

Reflection Paper

MKTG-499

Marketing Program

Department of Marketing and Management

Southwest Minnesota State University

## Reflection Paper

This summer I got one of the best opportunities to be a part of City of Marshall employee. I got an internship with the Marshall Economic Development Authority (EDA) for the summer. My internship started from May 14, 2019 and will end on Aug 29, 2019. The summer internship made me familiar with the town, the growing businesses around and the opportunities that the town has. This internship made me familiar with the business world and also, I got a feel of life after graduation. The things and knowledge that I have gained from this internship is one of the most valuable lifetime experiences. It gave me a hindsight of the things I can expect after I am ready to join the workforce.

My internship started with a detailed orientation program. My Director introduced me to all the members in the office and made me familiar with her work and duties. On my first day of the internship I got a tour of the city and my Director made me familiar with all the development work going around. First few days, I attended all the meetings with my Director and got familiar with her work and the purpose of her various business meetings and visits. I got to know the roles of a city developer and what they help with. I also got familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the other organization members in the office. I got familiar with the roles of Director of Chamber, Director of Convention Visitor's Bureau and what they do normally during the office hours. All these organization work together for development of the city though they are separate entities. These organizations have separate goals, but their goals overlap with one another.

Economic Development Authority helps in bringing developers/businesses in town. Developers are important assets of a community because they help with the expansion and growth of the community. Economic Development Authority helps with tax abatement policies, provides matching grants to the businesses for improvements, helps in providing affordable housing options to the population. EDA helps with the business expansion, retention and sustainability. EDA brings opportunities to the town which suits the best needs or interests of the community. It believes in uniting the community by providing jobs, affordable housing, providing quality living, etc. Making business visits about the opportunities being provided is one of the important tasks of EDA. They help the businesses to connect together and act as a bridge between different businesses.

The Marshall Economic Development Authority (EDA) consists of EDA Executive Director who is Sharon Hanson, Director Tara Onken and Assistant Director Marcia Loeslie. There are nine elected EDA board members who help with guiding the projects, making financial decisions, giving inputs in the projects being carried out, go through the strategies and help with finances.

Working as an EDA intern, I understood that not each and every individual need can be fulfilled. Lot of things needs to be considered before making major business decisions like bringing a company in the town or starting a new housing project. First, the target market has to be understood and Marshall's population varies widely in terms of needs. There is generation gap between the people in Marshall. Most of the age group is either the college students or middle-aged married couples and Marshall being a small town, can only fulfill one need at a time.

This internship changed my view about Marshall. Before my internship, I always ignored Marshall and knew nothing about the city. I always felt that Marshall has nothing to offer and is only a small town. Working as an EDA intern, I got to explore many businesses around the town,

the projects that our town has been working on. I got familiar with affordable housing concept and our attempt to make Marshall an industrial town with opportunities. I got to know about various events that are hosted in Marshall and how they are hosted. The eligibility and the requirements of being part of the city events.

I got to know about the big businesses which are the major employers in the town like the Schwan's, Harrison truck Center, Turkey Valley Farm, U.S. Bancorp Business Equipment Finance Group, etc. These businesses are the major source of income in the city and they help to raise the city's GDP.

Throughout my internship, I made lot of connections with the business people. I was welcomed warmly everywhere, and I was given a lot of motivation and encouragement for the work that I did as an intern. Getting positive feedbacks from the Economic Development Authority Board Members and other business owners was highly motivating for me and kept me going in my internship. I was encouraged in every step of my internship by my Director and other members working with me. My work was always appreciated, and my Director pushed me beyond my comfort level which helped me boost my confidence and my ability to express myself. I built a strong relationship with my Director which helped me communicate with her and put my views without any hesitation. She was always there to guide me and clear my doubts. She respected my thoughts, ideas and always valued my opinions. She helped me broaden my thinking and made me think like a developer which helped me a lot during my internship in economic development.

During my internship I made multiple business visits which was my favorite part of the program. I built many connections with positive people around the town. I prepared my packets in advance, which was prepared by the assistant director so that I could hand the application with the detailed information about the program and purpose of my visit. For my first business visit, my Director accompanied me and showed me how to approach the businesses. Due to the business visits, I got to know the business owners personally. The business owners highly appreciated the personal visit. On my visits, I would introduce myself and give an overview about the program that I was promoting. This helped me with my speaking skills professionally. Most of the time, the business owners would motivate me and thank me for my internship and my involvement in the city development.

I attended multiple professional business meetings where I got to be part of interesting conversations about the city. I got to know about the problems and challenges that the businesses face in the city which was interesting. I learned the things that work the best for our town. I got familiar with some construction terms as well, because economic development authority needs to work with the them quite often. Before, the meeting started my Director would always give me an overview or a draft about the meeting we would be attending so that I would have some clue about the discussions. My director always guided me throughout my internship program and helped me understand EDA better. Every day I learned something new in my internship. From using an office printer to writing thank you letters to business people for visiting us in Marshall, I learned many new things. Most importantly, I learned how to market the city of Marshall and know the potential of the city. I got to be part of many events organized by the Chamber office too. Almost every week, I attended couple of events outside my office and got a chance to meet with other like-minded people. I attended the events like Young Professionals, Let's Connect, Women's connect, etc. These events were always fun as I got to connect with other working people in town and know about their companies.

In some events, I also volunteered for a cause. We packed snacks for kids for the Food for Kids program, which would be distributed to all the kids in the Marshall area during summer. Most of the kids are dependent on school for lunch and during the summer holidays, they do not have food to eat as they have working parents who do not have to prepare food or they're not home. I attended women's health seminar where Doctor Shannon Brewers, discussed about women's mental health care and techniques of balancing the work life with the personal life. In one of the young professionals' event we got a tour of Bend-Rite Fabrication. Bend-Rite Fabrication is a welding company which serves customers from all over the upper Midwest. All these events that I attended were valuable and I learned something about the town and the business.

This internship helped me explore my skills too. I got to know about my potential as an employee and if I can handle things on my own without any guidance. I learned one thing about myself that it takes me a while to completely understand a new concept but with the time I get better. My communication skills improved working as an EDA intern as communicating with the clients and different businesses is an essential part of the job. I also got a chance to introduce myself in the city council meeting and talk a little about the project that I would be working on. All these things helped me become more confident in what I was doing. My formal writing skills improved too as I had to write some formal e-mails to the businesses. I worked with my Director and Assistant Director in rewriting the Economic Development Authority Strategy. I also helped with updating the EDA Handbook and organizing them together. I helped in the office with small tasks every day and mostly my Director would let me know my work schedule and the goals for the day before the week started. I liked knowing my schedule in advance as that way I know what to expect out of the day. I also learned how to use software called "Canva" for designing the social media posts and announcements.

Another important thing I learned during my internship was about the office culture. I learned that having a good work environment is important for employees to work together in harmony. I liked the work environment of the office as all of the employees always worked together and shared opinions. We have three different organizations: The Economic Development Authority, The Convention Visitor's Bureau and the Commerce of Chamber working together under a single roof. The work environment was flexible and understanding. All the departments worked together for events. Every Monday, the office hosted staff meeting where all the employees would discuss about the projects they're working on, asking for advices and opinions of each other. All the employees are always willing to help each other out and support one another. This is one of the positive experiences that I will be taking away from this internship.

As my internship was only fifteen hours a week, the work load was not a lot. I did not have lot of pressure at work and always had enough time to work on my projects as my projects were not major. I mostly attended the events with my Director which would take major time of my internship. During the office hours, I would mostly help my Director with small jobs like printing, filing and binding. I would read the files about the projects that are being carried or the ones which have been completed already. All these helped me with knowing the background of development projects.

I have almost a month for my internship to end as it ends on Aug 29<sup>th</sup>. I am still learning the roles about an economic developer. I am hoping to learn a lot more in the time that I have left as an intern. Everyday has been fun and interesting for me working as an intern because I am learning lot of new things and getting familiar with the things which I would not be bothered if it

was not for this internship program. This internship program made me care about the city and changed my perception towards Marshall. Now if people ask me what Marshall offers, I will not have to wonder but list out the things that I have seen and learned as an economic development authority intern.

