Final Self-Evaluation: Kai Eldridge

I spent the first 3 years of my college career studying and participating in the realm of social justice. Although I love the subject and am passionate about making the world a better place, social work was no longer inspiring me. I was feeling drained, rather than excited, by direct service. I felt complacent, as if my full potential was not being reached and I was not making a big enough impact in my community. This past year, I studied *food justice*. So, when I felt a pull to try something in the world of social media, it made perfect sense to do so in the restaurant business. I accepted a position as social media marketing manager intern for Elliott Bay Brewing Company having had minimal experience, but excited to try something different. My hope was that I would find inspiration in a new field that could help direct future career endeavors.

The last 10 weeks have been a fantastic experience. I am so happy to be immersed in the world of social media and breweries, in a position where I am able to express myself creatively, be self-directed, and learn a variety of skills. Through immersion into the brewery workplace, I have gained an understanding of beer and brewing. I am now fluent in beer lingo and have a basic understanding of the brew process. I have also learned which properties affect the flavor or color profile of a beer, and which beers are easier or more difficult to perfect.

One of my learning objectives involved researching what content and frequency of posts similar businesses were successful in doing, in order to develop a strategy to implement based on best practices. I have done this through trial and error, as well as by reading up on the topic through sites such as Forbes and social media marketing blogs like *Sprout Social*. Research has played a huge role in the development of content creation and my own understanding of the field.

My next learning objective was to create fresh, new, interesting content for Elliott Bay Brewing Company’s social media outlets. I have increased not only the consistency, but also the quality of content posted by EBBC. I am proud of the photos I take and the content I am sharing, including event promotion, food specials, and employee spotlights. Over the past few months, the quality of my photos has increased exponentially. I find that it now takes me far less time to get a shot that I like, as well as to edit the photos, than it did when I first began. Taking photos at Brother Barrel has been the most challenging, but rewarding experience. BB does not open until 4:00 pm, so finding proper light to shoot in is always a struggle. However, some of my favorite photos, such as those of charcuterie boards, chicken thigh tacos, and veggie foccacia pizza, have turned out to be my some of my favorite photos that I have taken. My favorite written posts are the employee spotlights. Due to the fact that most of my work can be done from home, I am not always interacting with the staff. It was so much fun having the opportunity to interview employees, because I got to socialize and build relationships with many people who I may not have spoken to otherwise.

Finally, I have been tracking data through *Social Report* to better understand what content is most successful with Elliott Bay Brewing Company’s audience. Overall, I have come to realize that photos with people in them get the most engagement, and hashtag optimization is key to growing a following. From the data I’ve tracked, I know that the audience wants to hear stories, but more so about employees than about the brewing process or different flavor profiles within the beer. Most of Elliott Bay Brewing Company’s following is between 30 and 60 years old, equally divided between male and female, and almost all of the audience lives in the United States. That being said, puns or use of “hip lingo” is not always ideal. Knowing this information helps me to cater to the audience and create fun, interesting content for those who are viewing it.

I mentioned in my contract that I would record participation and interaction metrics to facilitate Elliott Bay’s participation in the *Brewers Association* sustainability tool, but after speaking with the managers at EBBC, this does not seem to be on the spectrum of work they would like me to pursue. Although the company values sustainability, there is more than enough work for me to do in regards to published content. Revamping social media platforms was more of a priority than having me to understand Elliott Bay’s interaction with this particular tool.

I do not have a typical day at work. Some days I work from home, while others I work for hours at 1 or 2 of the four brewery locations. My 30 hours a week consists of researching best practices, taking and editing photos, chatting with employees to learn more about the company, writing employee spotlights, and posting content. Being a social media manager is a full-time job, and I could easily fill 40+ hours a week with work, so I have to constantly tell myself to put my phone down and and be present. Because the job is so time consuming, I plan to take and edit a whole stock of photos to leave with the company so that they have content to post when I am gone, because no one will be in the position. My work as an intern is definitely valued, so I am not sure why they do not want to keep the position filled or keep me on for a few paid hours a week. I assume that social media is not seen as a high priority because their customers consist of many regulars. The establishment is family oriented and I would guess that much of their marketing happens via word of mouth.

Overall, I love the independence that comes with my position, but I have struggled a bit with not having a mentor to teach me what is right and wrong. However, I am at a point now where I am especially grateful for an internship that offers me complete creative control and that has taught me to go with the flow and be flexible. I have learned that my ideal career will allow me to be independent, but also have a bit more structure. I have really enjoyed social media and intend to continue to pursue it in the future, as well as look for opportunities that give me the ability to help create positive change in my community.