & Achen, 2021; Taie, 2010; Williams, 2013) <sup>[4, 16, 17, 21, 25]</sup>.

When referring to experience, the top thing a candidate could have in every job category was previous experience. Similarly, the majority of job categories also placed value on a category referred to as other. When referring to previous experience for each job, it can include specific experience to

the job or just having a few years of general work experience. As noted in articles by Bae and Miller (2011) and Cuneen and Sidwell (1993) <sup>[4, 10]</sup>, applicants need to have volunteer experiences, as well as a practical background, previous work experience, and outside experience both similar to and different from the role they are applying to. It is also important to note that the category labeled as other for the majority of jobs refers to various attributes including certain skillsets and abilities.

**Conclusion:** This study examined and explored internship job descriptions for various types of jobs in the sport industry and explained what students can expect when applying to a wide variety of internships by using collected data from internship job descriptions. The findings of this study revealed the top responsibilities students can expect to have, the qualifications that are sought after, the types of skills and expectations looked for in prospective interns, and the experience one should have when applying to a sport internship. By identifying the responsibilities, qualifications, skills and expectations, and experience often posted in sport internship job descriptions, this study helps to better assist students and prospective interns be prepared to the best of their abilities when applying to internships in the sport industry. Similarly, this study also helps to prepare both educators and practitioners on how to better understand the recruitment process. This allows educators to find ways to help aid their students in the recruitment process while helping them to understand what organizations may be looking for. This also helps practitioners understand what students are looking for in the job market, allowing them to be able to post the most cohesive job posting that will attract the best candidates for the desired role.

One limitation to this study is that it only encompassed a six-month time span, rather than a full year. Similarly, in the timespan it was conducted during, it only showcases internships for the fall and winter rather than showing internship postings for every season. However, this study did accomplish its purpose of giving an overview and glimpse into what students can expect when looking at sport internship job descriptions. While this study is a starting point for learning about sport internship job descriptions, it is recommended that future similar studies should be conducted over about a year's time. A second limitation of this study was that only two websites were used to gather a limited amount of data in the given time frame. Future studies may benefit from expanding their search to other online job engines, both specific and unspecific to the area of sport management. This would also allow for a higher number of job descriptions to be collected. The two sites used to collect 130 job descriptions for this study provided a strong basis and understanding to determine what students should look for and be aware of. It is recommended that for future studies, a variety of websites can be utilized and studied to find a higher variety and number of job postings related to sport internships. Finally, this study may benefit from looking beyond job descriptions and speaking to educators, students, and practitioners directly. By speaking to those involved in this process, more insight may be learned into what students' concerns are, as well as how educators can best prepare their students, and what practitioners look for in recruitment beyond the internship job description posting. As this study provides a basic snapshot that could be explored more in-depth, it is recommended future studies explore interviewing those involved in the process.

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