

Transcript

DEMAN Live: Navigate Your First Job in Creative Industries with Duke Career Hub and The Chronicle

INTRO: Dave Karger

Welcome to DEMAN Live. I'm DAVE KARGER, Duke alum and host on Turner Classic Movies. DEMAN is the Duke Entertainment, Media and Arts Network. And it's the University's hub for the creative industries. On this show, you'll hear a past episodes of DEMAN live, which includes panels and one on one chats with alumni. Thanks so much for listening and enjoy.

Nina Wilder

Thank you all so much for being here with us tonight. I'm going to kick over my first question to Marina. And we're gonna get right into it. It's a question that we hear a lot at Duke, especially with your job and freelancing. What are your top tips for students and alums looking to freelance?

03:28 Marina Poole

Yeah, well, the first thing is that just to realize it exists as an option. I don't think anyone told me about freelancing while I was a student. And the thing is, you kind of have to wait until you graduate and you're in the city where you want to work. Because you kind of need to just be ready to work tomorrow, if someone hits you up. I'm the most important thing, the number one thing for freelancing is your network. So I guess it can be kind of hard if you haven't had that first job. But even if you've only had internships or any kind of connections, lean on your network and ask for help let people know what you want to be doing. And say like, Hey, can you can you put my name out there like I want to be doing I want to start freelancing in this role. And that that's how I got every single freelance job was just by people connecting me with other people. And once you get that first once you get that first job, it kind of just blossoms from there. And yeah, you just you just got to be genuine and connect with people and keep in touch with people and do work that you're proud of. So just the other thing I'll say is to build up your portfolio while you're still in school, because a lot of times you kind of want to at an entry level, like say, I'm in an editor and to get jobs as an assistant editor, I was still having to show a real even though I was just assisting. Um, so I didn't really have work from, like the various companies that I had that I could say I actually cut this, but I did have stuff that I'd cut from independent projects that I had done on the side or stuff from school. So really try to lean on that while you're still in school, and take advantage of those opportunities to grow your to grow your portfolio and build a real

05:39 Nina Wilder

That's great advice. And it makes me want to go to Tosh, who has also worked as a freelance artist on this panel. And so my question for you today is, how does being a freelance copywriter differ from being a copywriter signed to an agency because you've had those jobs? And does one have advantages over the other?

Transcript

06:03 Taji Badil-Abish

Yeah, great question. I think, first and foremost, being a copywriter and an agency, you are a part of that agency. And you have depending on the list of clients, the ability to work on different things at the same time and work on different projects at the same time. And when you're freelancing, typically you're brought in for a specific project or a specific job. Which, depending on what you're into having focus versus being able to kind of explore different parts of your mind whether working on the sports client, or like a food product at the same time works well for you, or whether you want to be more honed in on, okay, I'm working on Doritos. It's going to be the next month of like, chips. And so I think those would be the kind of outstanding differences between being a copywriter in an agency setting versus being freelance. One thing Marina said that also, I think is true for freelance editors is that you can what was I going to say, oh, freelancing, you, you're in charge of your schedule. So you work as much and as often as you want, versus being at an agency, you're a salaried employee. And you know, there's always going to be work coming down the line. So just having that flexibility as a freelancer is something that most people consider an advantage, being able to take time off when you need it. and whatnot.

07:54 Nina Wilder

That's great advice. I think that, you know, freelancing is often very intimidating for recent graduates seems somewhat inaccessible. So it's good to hear that there is possibilities for people looking to freelance, especially straight out of school. I'm sort of staying on the topic of your first job out of college Marielle. This is a little broad, but I really just want to know, What helped you stand out when applying to your first job, what would you say was the most standout thing for you?

08:28 Marielle Rogers

Yeah, what was really important for me was I learned pretty quickly on that Microsoft was a company that cared how you think and less if you're doing a specific function for four years straight, or going to a specific major from a type of program or different things like that. So because of Duke's curriculum is actually able to take a lot of classes that combined all my interest and behavioral economics and different things like that, and really be able to sort of craft that story and show how they all aligned and came together with through the clubs and the different classes I was taking. So that was super helpful. And then a second thing for me personally, was my duty gauge experience. I was able to work in Nicaragua with the social entrepreneur corps after my freshman summer. And it was a direct application that I was able to really test out my interest in business, how I wanted to combine sort of creative stuff, while also learning how to work on financial side of things and really get that well rounded experience. And it was something that as a sophomore, I was able to take and present to a program that generally mostly looks at juniors but dude gave me that opportunity to do engage, be

Transcript

able to, to the point earlier sort of had that backup reel of showing your experiences and showing your proof of your story. So that really helped me along the way.

09:49 Nina Wilder

Keeping going with sort of how your Duke experience helped you get to where you are now, Bryce, I would like to know while at Duke, so you currently work at Participant's Participant Media as an impact producer, how did you sort of realize that you were interested in storytelling and then develop those skills as a storyteller at Duke?

10:12 Bryce Cracknell

Yeah, no, that's a good question. I think I didn't know that I wanted to be a storyteller in a new sort of context. Probably late into my senior year, I had gone on to Commerce, in Jordan. And the day that I was coming back from Jordan was the day that the Trump administration issued his first Muslim ban. And I'd spent the past month with a cohort of students interviewing Iraqi and Syrian refugees, and coming back to United States listening to how the popular media or the mainstream sources are sort of speaking to the refugee crisis. And that region of the world just was very different from what I experienced both firsthand, but also what I'd heard from the folks who actually lived that experience. And so we had essentially altered our work from conducting research through a policy lens and basically changed it into a communications campaign, both at a local level, but also at a state level. And so we did some lobbying, wrote an article for The Huffington Post created a series of monologues that we performed in the Durham community. And it really solidified for me the extent to which policy research data can only do so much and very limited circumstances. And I think today, one of the last sort of outlets for which we can sort of reach people challenge our preconceived notions of the world is often through storytelling.

And so having majored in public policy and studied issues of environmental and racial justice domestically and international human rights, I kind of decided to take a leap into something that I'd previously only told friends that I would consider another life. And that was getting into filmmaking. And I had very little understanding of what went into that other than the sort of behind the scenes that you'd see on some of my favorite films at the time, like Avatar, Star Wars, and move to Los Angeles, and, again, speak a little bit to how that came to be. But the DEMAN network was super, super helpful in helping me get that first job, specifically, Amy and Dave Karger. And I was able to get my foot in the door at Participant, really lean on my public policy chops while learning about the business. And so the social impact of sort of the intersection of activism and storytelling in many ways, and hopefully, I can make a further jump, more so on to the creative side, whether it be in writing or directing or producing. But that's the sort of long-winded way of how I arrived here and, and doing the work that I'm doing now.

Transcript

12:57 Nina Wilder

Taking the leap and moving to a city like Los Angeles, and working in media is definitely frightening for a lot of people.

13:04 Bryce Cracknell

It was shocking. Yeah, I grew up in North Carolina. And so moving to the second largest city in the US was, is still as culture shock.

13:12 Nina Wilder

Yeah. Well, I think that makes a great connection with Chaz, who is also sort of, I guess, you could say, freelancing in your own way as a writer, director, producer. So there are countless paths to becoming a screenwriter, someone in production, but especially in Screenwriting. What are your tips for students and alums hoping to establish themselves as screenwriters?

13:37 Chaz Hawkins

Yeah, well, first of all, I just want to say, Bryce, I'm public policy, too. So gang gang? Yeah. Cool. Um, but now on that side, the best part and the best thing you can do right now is really learn how to craft and tell your own story, as Mariela was saying, that's your strongest thing. It's the only story in the story, you know, best at this point. And then once you can tell your own story in a million different ways, you can learn how to use pieces of that story to tell any multitude of story that you can create around that and create really cool narratives that not only are standalone in their own, but are also a piece of view. And when you're able to really share that piece of view with the world, it makes it a lot easier to show why you're doing things and why you want to have the social impact that Bryce was talking about. And I think public policy kind of drilled that into me as well. Just having a social impact Ben to a lot of the stories you tell, and a side of that. So I think really, any writer at the heart of it is really just telling their own story over and over and over again in so many different paths. And I really think that's the major key that you can be doing right now and at any point in time.

15:00 Nina Wilder

Yeah, I think that's amazing advice. You always say write what you know. So that's a, at least a good starting point. I'm kind of going to the East Coast, Alexandra, you work for NBC Universal, and you started out and the Page Program. And I think a lot of people maybe dream of that, but are intimidated by that. And so I'm interested in hearing about how you first connected with NBC Universal, and if you recommend applying for the page program to get your foot in the door? And if so, what are your top tips for applying?

Transcript

15:34 Alexandra Bratton

Yeah so I had always been interested in NBC Universal, and I think Amy definitely spurred that as well. Um, and I first learned about it through just reaching out to, to alumni at NBC Universal, and wanting to learn more about like entry level jobs, and they were like, Oh, the page program is a great kind of starting point at NBC. And for those of you who don't know what it is, it's a post-graduation post graduate program at NBCU, where you get a rotation and production in marketing and in business. So it's for people that are really interested in media, but like not quite sure where they want to land. And that definitely resonated with me. And even if you kind of do have an idea of where you want to go, I would still highly suggest it. If you're interested in NBCU, just because they do hire from within the paid program a lot on 100%, pretty much pages are offered a job somewhere if they want it.

Um, so I would definitely suggest that and it exposes you to so many jobs that you didn't know existed, like where I'm at now was his content distribution, as some where I had a rotation was like, I don't know what this is. But let's try it out. And I ended up really liking it. And for tips is a really long application process, which I think is why partially why it's like, so intimidating. And some people just don't want to go through that. But it's, it starts with a written application. And for that, I would just suggest showcasing your personality and kind of demonstrating your interest in the media landscape overall, they're not looking for people that want just one thing because it is rotational program. And then like a month after that is a video interview, which isn't with another person on the other side, I think it's so they can remove bias and watch them all at the same time. So questions pop up and you answer them. And advice for that, I would say, pulling as many questions from like Glassdoor about the patriarch or anywhere online and just writing them all down. I would stay away from questions before like 2015. Because that's when they change the program.

So there's some really technical ones you'll find like pitch MVC, Udemy, or kind of more complex questions that like, I wouldn't say any of us are like, like what is MVC is because property, it's more, it's more behavioral. So I would pull the behavioral questions and then practice in photo booth. So you can watch yourself back and see if you're using filler words and just get comfortable with the questions and comfortable seeing yourself and talking to yourself on the camera cuz you only see yourself. And then a couple weeks after that, I think it's virtual now. But when I did that it was in person. And you are 30 Rock and you have a group interview a group with other like seven to nine potential Page Program candidates. So it's a group interview, a group activity, a one one on one interview, and a presentation. So for those I would just say like, it's a group activity. And this goes for any job opportunity where you're doing group activity. If there's a time limit volunteer to be the timekeeper. It's a great way to kind of take initiative, but relieve the pressure of like having to have the best idea or something like that. And in all of the group activities, just they're looking for a team player. So nodding along to

Transcript

people's answers and building off of people and supporting the people that you're with is definitely something they're looking for. So hope that answer's everything.

19:30 Nina Wilder

No, I think yeah, I was kind of guessing it was intense, but it definitely does sound pretty intense. But yeah, that's all to say, maybe more worthwhile once you get it. So thank you for all of that very helpful information. I want to ask Jesse, you also did a rotation program at the NBA. So while you're in the NBA associate program on rotation through various NBA departments, how did you try to maximize your skill? and your professional development?

20:03 Jesse Dembo

Um, yeah, it's a great question. Um, similar to sort of what Chaz said, being a public policy major helped me in so many more ways than I thought, um, you know, obviously, I didn't go to Capitol Hill, which is why I think someone from the outside might take a look at Pub Pol major and say, Oh, of course, you want to go into politics or you want to work at a startup. But the way I saw into Chas, this point about sort of crafting a narrative for yourself in your own journey is, if you are a Pub Pol major, whether you know it or not, you're a problem solver. And so that's sort of how I tackled each individual rotation was driving experience in bizdev. No, do I've experienced project management? No. But what could I do with the skill sets that I gained through my public policy major, and it was so much more than I thought. So you look at all the individual classes. You're learning econ, not just micro in the math behind it, but macro. So thinking big picture, whether you're tackling a problem at work, or you have to get a proposal passed, you're not just worried about one or the details, take a step back, look at the bigger picture. So you learn that in econ, you learn about ethics, that comes huge into play in the workforce, especially at a big organization like the NBA, you're constantly thinking about, you know, the classic dilemma of alright, we need to make more money. But we also need to do the right thing. And I don't need to go into examples there. But I'm sure you could think of some on your own.

If you keep going you get technical with stuff like statistics, or probably the biggest skill that I learned at Duke was how to write. And if you can write a memo, you can write in any fields you want. Because half of my job, probably more than half is crafting, well written succinct emails it sounds old school, it sounds dumb. But it's the way we communicate. And thank goodness for zoom, because now you can actually speak to someone. But before that a lot of you know getting a deal done communicating. Even internally, you'd want to just walk upstairs and go to the person's desk, but you had to write an email for so getting your message across and learning how to, you know, effectively communicate your points. All of that came from the pub home major, and I didn't realize it until I went through four different departments at the NBA doing four entirely different things and realizing you know what, I can do this. I think I went on a tangent there. But hopefully that answers your question.

Transcript

22:46 Nina Wilder

No, that's great. I think we should all be Pub Pol majors or should have been Pub Pol majors. Um, well, so we've heard initially from every one not not nothing else, Duke English. You know, I represent English. But I think we've heard from every panelist so far, initially, but now I'd like to go through and do some sort of rapid-fire questions and hear from every panelist. A couple questions. So to start us off, and I'm going to ask you to do this in one sentence or less, you know, the least challenging thing ever. One sentence or less? What's the best career advice you've ever received? Think about it. And I'm going to ask Alexandra to start us off.

23:37 Alexandra Bratton

sorry, finding my mute button. Um, I think for me, uh, someone just said to me, we have so much pressure to like, find your passion and it's okay if you don't know what that is and just find something that you're good at and you enjoy doing every day and and that will make you happy as well. So I think just like relieving that pressure.

24:01 Nina Wilder

Bryce?

24:03 Bryce

Don't burn bridges. Build them.

24:12 Nina Wilder

Chaz?

24:13 Chaz

Sort of on that same note, be easy always come at everything with a positive mindset and a chill attitude.

24:21 Nina Wilder

Jesse?

24:23 Jesse

Not to freak anyone out here, but someone told me this once and I'll never forget it. Think about how you would want someone to talk about you after you've left a room. Not just your friends, but in the work setting. If you leave a meeting, what are they going to say about you? Always be yourself and always keep that in mind.

Transcript

24:46 Nina Wilder

Tajj?

24:52 Tajj

For me, the best advice is something you already know you just need to hear it from someone else. So that is to say, trust yourself.

25:02 Nina Wilder

Very insightful. I like that. Marielle?

25:09 Marielle

When you're asking for help, don't just bring your questions, but bring your solutions as well and really just show how you've thought through it and get that perspective from there.

25:20 Nina Wilder

Finally, Marina?

25:24 Marina

Amy actually gave me this advice. She told me that she got her first job at the Today Show by literally showing up and introducing herself. And I thought that sounded crazy and scary. But then when I came out to San Francisco, I was just like, You know what, screw it, I'm gonna do it. And I made a lot of connections that way. I got I actually got my first freelance gig that way.

25:52 Nina Wilder

That's great. It's, yeah, it's a loose, elusive Amy, that keeps being referenced if you're here, and you do not know by now that is being Amy Unell, who works with me at Duke Arts. Um, okay, that went really well. I'm gonna ask you a couple more. So here's my next one. Is there anything you wish you had done at Duke to better prepare for your life post Duke? So what do you wish you had done that you hadn't done? Hindsight is 2020. And I'm going to ask Alexandra, to start us off again.

26:31 Alexandra

I think just like, networking was more people and learning about more jobs. While while I was actually at Duke, and taking advantage of the alumni network more.

26:50 Nina Wilder

Bryce?

Transcript

26:52 Bryce

Um, I don't know if I'd do anything differently. But if I had more time, actually, maybe I wouldn't have been a public policy major. But for different reasons that we could, we could get into, I would just generally say, you, I do miss the classroom a lot. And to study what you're interested in, I think if you, regardless of what you major, and as long as you're sort of passionate about it and interested in it and want to sort of are curious about it, like you can really get into just about any industry. And I think that really applies to this industry. Because you're just learning how to think and think critically.

27:34 Nina Wilder

Yeah, just to pop in and give my two cents I that would be mine, as well, I wish I would have paid more attention in my classes. They are really interesting, um, Chaz?

27:48 Chaz

I guess not to also take a dump on public policy, which I have started theatre studies a bit earlier and access that creative side, earlier in my career in my creativity, because like Bryce, I came into writing my senior year, as I was leaving. And it would have been great if I had at least a year to really study it and get decent at it, or at least have control over it before leaving.

28:15 Nina Wilder

Jesse?

28:17 Jesse

I completely agree with what everyone said so far, I'd say two additional things. One, really emphasize Take, take the classes you're interested in, you know, once you get all the requirements out of the way, because you don't want to have those doubts. You don't want to have like the amount of times I've said, oh five done, if I'd done things differently, I probably would have done this. Don't do that you're at Duke, you've all the resources in front of you. So to that end, to prepare you. I would also say forget about the grades. First, I was the same way I was focused on I if it's not a requirement, how can I get through this credit. There are certain classes you should take that'll set you up for success. One of those, anything with Excel, I wish I'd taken more classes to just learn computer software, because I guarantee learning on the job is a lot harder. So take the time it do to study up on your software, whether it's film or in, you know, numbers in Excel or PowerPoint, stuff that sounds basic, but you're going to have to use every single day.

29:26 Nina

Tajj?

Transcript

29:27 Taji

For me, I wish I would have collaborated with more of my co students at the time. Duke is an amazing place and everyone is so talented, just like in an agency and people have so many skills so I wish I would have worked with more people and just created more stuff. Because the resources are there.

29:55 Nina

Marielle?

29:58 Marielle

I honestly think I took reiterate the Excel thing and learning some of the software programs. I mean, you can learn it on the job, and you do. But it definitely would have made that first year transition a little bit smoother if I had been explored that a little more deeply during my time at Duke.

30:18 Nina Wilder

And finally, Marina?

30:21 Marina

Yeah, kind of to echo what a lot of you guys are saying. It's not just Excel, it's Photoshop, it's illustrator. It's like, whatever creative field you envision for yourself, like know those skills, because we do have classes and resources available at Duke. And while you're in those classes, I don't know if any of you guys are like this, but I was super intimidated by how kind of talented and advanced some of my peers were in like, like, certain phone classes that I took that I felt like I was new to this, and I looked at them, and I was like, what, like, how are you guys? Like, this is insane. And it kind of scared me and it kind of made me think like, Oh, I'm not necessarily like the right person for this. But once I graduated, I realized that I was like, had so much more experience than a lot of people. So just like, ask, you know, just like get help if you need it make work that you're proud of while you're in school.

31:28 Nina Wilder

That's lovely. I think that yeah, as I've graduated, what I've learned most is I look back and I'm like, oh, there's a million things I coulda, shoulda, woulda done. And if I can at least make it count by telling current undergrads to go do it. Then it's worthwhile. Okay, this is good. I like everyone sort of building on each other. So I'm going to ask one more round circle question. Everyone here that works in some capacity in a creative industry. And so we know that there are uncertain timelines, when you are applying to jobs, if you're even applying if you're freelancing, that it's sort of just diving in headfirst. And there's also social pressures associated with choosing to pursue a career in creative industries, you know, we don't have usually don't have recruiters or that sort of, like I said, timeline that other careers

Transcript

might have so and they've it's a sort of a wellness thing. But if you could share one tip that helped you navigate the uncertainty, the you know, the wacky timelines, the pressure, etc. If you had one tip, what would it be for handling that? And once again, I'm gonna start off with Alexandra.

32:46 Alexandra

Yeah, I would just say reframing, like, since timelines are longer, not thinking of it as like a failure to graduate without a job, because most people won't even consider you until you've already graduated. Um, and for the social part, no one remembers when you started your job, whether it was in August, or you waited until October, like you might be like, everyone's in jobs, they think I'm like, such like, no one remembers when you started your job. So...

33:18 Nina Wilder

Thank God for that. Bryce?

33:22 Bryce

Um similarly, I think a lot of your peers have probably, or if you are in this senior class, a lot of your peers may have jobs already. And not to be intimidated by that I didn't get my job until August after graduation. And I think that was three months later. And I think something that was interesting about the industry, particularly in LA and film and entertainment, in particular, is that folks really don't care where you came from, or what sort of credentials that you have. And it's all about sort of putting your time in and working your way up, particularly in corporate settings. And that, for me, was really challenging for a number of reasons, speaking mostly to the financial reason is that they don't pay assistance very much at all. And some folks may have to get a couple of jobs and, or have additional assistance from other funding, which I didn't have. And so there are a number of sort of pressures there to navigate. I think the advice that I would give is that if you're interested in being sort of creative is to make things find things to make with peers, there's money out there, to grab even as an alumnus, you can get money from the University in certain contexts and settings, but really be scrappy in terms of how you sort of work that creative muscle, regardless of what you're doing during the day. finding the time to make things for yourself and when you if you get to the point, and hopefully folks do get to the point where the thing that you're making money doing is all thing that you like to do and his thing that you're doing on the side. That's fantastic. But until then, make sure that you're financially sustained. So that way you can do the creative things that you want to do.

35:17 Nina Wilder

Chaz?

35:18 Chaz

Transcript

Yeah, not just to echo Bryce a little bit there, it's like when you're in those hard times, remember how much you love what you're doing, too. It's like, don't forget about that, even when times are good, and times are bad. And then when it comes to actually getting the jobs and working each job, make sure to take advantage of each little. And every opportunity you get that is in this industry, you never know who you're going to meet. And at what time, this industry is so small, even though it looks so huge. It's so much tinier. When you're actually inside of it, and you realize, oh, well, you know, oh, you know, this person. And you can just be working a small little opportunity, just writing a small short script for someone that ends up building a new feature that gets funded. And then you get paid for all of those types of things. So just take advantage of any and every opportunity that comes your way. And just make sure to bring everything with that same love that you have at all creative assets.

36:16 Nina Wilder

That's great. Jesse tips for uncertainty in social pressures?

36:22 Jesse

Um, yeah, I mean, I think, like, I feel like we're all pretty similar as how we all ended up at Duke. But But what I would say is, there's a lot of pressure to feel like you have it all figured out when you graduate to graduate and say, I got the dream job doing what I want to do. But I'll tell you more likely than not that first job will not be your last job, you're going to go through a lot of different jobs, maybe different careers, maybe switch entirely. So don't just put so much pressure on where you end up, right, what company it is, what the name is, focus on what you're doing, focus on the skills that you're getting, if it's a job that allows you to learn, that's all you need. Because from there, you can craft again, going back to the narrative, craft the narrative that you want for yourself and take bits and pieces from each experience. Don't worry so much about the name of where you're starting, because I guarantee that's probably going to change after a couple of years anyway.

37:23 Nina Wilder

Tajj?

37:24 Tajj

Just speaking on the timeline piece, in the creative industry, you're going to have to deal with deadlines, and timelines. And it can get crazy sometimes. And you'll hear that term thrown out loud because oh, this is an emergency. Well, at the end of the day, it's not like there's a reason we're creatives where we don't work in emergency rooms. So it's not life or death at the end of the day, so conversely on that, like take care of yourself, like things aren't emergencies, no one is going to perish as a result of you not being able to send something at a pm at night always. If you can get it done earlier. Cool. But definitely just try and take care of yourself. Because there we didn't we didn't choose the medical school route for us it

Transcript

38:15 Nina Wilder

there are no emergencies in the arts. Um, Marielle?

38:22 Marielle

yeah, I would just say know your why. And remember sort of the reasoning behind why this is the area you want to be in compared to a lot of these industries that tend to have way earlier recruiting timelines, I worked in the Career Center, and we would have a lot of really stressed out seniors every year come in and sort of freak out. And then when you ask them, like, do you even want to be doing consulting or banking or something, they clearly had no interest in it. But the fact that these timelines are so different and overlapping, it's just always go back to that why and be like, nope, the things I want to do, they're just gonna operate differently, and that's fine, but it is sort of hard to separate those if you have friends, and everyone else has such varied interests. That's cool.

39:01 Nina Wilder

And Marina, close us out on this question,

39:08 Marina

yeah. Um, well, to the freelancing thing, it can seem really uncertain. But it's actually a lot of times a lot easier to get work as a freelancer because they're not committing to you for like, years and years. And, you know, it's like you're signing on for two weeks or six weeks, or whatever it is, and, um, I never I didn't have to submit an application or show my resume to anyone a single time until my current position, which is a staff position, but um, so yeah, I guess just to kind of let Chaz was saying, Take every opportunity that comes your way if it...I just remembered another good piece that I got. I'm trying to think of it as a triangle. There's like three things, there's are you doing it for the money? Are you doing it for the people? you're going to really enjoy making these connections or working with these people, or the creative? and it's the creative is something that really calls to you. So you need to always try to fulfill at least two of these three things. Maybe right out of school, it might just be one, but try to aim for two, you're probably not going to get all three right off the bat. And if you if, if you can't satisfy the money aspect of it, live at home, if you can get a second job, if you can do whatever you need to do to support that creative, the creative and the network, because those are going to serve you in the end more than the immediate payoff well.

40:55 Nina Wilder

That's great. I feel like I keep saying That's great advice, but don't have such great advice. Again, I think for a lot of people and I was here, a little over a year ago, it's very daunting to think about pursuing a career in a creative industry. You know, people tell you, you're not going to make any money, people

Transcript

tell you, you are going to be stressed all the time, etc., etc. So it's nice to know, you guys really somewhat mastered or you have good advice on how to deal with all. So I'm gonna use your time to go back to some individual questions. And I'm gonna go to Marielle. You touched on this briefly beforehand, but you have an economics degree in Decision Sciences, which I think is just fascinating. And so I'm curious as to how that intersects with your current role as a Market Strategist for Xbox.

41:51 Marielle

Yes. So luckily, for me, the ability that they get both a macro and a micro level has been really instrumental. In my time working his strategy for Xbox, we work not only across the organization with a bunch of senior leaders to try to figure out what do we want to do as a whole brand as a company? Where are we trying to look, now, a few years out? How does this all work together, but we also have a lot of different products now that are subscriptions, or hardware consoles, or cloud streaming. And they all have their own special needs and interesting questions and things that are sort of begging them take every day, and yet to be able to get really deep and really gritty really quickly on Super nuanced topics. So being able to sort of flip between the spectrum of things has been super useful and understanding those and then sort of as we think about these opportunities, there's both the how does this fit us creatively? How does this add to our story, but there's also the financial side, if we want to acquire a company, it might look great on paper, but then we realize like, there's no way to make this work. So understanding from econ how to think about model building and how to think about all the different components that go into that have been really helpful pieces for my current role.

43:10 Nina Wilder

Um, and I'm also sort of interested in, yeah, these intersections between what we ended up what we studied and what we end up working in. So I want to go to Chaz and I am really curious to hear your answer on this. You pursued an MFA program at Loyola Marymount, and how did that help you prepare for your career as a writer? Do you think it's essential for a writer to get an MFA or no?

43:36 Chaz

I think so. They're like, they're like two schools of thought. I think for me, it was essential. Because at Duke, I wasn't studying writing in any way, shape, or form. I knew nothing about the craft, I just knew that I liked writing, I liked and in fact, for my application, and this goes back to studying like the tools of your craft, I didn't even know the final draft program existed when it came to writing scripts. So I was writing everything on Microsoft Word and tabbing over and spending like an extra six, seven hours working to make a script look like a script when there was technology out there. That did it for me. I didn't know about that till I got to grad school. So for me grad school was essential, because I just didn't study writing when I was coming out. That being said, if you studied writing, when you're coming out, I don't think it's as essential I think you can be able, if you're able to tell stories at that point, it's just you amassing an amount of experiences, and being able to tell those experiences as well as you

Transcript

can, and finding that networking element and opportunities to do that. Grad schools have hyper focused bastion for that and can give you time to build that portfolio to build that network in a small space. But not all of these people, for example, in my grad school, my MFA program, not all of these people end up actually doing what we all want to do even at the MFA level. So It's like it's just more helpful to get out in the world and start the networking process. And get involved in that go PA on someone's set, go work is a Page like Alexandra went into, like, find ways that are even craftier to just be around film. And you can find ways to write for it after that.

45:23 Nina Wilder

That's great. Yeah, I do think it's a sort of, and it can be a divisive school of thoughts. And people are like, No, you do not need an essay. If you're a writer, it's like, God given talents, and people see it was helpful. Chaz: It was very, yes. Nina: So that's great to hear. And I guess it's just sort of, to the person, but it's nice to hear that it was helpful. Um, Bryce, I would like to ask you a bit about your current job. I think it's a very fascinating intersection of what you studied at Duke and what you're interested in the storytelling. So can you just tell us what your role is a social impact producer at Participant Media? And how does that fit into the overall filmmaking process there?

46:07 Bryce

Yeah. So participant is, is unique in some ways, but essentially, what they, what they do is that they're a production company, and that they're a financier. And so for those that are familiar with the filmmaking process, forgive me. For those that aren't, hopefully, this is somewhat helpful. But we essentially get involved with projects, either super early on in development, or we buy a project after it's essentially been made. And so for documentaries, for instance, we purchased a documentary from Sundance, I had to make sure this has been announced, it has called FLEE that had already been made. And we're gonna go distribute it with a company called Neon. And so in that process, the film has already been made by the artist. And now we're just distributing it in theaters later this year. And eventually, it'll live on the streaming platform.

And in that context, someone like myself who've worked in social impacts, will come in to sort of inform the deal to make sure that this fits our sort of values and narrative with regards to how we think about impact in the world, and that the film can reach different audiences and certainly influence social change in some way, shape, or form. But the longer version of that is that we might get involved with a project much earlier on, and essentially see it from an idea whether it's a article, a book, or even just an idea someone has bring the different sort of folks together, whether it be a writer and a director and producers, and really just build the craft from there work on it script, a script, a script, and we eventually reach a stage where you consider greenlighting and actually funding it entirely to go ahead and make it and that process, someone like myself, again, is sort of brought in to sort of give that way as to whether it would have that social impact, then, assuming that it does the film, or the

Transcript

television show will go ahead and get made. And we come in later, however, many years or months after to begin thinking about what does a campaign look like? We work closely with the distributor in the marketing team to think about what audiences will it reach? What is the sort of state of play with movements that might touch on these issues? And how will it sort of resonate with folks? And where can we sort of push the envelope forward when it comes to that issue. And so, for something like JUST MERCY, or WHEN THEY SEE US, those who are involved in police reform, police accountability, criminal justice reform, reimagining the criminal justice system more broadly. And we work closely with organizations like the Equal Justice Initiative, and a number of others, Color of Change, to think about how we can look at prosecution differently. And more specifically, reform how we how the justice system is and of itself. And narrative change is, of course, a major part of that. And so what we sort of do is that we bring audiences together, whether it's the film going audience are activists and and folks, policymakers, people who do the work full time and use the film to either broaden that coalition or use the sort of communications around the film to push the issue. And so even more recently, JUDAS AND THE BLACK MESSIAH, just came out on WarnerBros, or HBO max. And the large part of that campaign is really changing how we think about the Black Panther Party, their role and the United States and how influential they were into making sure that folks basic needs are met from a sort of anti poverty perspective. And so, depending on the film, depending on the issue, depending on who's involved We'll sort of build a campaign from there, working closely with the filmmakers, those who are marketing and those who are distributing the film.

50:10 Nina Wilder

That's amazing. I think it's really important now more than ever, to, you know, let it be understood that art does not exist in a vacuum. That it is very much a part of our social justice movements in this country. And it's very much a part of current events, and that you can have those intersections in your creative work. That's great. I'm curious. So this is an audience question. Has anyone on the panel ever conducted an informational interview? Not you, being the one who's talking to somebody, someone contacted you for an informational interview? Has that ever happened? Anyone here? Taji? Yeah. Yeah, I was gonna say the question is how the student wants to know how they can set themselves apart and an informational interview, and makes them want you to possibly refer them to your company or where you're working?

51:13 Taji

Yeah, I have two examples come to mind of people who have had reached out to me. And that led to a chat that then led to an interview and a chat down the road. The first thing I would say is, be personable, within reason there, I think there's a fine line between professionalism and being like human and sounding human. So one example I had a guy reach out to me on LinkedIn, he expressed that he had admired a piece of work that I had worked on, and identified some common interests. And was just like, I'd love to just like have a conversation with you. And here's my number, if you're

Transcript

interested, it was like, the perfect level of like football, like you've clearly like, looked into who I was, but also like, you're not treating this solely as a transaction that came across human as, and we later had a phone call, he was super dope guy. And that was a connection, I think, was valuable later on to him. And then the second example is just kind of, don't be afraid to ask, when you're reaching out to people have what you want to know, kind of in mind, I think someone earlier mentioned, like, kind of know what you're asking someone for it. Because if people just reach out to you and just send a LinkedIn connection, it's like, okay, I don't know you, I don't know what we have in common. And I don't know how I can help you. So be very upfront and clear on kind of what you're looking for advice on what you want to hear about. So on and so forth. I think that goes a long way.

52:59 Nina Wilder

That's great. Did Marina, did you say you had also had someone contact you before?

53:07 Marina

I did recently. And it was kind of a strange experience for sort of like the opposite reasons. But you said Taji, because I, I sort of found myself in a situation where I wanted to help and I was, like, excited to share information, but he didn't really know what he wanted. Um, so it kind of it made it hard to help. So I totally like everything you said, Taji's advice to follow.

53:42 Nina Wilder

Does anyone else? I think that's a few other hands. Does anyone else have any other things to add about that? How can you make yourself stand out when you're talking to...

53:51 Marielle

I've had a mix through either LinkedIn or Duke alumni are different clubs. And I think the biggest thing is being genuine, I think it's totally fine for so I would say I'm actually just trying to learn at this point, I don't really even know what your role is, I really want to find out, doing a bit of that back work to Taji is playing a sort of understanding like, this is what I know. And here's what I want to get to. And is there anything in the interim where like, I can learn more, find out things out, I've had people come to me that when you have conversations, and honestly sometimes they never even ask for a referral. And I did it on the back end on my own because I could just sense that it was something that they were really caring about. And then sometimes he will come across super abrasive, super up front, but they can't actually explain or show why they're looking for your help or guidance in any way. So I think it's been through a mix of channels, but really just those who come in are genuinely wanting to learn I've never had peers or friends not want to have these conversations with people. So just putting your foot out there and just getting these conversations and and learning is a great start.

54:57 Nina Wilder

Transcript

That's, I think a perfect place. To end this panel, I would like to give a humungous thank you to all of our panelists for this conversation. I have no doubts that it was incredibly helpful for students and alums hoping to break into Creative Industries of y'all are amazing. I'm so happy that Zoom exists so we can make this happen. I thank you so much for joining us tonight. Until we meet again stay safe and be well.

OUTRO: Dave Karger 57:28

That's it for this episode of DEMAN Live. I'm DAVE KARGER, DEMAN is a signature program of Duke Arts and Duke Alumni Engagement and Development. Follow DEMAN on social and stay updated at DukeDEMAN.com, that's d e m a n.com where you can find our full archive of episodes. Thanks so much for joining us. See you next time.

This episode was produced by me, Lilly Clark, in collaboration with Hear at Duke, Duke's student run podcast hub. Our theme song is "Carolina" by Cameron Tompkins.

####