

GROWERTALKS

Guest Column

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An Intern's Perspective

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Before I even stepped through the doors of Ball's West Chicago office, I had high hopes for what this internship could be. I was somebody who'd been eyeing a Ball internship since I started college and I applied every year, even though I knew they didn't take underclassmen. By the time the career fair rolled around my junior year, the representative at the Ball booth and I greeted each other like old friends. It pays to be persistent.

So what are you good at?

After receiving confirmation that I got the Marketing internship and would be spending my summer at Ball, I wanted to get in contact with my supervisors early to make a strong first impression. I met with them in December, where I was asked a question that I've never been asked before: "So what are you good at?"

I told them that I was an aspiring writer and artist, and I was surprised to hear them say I could spend my summer writing for the company.

That question is at the center of how Ball operates as a company. They play to your strengths and use your individual skills to get projects done. In the MarComm department I was surrounded by masters of their individual crafts, and I was able to learn and take something from each of them for my future career.

My thoughtful supervisors saw my strengths and took it upon themselves to restructure the internship to what fit my skills best, which turned into a summer full of writing and graphic design. I primarily wrote articles for our consumer-facing brands, Wave Petunias and Beacon Impatiens, which was my first time doing B2C writing. It was such a thrilling experience to be "the expert," in a way, and I had real people reaching out to me with questions regarding the topics I wrote about. To me, it felt like I was able to bring poetry to my desk job. I'm a poet at heart, and those who read my work closely might pick up on the subtle rhyme and pentameter throughout my text. A few of my articles even got picked up by a national green industry news website, perishableNews.com. The national recognition that my articles got validated all the hard work I've put into my writing and it was great to know that I had some real fans!

A friendly & passionate industry

A substantial portion of my internship was the opportunity to attend Cultivate'25 to represent Ball and help set up and tear down all the booths. The eight other interns and I were in Columbus for the entire week of the trade show, and it was an opportunity to get closer as a group and foster friendships outside of the workplace.

We were all placed in different booths throughout the convention center and I ended up in the PanAmerican Seed booth. It felt like a time to truly test the knowledge I'd gained by writing for Beacon and Wave since they were the focus of the booth. It was exciting to talk about plants with green industry professionals from around the country, and I was able to give them growing and marketing suggestions for their businesses. The passion in this industry is unmatched; it was refreshing to be surrounded by people who shared the same love for the natural world as I do.

“You *GET* to do this”

I had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to sit down with renowned garden writer Allan Armitage during Cultivate and pick his brain on advice for young writers. With 17 books and hundreds of articles and columns in green industry publications, I took this as an opportunity to learn all that I could from Allan to prepare for my future career in the horticulture and literary world.

He was teaching me from the start. I walked up to him and said “Allan, I gotta interview you.” He stopped and said, “Change that O to an E ... you *GET* to interview me.”

He told me that believing in this philosophy of “getting” to do things changes how you perceive work and life as a whole. I don't GOT to go to work every morning. I don't *GOT* to go out in the garden and water. I *GET* to. This philosophy can be applied to more than just work and chores—with this outlook on life, it's truly a privilege to do anything at all.

Allan told me that the two things an aspiring writer needs to make it in this industry are passion and patience. He shared that not only do you need to know what you're writing about, but you have to like it. You should want to write about it. On the other hand, you also need to be patient because becoming a nationally recognized writer won't happen overnight.

Following the interview, I was full of inspiration and philosophies from Allan that will follow me throughout my career. I'm sure I'll think back to this chat with Allan every time I say “I got to do” something, and I'll work to change that O to an E.

At Ball this summer, I learned that there's no downtime in the corporate world if you work correctly. If I had any downtime, I would walk around the MarComm department until I found somebody doing something I could help with or learn from. Staying busy is easy if you're always looking for something to do.

I'll be able to take what I learned at Ball back to Purdue and I'll use this experience to narrow down a future career in horticulture. Working here this summer has been a dream of mine since I entered this industry, and looking back, I can say that I never felt like I worked a day all summer. Since interning at Ball, my future has never looked greener.

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Ilyin Costello was an intern at Ball Horticultural Company this past summer and is currently finishing up his last year as an Agriculture Economics student at Purdue University.