

Summer in the city

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It's intern season, and workplaces are filled with fresh-faced up-and-comers who've landed in the big city eager to build their resumes.

That's the plan, at least. At summer's end, some will leave wondering how to make their CV sing with entries like "procured boss's dry cleaning in a timely and efficient manner."

But not all of them. This week, we check in with four interns who are getting some serious hands-on experience in their dream fields, from helping devise product marketing schemes to working on the set of a hit HBO show.

Hands-on marketing gig hits the Mark

During her interview for an internship with Mark cosmetics, 21-year-old Natalie Kitson was warned that she'd be asked to do more than fetch coffee.

"They told us we'd be getting our hands dirty with everything they're involved in," says the student at Arizona State.

Now, after besting hundreds of applicants to land one of 12 coveted spots, Kitson knows her future mentors weren't kidding.

As a marketing and merchandising intern, she spends her days "in the middle of the action" at Mark's Midtown headquarters. Her primary responsibility, she says, is to create a marketing strategy for Mark's new face and eye products. She also assists her assigned mentor in everything from prepping for meetings to offering feedback to higher-ups.

"They ask our opinions on which products we'd buy or which layout would produce the most sales," she says. "We actually participate in meetings."

This means serious face time with execs like president Claudia Poccia, an experience Kitson says came as a surprise.

"It's just astonishing to have that much input," she says.

In addition, Kitson and her fellow interns are privy to exclusive "Make your mark" luncheons, hosted by successful businesswomen like Avon CEO Andrea Jung and "Today Show" financial adviser Jean Chatzky. The women pass on not only advice, but also contact information so the interns can stay in touch.

"They really want us to succeed from this experience," says Kitson, who reports that the job has bolstered her plans to pursue a public relations career.

“What I’ll take away most is knowing what I’m walking into in the business world,” she says.

A wheel deal

Many students consider internships a fast track to success, but few move as fast as 20-year-old Peter Begley. As the summer intern for Classic Car Club, the city native has found himself behind the wheel of some of the world’s speediest — and priciest — vehicles.

“The opportunity to work with these beautiful cars is a dream,” says Begley, a student at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va. “I’ve loved cars from an early age.”

The SoHo-based club gives members access to a fleet of 48 “staggeringly stylish” rides. And when someone orders up, say, the 1955 Porsche 550 Spyder or a 2006 Lamborghini Gallardo, it’s Begley who gets to steer it across town.

Admittedly, not all his duties are so glamorous. He assists booking agents, checks cars’ oil, helps with mechanical repairs and prepares for racetrack events.

Begley, who landed the gig by simply “going out on a limb” and e-mailing the club, says the most rewarding part has been working with such a knowledgeable staff.

“It surprised me how well they trusted me,” he says of his bosses, who encouraged him to get to know the vehicles — including his personal fave, a ’65 Cobra Shelby — by driving them. “I haven’t crashed any yet.”

While learning “the ins and outs and history of each car” has been fascinating, Begley does acknowledge one drawback: “There are definitely days I come home and my hands are completely black,” he says.

Still, he knows he won’t be getting much sympathy from his peers.

“I always joke that while my friends are scooping ice cream this summer, I’m driving around Ferraris.”

Connecting with the community

Susanne Hansen has spent many summers as a lifeguard, but in her current post as an intern for the nonprofit LIFT-The Bronx, the 21-year old is literally guarding the lives of the area’s low-income residents.

“I’ve never had a job where I’ve been given this much responsibility,” says the New Jersey native, who works with struggling families to secure everything from housing to child care.

Recently, she saved two clients from eviction by writing letters to the court to extend the process, and securing emergency funds from community partners. She has also helped clients refresh their resumes, find new job opportunities and sign up for public benefits such as food stamps.

The intense, hands-on experience “has really made me think about poverty on a bigger level,” says the Fordham junior. And it’s inspired her to seek creative solutions for these

problems, such as improved technology systems to better connect the needy with partner resources. To that end, Hansen is spearheading a project to update LIFT's online database of resources.

"The most rewarding part is getting to know the community around me," she says. "Everyone has their own story to tell."

As an added bonus, the internship has helped solidify Hansen's once-vague career ambitions. She's now looking into graduate school and social work programs in order to pursue a job in nonprofit management.

"I've heard that internships help you find what you like and what you don't like," she explains of her initial hopes for the post. "In my case, I was lucky enough to find something that I love."

TV major gets the 'Treatment'

As an aspiring producer, 21-year-old Adam Bradshaw knows networking is everything in the entertainment industry. So the film and television major from New Jersey's Rowan University jumped at the chance to take an eight-week internship with the HBO series "In Treatment," where he's getting serious face-time with industry heavy-hitters.

It wasn't an easy gig to land: Bradshaw was among 1,200 applicants for the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences Foundation's internship program, which pairs interns with major television shows.

"I applied thinking I didn't have too much of a shot," says the native of Kalamazoo, Mich. It wasn't until after Bradshaw was awarded one of 30 coveted spots that he found he'd be working on the Brooklyn set of the critically acclaimed drama.

So far, says Bradshaw, the internship has provided in-depth exposure "to all realms of the industry." He's worked in the production office assisting in the organization of the show, logged time on set as a PA and helped out in the post-production department.

"I've also been doing a lot of shadowing — following around the producers, the director, and other people on crew to see exactly what professionals in this industry are doing."

While meeting the show's actors, such as star Gabriel Byrne, "has been cool," Bradshaw says the highlight so far was shadowing Emmy-winning director Paris Barclay.

"He allowed me to sit behind him in one of the director's chairs, and I got to watch him direct an episode. It was just an amazing experience."

While he's grateful for "the opportunity to learn from professionals doing jobs I hope to do someday," like a true industry bigwig, he already has his eyes on the next big project: a fall internship with NFL Films.