10:05:35 Welcome to Sky Career Talks, where we connect students with professionals sharing their real-world experiences and career journeys.

10:05:44 Today, we're joined by Melissa Januzzi, who will share insights into her career. Let's get started!

10:05:51 Yes, so excited to be here, thanks for having me.

10:05:53 We're so excited to have you. So, Melissa, would you mind telling us your role, and what a typical day in your position looks like?

10:06:01 Yeah, absolutely. So, I actually just started in this role about a month ago, so it's brand new, um, but I'm their new associate director of communications for Citizen Watch America.

10:06:13 Um, it's actually… I don't know if everybody's heard of it, Citizen Watch, you probably have seen one, at least in your lifetime, um, because the company's been around for over 100 years, um, so if you don't have a Citizen Watch, your mom, your dad, your aunt, your uncle definitely does.

10:06:30 Um, and the company actually is based in Japan, um, but I work for their, um, headquarters in

10:06:38 the United States.

10:06:41 since it's based in Japan, do you ever have to go to Japan or speak Japanese?

10:06:47 No, so we do speak with their headquarters, um, frequently, and we'll have, like, monthly calls with them, um, but, um, we might be planning some trips

10:06:56 over there in the future, but myself, I have not been there yet, but I believe some of my coworkers have.

10:07:02 Oh, that's so cool.

10:07:03 Yeah.

10:07:04 If you don't mind me asking, because it's…

10:07:06 headquarters are in Japan, does that affect the culture of your company?

10:07:11 Yes, absolutely. Like, you can tell that there are, you know, different pieces of the Japanese heritage and their culture within the Citizen Watch America company. Um, and just in the office, like, how we interact with each other, it's a little bit different, um, and there's just these, like, subtle nuances, um, and I think a lot of it has to do with…

10:07:33 um, respect. Respect is such an important piece of the Japanese culture, um, and actually, when I was at Rutgers,

10:07:41 I took a class on Japan and its culture, and it was, like, one of my favorite classes, so it's weird now that I'm kind of going full circle and actually then working for a Japanese company.

10:07:52 That is so cool. Actually, now that you're talking about records, can you tell me about your academic background and how it might have prepared you for your professional career? You touched on it a bit.

10:08:01 Yes.

10:08:02 Did they know that you took that class?

10:08:05 No, I actually brought it up, like, um, I think once I, like, started the job, but, um, what I… so I did go to Rutgers, um, graduated 2017, double majored in history and communications, specialized in public relations, um…

10:08:23 And what I kind of look back on my…

10:08:26 my time at Rutgers. History Communications is actually very different, but

10:08:31 There is something that is the same across the two, which is all about storytelling.

10:08:37 And how you create the story for a specific audience. Um…

10:08:43 It's just done in different…

10:08:46 areas in different ways. So, that was really cool to…

10:08:52 love these different subjects, but then there's this read-through line for both of them.

10:08:57 Um, and I think in a lot of ways, for me, communication's a little bit more practical to be able to work in, you know, for a brand, to really be able to work, um,

10:09:10 Uh, for corporate America versus academia is typically where you're kind of going with the history route. Um, but…

10:09:19 Um… I… I think a lot of my classes kind of prepared me for that storytelling and how to create the storytelling in real life.

10:09:28 Um, and then I also would say that I did have a couple professors, um,

10:09:33 specifically, um, Professor Mark Beal, who I'm sure a lot of folks within the

10:09:40 communications department's familiar with. I mean, he has such amazing real-life experience that he was able to bring into the classroom and speak about, and it made this idea of communications, which is sometimes not tangible, very tangible, and I started to understand, like,

10:09:57 what a career could look like. So that was really extremely helpful, and I think to someone like him, some of my other professors really pushed me to create, um, connections, um, even outside of Rutgers campus, which helped me eventually, like, make the inroads that I needed to, you know, to be able to land a job, um, and develop relationships with

10:10:21 clients and things like that, so…

10:10:22 That's amazing. Oh, I'd love to hear that.

10:10:23 Yeah. Yeah.

10:10:26 Was there a single… single factor or particular experience you had that was a turning point in your career?

10:10:34 Yes, um, there…

10:10:36 was one point in time when, um, for my first company that I worked with, Taylor, it's an integrated marketing agency, they're based in New York,

10:10:46 awesome clients. I worked with Capital One, like, AIG, um, they work a lot with Diageo, which owns, like, Smirnoff,

10:10:54 Guinness, Captain Morgan, um, it's the… the biggest, um, uh, spirits, um, distributor in the world. So…

10:11:05 Um, really great experiences there, but when I was probably about, like, 5 years in, um, one of our client partners was going out on maternity leave, and they actually came to our agency and said, hey, listen,

10:11:17 we need somebody on your team, um, to basically backfill for this person. We're not gonna…

10:11:24 fulfill the role internally within our brand, and we really want Melissa to do it. Everybody at my agency calls me MJ because we had another Melissa. So, like, to differentiate, they called me MJ, because my last name's Januzi, so they were like, we want, you know, MJ to support us, um, and that was just, like…

10:11:42 One of those moments where you're like, oh, you know, all my hard work has been, like, paying off, now I can actually, like, you know, still work for my agency, but get a little bit more behind the scenes look at what it is working for a brand on the corporate side of the business versus an agency side.

10:12:01 Which, um, now that I'm on the brand corporate side, I'm… it kind of gave me a little bit of, like,

10:12:08 peer view into that. It kind of, you know, you pull back the curtain a little bit, and you learn a little bit more. So, um, looking back, I'm like, that was actually a really big moment for a couple different reasons, and I think one of the reasons is just to see what

10:12:21 what it's like working more so in-house versus, um, out of house at an agency.

10:12:27 I think it's amazing that she thought of you. You must have really made yourself, like…

10:12:32 Yeah.

10:12:34 be a point of contact for people, or showed your skills in some way for them to think of you to fill that role.

10:12:39 Yes. 100%. I think one of my strongest skill sets, um, at my agency, my old agency, Taylor, was that client relationship, just knowing that, like,

10:12:52 It's really important to be responsive, to be timely with requests, to really, like, make sure you're listening to their needs and addressing their needs, um, and just always being really kind and understanding.

10:13:06 And I think that, um…

10:13:08 I think that is a very strong skill set of mine, just from my personality. So…

10:13:14 I think, at the end of the day, what I did was build trust, and I think that trust is something that, like,

10:13:20 can't be taught. Um, so, um…

10:13:24 So I think maybe that was, like, the results of the trust.

10:13:29 Yeah. Yeah.

10:13:27 That's amazing. I think you're totally right. Trust is, like, the foundation of a lot of relationships.

10:13:33 Yeah.

10:13:34 How do you balance any of your technical skills and soft skills in your role?

10:13:40 Yeah, it's… I…

10:13:42 I think about this a lot. I think it's very hard to, like, continue to learn your technical skills, because

10:13:50 You know, in my role,

10:13:52 I'm essentially managing all the communications for the brand externally, so that can be from, like, earned media, social media, um, events, influencers, and when you think about

10:14:06 social media…

10:14:22 Oh, yeah.

10:14:07 And influencers, that's always changing. They're always changing the algorithm, they're adding new little things that you can use to show your brand in new, cool, creative ways. And then you have this big thing like AI, right? Like, coming into the industry too, you have to kind of learn, like,

10:14:25 you know, what do they are? How do I use it? How do I use it in a safe way for my brand?

10:14:32 Um, so I think keeping up with the technical skills is extremely hard. I would say probably harder than it was

10:14:39 like, when I started, which was about 10 years ago,

10:14:42 Um, and then you're kind of managing as… as you're… the soft skills part of it is, like, as you're taking on more responsibility, you're typically managing a larger team.

10:14:53 In my current role now, I'm not managing a team, but I'm working with a lot of individuals across the organization.

10:15:02 that maybe are more senior than me, maybe are a little bit younger than me.

10:15:07 So the way that I communicate with them,

10:15:10 needs to adapt, um, to, like, who they are, their role, um, you know,

10:15:16 I think a lot of times, how long they've been with the company, right? You kind of adjust how you communicate with them, because you start to assume that they probably know more than you.

10:15:26 Um, so, you know, how do you ask them questions and things like that? So, um…

10:15:32 adapting to your… to your soft skills is… I actually think, very, very hard as well.

10:15:39 Because it's… at the end of the day, it's about people, and understanding who you're speaking with.

10:15:46 Do you set time aside to develop these skills?

10:15:50 Or, like, professional development time.

10:15:53 Yeah, exactly, and unfortunately, a lot of times, it's like, you gotta do it outside of work, you know?

10:15:58 Oh, okay.

10:15:59 But, um, I am, like, actually taking a course right now on, um, AI. So, yeah, and it's… I'm using, um…

10:16:08 I don't know if anybody's familiar, it's called Section 4, and, um, it's…

10:16:13 It's… I forget the guy's name.

10:16:17 He is an NYU professor. It will come to me, it will come to me as soon as we…

10:16:22 you drop off the conversation. Um, but he's, like, a co-host of Pivot, and he owns this company, and it's good, because it's a lot of, like, marketing, business, finances, you know, all…

10:16:34 all elements, right, of typically a corporate job, so it's really helpful to understand, you know, different parts of…

10:16:42 different departments, how they work, how they work together. So, I really need to, like,

10:16:47 learn more about AI, so I've become a little bit more skilled.

10:16:52 That's a lot to balance.

10:16:54 You're doing amazing.

10:16:55 Yeah. Yeah, yeah, I think it is a lot to balance, but…

10:16:58 You find the time, and it's one of those things where it's like, I don't…

10:17:02 I think the good thing is to try to find, like, classes that you don't have to have such a rigid schedule, and kind of take it on your own time. So, if I'm like, alright, I have, like, an hour on Sunday, I'm just gonna, like, focus on that. Um, but then maybe next… the next week, I won't touch it, because it's just a crazy week, and there's too many things going on.

10:17:21 And I think just giving yourself that flexibility is very, very important.

10:17:27 Um, and also, I think something really important for individuals, like, graduating, going into the workforce,

10:17:34 kind of creating those boundaries for yourself, um, yeah.

10:17:38 I think that's super important. I love that you said that.

10:17:41 Yeah.

10:17:42 What was the biggest obstacle you encountered in your career, and how are you able to overcome it?

10:17:48 Yeah, so the greatest obstacle is

10:17:52 Um, so when I first started out, I was an intern for

10:17:58 tailor, the company I was just mentioning before. And, um, then once I

10:18:04 graduated, I started there full-time.

10:18:06 Um, as an Assistant Account Executive, and worked there for, like, 9 years. Um, but unfortunately, over the summer, I was actually laid off from the job, so that was definitely, like,

10:18:17 Definitely a very difficult time, but it was a really, like, beautiful time, a really great

10:18:26 opportunity, because now I can kind of go out on my own, really test my relationships,

10:18:31 And try to secure a new opportunity for myself. And all those skill sets that I've been talking about, building relationships, staying in touch with people, um, you know, being a hard worker, asking questions,

10:18:44 those skills I, like, put into Hyperdrive, um…

10:18:48 And, you know, the first… the day that I learned that I was getting laid off, um, it was very…

10:18:54 tough day, but I really took the day to just thank everybody that I was working with.

10:18:59 seeing how much I, like, enjoyed working with them, thanks, you know, um, the leadership team saying the same thing, but then the next day, I got up and I said, you know what? Fresh start.

10:19:10 Let's hit the ground running and try to reach out to as many people as possible. And then, um…

10:19:15 It was great. It was a really, like, a sprint to try to find a new opportunity, but I was able to find this current opportunity that I'm… that I'm with, which is so exciting, within a month.

10:19:26 Um, and that is really, really challenging, especially in this, um, job market right now. So, I think a lot of people in the industry know it's a very crazy time. There's just so much that's changing, um, just because of, you know, a number of factors.

10:19:44 Um, but it was something that, you know, could have been, like, very much a hardship and was actually just a really great opportunity. So, I would just say that anybody that, you know, is going through, um, a challenging time,

10:19:57 take that and run with it, and try to make it into a positive.

10:20:02 I'm sorry you had to go through that challenge, but you did well with it.

10:20:06 Yeah, no.

10:20:07 Yes, always, um, I have found that, like, most challenges in my life are 100% blessing in disguise, so…

10:20:15 Yeah.

10:20:18 Yes!

10:20:14 Yeah. When you find yourself getting too comfortable, something lets you… remind you to go out and do something about it.

10:20:22 Yeah, exactly. So, it keeps you on your toes, so that's…

10:20:26 That's true.

10:20:27 Yeah.

10:20:27 I am curious, when you found this new physician,

10:20:32 Yeah.

10:20:32 Was it through networking, or some kind of skill or approach that really got you the position, or through the door?

10:20:41 Yeah, 100%, it was networking, like, staying in touch with people.

10:20:45 Um, 3 women that I currently work with worked with… worked… I worked with them at my previous, uh, role. In my previous role, so that's how I actually had learned about the opportunity and was able to learn more about it.

10:21:01 Um, so again, it's really those

10:21:03 those relationships, it's so important. And I think you just don't know where people are gonna end up, so I think always just staying in touch with people, going out of your way. This whole, um…

10:21:16 you know, over the summer, this really, like, re-taught me to

10:21:20 check in with people more routinely, and now I'm, like, picking that back up again. I'm trying to…

10:21:26 do things like this, like, really try to talk to other people just so that I'm constantly

10:21:33 being able to, um…

10:21:36 Talk with others, but then also give back. I think that's so key, because so many people have given back to me, um, throughout the year, so…

10:21:44 That's amazing. I love it.

10:21:45 Yeah. Yeah.

10:21:47 Uh, do you have any advice for aspiring professionals in your field or in your degree?

10:21:53 Yes, 100%. I would say, like, read, read, read, like, as much as possible.

10:21:59 Um, and I don't just mean, like, your Instagram or your TikTok feed, like, really try to read, um,

10:22:06 trade magazines, trade publications, um, read business publications. When I was in school, I…

10:22:15 bought, like, a subscription to Wall Street Journal, and I was reading it all the time. Um, I think it's really important to understand the economy, um, you know,

10:22:25 business relationships,

10:22:27 Um, I also would say, like,

10:22:29 go outside of your comfort zone at Rutgers and start to communicate with people outside of Rutgers, whether it's, like, through family or friends or, like, through your internship, or whatever it might be. Go to events and things like that.

10:22:44 the nearby area. I mean, New York is so close to the campus as well.

10:22:50 So, really try to break out, create those relationships.

10:22:54 LinkedIn is such a big thing. When I was in college,

10:22:58 I would just, like, reach out to people on LinkedIn, and I ended up talking to plenty of people on the phone.

10:23:04 Just from, like, reaching out and saying, hey, I love your company, your role seems so interesting. If you have a few minutes,

10:23:12 In the next couple of weeks, I would love to just, like, pick your brain.

10:23:16 And it wasn't anything like saying, like, hey, can I have a job? It was more so, like, I want to learn. Like, now is the time when you're in school to learn and absorb so much information.

10:23:28 And then, I would say, too, when you're transitioning from

10:23:32 college to…

10:23:34 a real-life job.

10:23:36 you know, company culture is such a…

10:23:40 culture shock, right? Because you're coming from a college campus, and then you're going into the real world. I would say, like,

10:23:47 like, embrace that culture. Like, embrace the work culture, because I know it's going to be so different.

10:23:54 for the next generation. I even think sometimes, like, I have culture shock, and I'm 10 years older than this generation.

10:24:02 So my advice is just, like, embrace it, like, learn how to insert yourself into the culture, but then also making sure

10:24:10 you're bringing your perspective, because, you know, a lot of young people are hired, right, because

10:24:16 We want their perspectives, right? As brands, we're trying to sell to them. So we want to know what's cool, what's trending, you know, like…

10:24:27 How are they thinking? Um, how are they going to think in…

10:24:32 two years from now. So, I think making sure you develop your perspective is also really important.

10:24:40 I love that. Thank you so much, Melissa.

10:24:55 Oh, thank you.

10:24:56 We're gonna end the video here and say goodbye!

10:25:00 Thank you! Happy Friday, everyone!