

Tyler Balkin

Tyler Balkin currently serves as a Senior Media Relations Specialist at Walker Sands Communication. Before attaining this position, Tyler interned at Walker Sands after her 2004 graduation from the University of Illinois. She received her B.A. in Communication and Minor in Sociology.



1. What is most memorable about your experience as a student at UIUC? What were you involved with on campus?

The amount of opportunities made available to me. U of I offered so many different ways to get involved on campus, whether it was through internships, clubs, social organizations, etc., I never felt like I was limited. When I was on campus most of my time was spent either singing or in the Department of Communication. When I was singing it was with the Illinois Rip Chords, which is an all-female cappella group. I was a member of the group all four years and was President my last two years of school. I balanced this with my involvement in the department. I was a Peer Advising intern for the department and was also apart of the Communication Leaders.

2. Tell me a bit about your current position. How did you get to where you are now? What is your favorite part about your current position?

I'm currently a Senior Media Relations Specialist at Walker Sands Communications. Walker Sands is a full-service marketing and public relations firm with a focus on business-to-business and technology clients. My job is to build relationships with key industry reporters, establish clients as experts in their field and garner media coverage. I actually had very little PR experience before starting at Walker Sands. I gained some experience while completing the PR Certificate Program, but I didn't have many PR internships to put on my resume when applying to jobs. So during my senior year, I applied to a bunch of PR internships in Chicago (in the PR world it's common to do an internship as a post-graduate.) I applied to Walker Sands' internship program and fell in love with the company. After I made the first round, I was then asked to take a writing test and come in for an interview. Next thing I know, I graduated and started interning a week later! I interned at Walker Sands the summer of 2014 and was then hired on full time in August. My favorite part about my position is that no day is ever the same. I'm always doing something different for my clients and working on interesting projects. PR is also very fast paced, so I never feel like I'm staring at the clock waiting for the day to end.

3. I'd love to learn more about your career. What have been some of your greatest accomplishments and challenges as a professional in the field of communications?

PR can be a challenging field, but what's nice is you can see your hard work pay off. One of my greatest accomplishments was getting my client a placement in a top tier publication when they least expected it. They were thrilled, and making a client happy is one of the best feelings. But there are some hurdles, sometimes a pitch doesn't get the kind of coverage you want or you hear crickets and get no response from reporters. It's not supposed to be easy every time, but it's important to have those kinds of obstacles or else you don't feel like you're really challenging yourself.

4. What aspects of your education as a communication student have been most beneficial to your career?

As a communication major, most of my courses involved some sort of writing aspect. While having to write long papers and research projects was challenging at times, that writing experience was extremely beneficial for my career. In PR, you must be a strong writer. My job consists of writing pitches, press releases and contributed articles. If I didn't have an intense writing background in college, it would've been much more difficult to break into the industry.

5. What advice would you give to current communication students about the professional realm?

Get as much experience as you can! There is no such thing as too much experience. Apply to a variety of internships, join a bunch of clubs...don't feel like you have to limit yourself. Communication is very broad, so it's important to explore different fields, that way you have a better idea of which path you want to pursue.