RESTORATIVE INNOVATION

Despite the stigma that law is cold, much of the innovation that was enacted in this experience came from people management and being aware of the soft skills needed to achieve the social media video campaign we were looking for. Our social media campaign in some ways (definitely not in all) had a lot riding on it, and was aimed at reinvigorating the company's main purpose again. Coming in as a rising sophomore having no knowledge of law, knowing this was initially very intimidating. The campaign was based upon interviewing people about things that previously happened in their lives prior to Street Outreach Court Detroit (SOCD) and how SOCD might have helped. Because of this, the interviews were often times very personal and dealt with things very close to the interviewee's heart.

Much of the innovation came through experience and learning on what it means to ask questions in a way that is both sensitive and respectful, but also not patronizing. Learning how to be bold and ask possibly difficult questions to someone who doesn't know you, as well as showing that you're being sensitive and engaged in their story was innovative in a new way for me at the time. The innovation came through soft skills like empathy, confidence, leadership, sensitivity, giving, initiative — things that promote the restorative nature of the company and not as much through hard skills like video editing and filming although those were important as well.
One fairly significant failure in this internship was in the interview process, specially asking questions. While interviewing many of the grades, like you would in any conversation my partner and I would interject while the interviewee was speaking. Many times it would be things like “sure” or “yeah” or “mhm” in order to affirm them that we were listening attentively. However, when we at the end of the summer started editing we started realizing that we had some great clips and sound bites that were deemed unusable because they had our vocals also layered on top of it. This seemed both unprofessional and unintentional for a campaign that was meant for judges. We didn’t have the foresight in the interview to realize this mistake at the time. However, that was not the main failure. We only had the last week of the internship to edit the 20 or so interviews we had done the past couple of weeks. What we came to realize was that not only a few but many experienced this problem. So the main failure was not realizing this sooner and pivoting.

Although unpleasant at first, this not only became excusable but an asset to the campaign. We realized that after editing everything together the interviewers voices helped to reinforce that these were actual stories and touching testimonies that normal people were reacting to. It showed how this was not some contrived or manufactured campaign but real people having a conversation about their lives and what SOCD did for them, and hearing not only the people’s voices but the company connecting with these past graduates helped to reinforce that.
Some key takeaways from this internship is that experience doesn't always equal effectiveness, experience doesn't always equal value, and experience doesn't always equal innovation. My partner and I came into a non-profit law firm having no background whatsoever in law. Despite this we were able to succeed, become highly valuable to the team, and innovate in ways that possibly other law students couldn't. Also through this experience I learned the importance of communication and relationship with your superiors and boss. The only way my partner and I were able to succeed is because we had a very open line of communication and accountability between us and Jayesh. It creates an environment where clarity becomes less arduous and trust is more easily given.