

SAEM Internship Final Report



Nakturnal.Org – Fall 2019

Photo from Nakturnal.Org

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (OVERVIEW OF WHAT YOU DISCUSS IN YOUR PAPER)

In the Fall of 2019 I worked for Nakturnal.org, a company that focuses on digital and influencer marketing and search engine optimization. Below you will find the following information about Nakturnal.org:

- The Background and History of the organization
- Their Business Structure
- SWOT analysis
- Organization structure of employees
- My responsibilities as an intern
- My learning goals, challenges and outcomes

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF NAKTURNAL.ORG

Nakturnal.org started in 2005 with the original Nakturnal organization owned by Kellee Maize and Leigh Yock (Stone 4). The original Nakturnal started as an event management group – helping plan events and create sponsorship opportunities for over 1000 events throughout the United States. Nakturnal.org is still partnered with Leigh Yock and Nakturnal as their event and marketing coordination group.

The true beginning for Nakturnal.org occurred when future co-founder Lani Rediger joined the Nakturnal team in 2007. In 2011 Kellee decided to pursue her music career, forming Kellee Maize Music with Lani and her significant other Joey Rahimi. Joey Rahimi was highly successful in his own right, founding the company Branding Brand in 2009 and helping to quietly lead it to being one of the top e-commerce technology providers (Branding Brand). Utilizing Joey and Lani's knowledge of SEO and Digital Marketing, Kellee was able to get her music brand ranked above numerous top-performing national acts on Google (Smith).

In 2013 Lani saw the need for a digital marketing arm for Nakturnal and with the support of Kellee and Joey began Nakturnal.Org – the group began soaring to new levels in 2016 when they partnered with Jodie Ball (Stone 4). As Nakturnal.org they have focused on Search Engine

Optimization (SEO) and digital growth for clients big and small – helping national brands and local brands alike. Both Nakturnal and Nakturnal.org still focus on supporting women owned business and non-profit businesses, with a portion of Nakturnal.Org’s proceeds being donated to local non-profits (Nakturnal.org).

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Nakturnal.org is now a separate group from the original Nakturnal. Because their owners work alongside many other groups, it is considered one of a number of “sister” organizations across Pittsburgh. The sister organizations for Nakturnal.org include Nakturnal, Aiken House, Kellee Maize Music, Branding Brand, Niche.com, and Schenley. They operate out of offices located on Walnut Street in Shadyside, but due to their national digital presence often work is done from wherever an internet connection can be found.

For the duration of my internship we worked primarily from the Nakturnal.org offices, with a regular secondary location for work being in the Aiken House location. Because Co-Founder Kellee works from the Aiken House location predominantly, when we had projects that were focused on her business needs we would often work from that location rather than have her come to the Nakturnal Offices. In addition, interns were expected to do some work from home, as often much of the SEO work we would be assisting with would only be beneficial if done from a different ISP than the main offices.

SWOT ANALYSIS OF INTERNSHIP ORGANIZATION'S OPERATIONS

STRENGTHS

- Numerous clients across a multitude of business sectors including clothing, jewelry, technology, travel and more
- Small, flexible workforce allowing them to expand and contract as needed on a per-client basis
- Access to numerous data analysis tools and programs and the knowledge of how to utilize these tools to benefit clients
- Over a decade of experience in maximizing results from the Google Search Algorithm

WEAKNESSES

- Due to small number of employees there can be more work than people to get it done
- Relies heavily on interns to provide certain business functions (commenting, research), which means there is a dip in productivity while teaching these tasks to new interns
- Paid employees are independent contractors – this can result in work being done less efficiently when contractors have other jobs to work for, difficulty in retaining high quality employees between contracts, and fewer “hands on deck” when needed to complete big jobs
- Managing partners and CEO have families and outside obligations that limit their schedules inside the office, making it harder for them to consistently oversee work in progress.

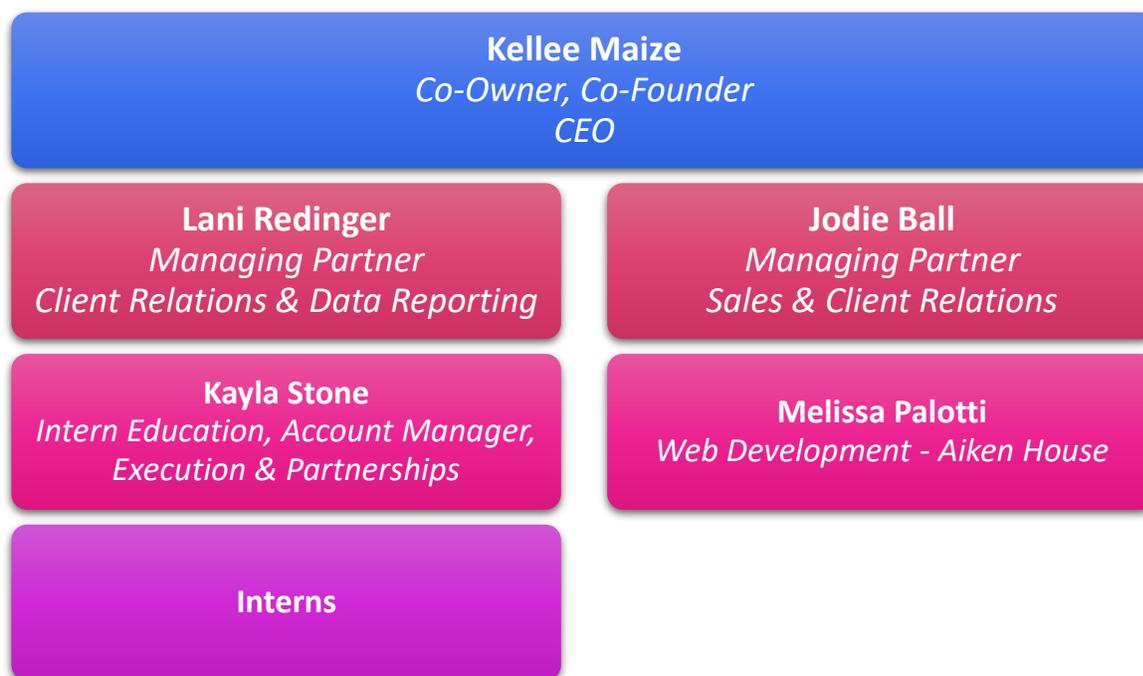
OPPORTUNITIES

- Engaged in one of the largest growing fields of marketing – digital growth
- Google Algorithm changes mean most companies need to hire outside firms to stay on top of the quick pace of change with SEO
- A strong portfolio of past and current clients which can lead to future contracts
- Connections with “Sister Businesses” in Pittsburgh that allow for contracts to be shared between organizations

THREATS

- Because online marketing is rapidly expanding, there are many competing companies offering similar services
- Google Algorithm changes that can negatively impact results
- Many companies are looking to hire an internal position for SEO and Digital Marketing, making the need to hire outside the company obsolete

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



RESPONSIBILITIES AS A STUDENT INTERN

DUTIES

While often similar in scope, my duties at Nakturnal.org changed on a nearly daily basis in response to business needs. At the start of the experience it was much more focused on daily sales research – finding contacts at companies so our sales team could reach out to someone specific rather than a general “marketing coordinator”. In addition to sales research I assisted with SEO boosting tasks – publishing ghost-written blog posts to client websites, writing keyword specific blogs for clients, updating google business listings and researching potential bloggers to write for our clients all became tasks on various days depending on the business needs.

In the middle of October I was shifted from regular intern activities – sales, blogger research and listing updates – to help with a new project for Kellee Maize (co-owner and CEO). This required learning how to create and publish websites using the Webflow platform, integrating Google Documents, Forms and Spreadsheets, and researching business needs for a startup co-working space, “The Goddess Nest.” Through the Goddess Nest Project with Kellee I learned about securing funding for a project through grants, balancing the tight financial needs of a startup against the technology requirements, and how to process and handle massive amounts of data from interested clients.

In addition to the in-office duties we had one important task that was required to be performed on our home networks – this activity specifically helped Nakturnal.org clients while also teaching us about how our actions online impact search engine optimization daily. Each month we were given a list of blog posts written about our clients products and were asked to comment on those posts (boosting the value of the blog because of the interaction) and then click on our client link, leaving the window open for a minimum of 2 minutes (boosting the value rating for that link for the Google Algorithm to see that people are interested in the site). This helps link the keywords from the blog to the company, increasing their search optimization.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

When I began this internship, I wasn't really sure what to expect. I only knew I wanted to learn more about digital marketing. However, easily my biggest accomplishment this semester had little to do with digital marketing and more to do with website development. Because of my work on the Goddess Nest Project with Kellee I became incredibly familiar with the Webflow publishing platform. Developing the skills needed to create a website from scratch that is mobile and SEO optimized has already created opportunities for me. I was able to develop a side project alongside the work I was doing for Kellee (Luxinly Digital Branding) and I have created connections within the Goddess Nest project to potential clients interested in having their websites developed.

Additionally, two companies that I did keyword research and developed proposals for are now in the sales funnel as potential future clients. Knowing that two proposals I worked hard on and learned about keyword research for resulted in potential clients was a huge accomplishment.

THREE LEARNING OUTCOMES—DID YOU ACHIEVE THEM? IF NOT, WHY NOT?

My three learning objectives were:

1. Understand the Nakturnal.org approach for digital marketing campaigns like Influencer Marketing, PPC, SEM, and SEO
2. Develop social media marketing skills via researching influencer blogs and contacts, and analyze how these relationships assist client search engine optimization
3. Understand the Nakturnal.org Sales Funnel from creation of leads, proposal creation and contract negotiations

I believe I achieved all three learning objectives for the following reasons:

1. I was taught how to write client blogs with keyword specific content in mind to boost SEO, and I was given tools to look at and analyze the impact of these posts and website development on how search engine rankings were improved over time. Through my

work with Webflow on the Goddess Nest project I learned the importance of mobile compatibility on search engine rankings and how page descriptions and titles can impact these rankings.

2. Though it was limited to the very beginning of my internship, I did do significant research into potential blogs and influencers for Nakturnal to contact. Additionally, I saw the process of contacting bloggers, negotiating pay and trade, and encouraging the use of correct keywords within the blogs. I was able to make a direct connection to the value of influencer blog posts through commenting, which allowed me to learn how link interaction on these blogs impacted search engine rankings.
3. I worked on client proposals, leading to a greater understanding of how search volume relates to client profits and how specific keywords can be targeted in a campaign. These proposals in turn became the framework for developing a client relationship and were early benchmarks for how we could improve business for our potential clients.

NEW KNOWLEDGE ACQUIRED

The top skills I learned during this internship included:

- Building and optimizing websites using the Webflow platform
- Writing website content with keyword optimization
- Using the Ahrefs.com platform to research keyword search volume to generate sales proposals for digital marketing
- Generating sales proposals
- Ensuring high quality and accurate data for client-facing reports

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

The primary challenge I encountered in this experience was the change in job description halfway through the semester. While I was excited to learn about digital marketing and influencer based SEO, I was able to take the shift toward assisting with the Goddess Nest Project in stride and used it as a platform to learn other aspects of the digital marketing business. Primarily I think this challenge taught me to appreciate all the complications that are involved with managing client expectations and changing client needs.

HOW EXPERIENCE IMPACTS YOUR CAREER

The biggest impact this will have on my career is in networking opportunities. While the Goddess Nest project was not one I had anticipated at the start of the experience, it involved working very closely with Kellee Maize, a nationally acclaimed entertainer who has appeared on Oprah. She and her husband, Joey, are well connected within the Pittsburgh music industry, as well as at many start-ups and marketing departments around Pittsburgh. Having worked so closely with Kellee on the Goddess Nest Project has made that connection one which I anticipate will result in future employment. Additionally, because of the quality of work on the Goddess Nest website, numerous members of the co-working business are interested in potentially working with me in the future for designing their own website. As a result, I am considering launching my own website development business.

The other major takeaway I have from this experience is the need to be flexible with all clients, bosses and co-workers. Because the job I ended up performing was highly different from the job I was expecting it reinforced the fact that small businesses often have to explore every avenue to ensure profitability and success.

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