

fair Market value

What can you do with a marketing degree? The better question to ask is: **What can't you do with one?** WITC marketing graduates go into a **wide range of fields** with good career prospects and **solid earning potential**. Read on for the experiences of **four recent alumni**.

By Phil Bolsta

Tina Slayton had two main requirements when she was deciding what to study at WITC: an education that would prepare her for the business world, and one that would offer her experience in a number of different realms. She got what she wanted.

Slayton earned an associate's degree in marketing from WITC, and then went on to the University of Wisconsin–Stout, where she earned a bachelor of science degree with a double major in marketing education and business education and a minor in business administration. She now works as a marketing specialist at Rice Lake Weighing System, which makes industrial scales and process-control equipment for the weighing industry. It's a diverse job. One day she's writing direct-mail pieces and Web content. The next day, she's preparing a direct mail marketing campaign or gathering the leads herself at a trade show. The day after that might find her planning a product launch or preparing literature for catalog houses. "Every day is different and you get to do a wide variety of things," she says. "Thanks to what I learned at WITC, I'm prepared for whatever the workday brings."

She's not alone. WITC's marketing program graduates go into everything from sales, market research, and branding to advertising, sales promotion, retailing, and customer service. Others work in pricing, product development, and public relations. In fact, the question to ask might be: What can't you do with a marketing degree?

It doesn't matter whether the goal is consumer sales or business-to-business services. Every company, from multinational corporations to mom-and-pop stores, requires marketing expertise. Someone has to identify the company's target audience and then figure out how to communicate information that highlights the positive attributes and unique services it offers.

With that in mind, here are four WITC graduates who have leveraged their marketing degrees to get a head start on lucrative and satisfying careers.

Jason Emerson account executive

Not long after Jason Emerson earned his associate's degree in marketing at WITC Superior, he said goodbye to winter. Emerson, who grew up in New Richmond, moved to Naples, Fla., two months after graduating from WITC in December 2005. "I'd spent 23 years in Wisconsin and I was tired of the cold," Emerson says. "I figured I'd try a change of scenery and do some exploring before I got married and had kids. And you can golf year-round here!"

After working briefly in sales at a small golf shop, he landed a job as an account exec selling radio ads for WAVV 101.1 FM, an easy-listening station in Naples. "I love it," he says. "I like the whole field of outside sales, and especially in radio because it's so personable. I bring clients out to lunch and take them golfing. It's all about building relationships."

The interpersonal and customer service skills Emerson learned at WITC are paying off. "When I took the Introduction to Sales course, I had to do a 20-minute presentation in front of Mary Tripp, the instructor," he recalls. "We had to role-play a situation from scratch. Afterwards, she said, 'You're a natural at this.' She instilled confidence in me, and I carry that with me when I meet clients."

In a sense, WITC helped Emerson discover the salesman within. "Before I took a public speaking class at WITC, I had a tendency to clam up and not want to be in a room full of people," he says. "That class helped me a lot."



Jason Emerson has used his WITC marketing degree to find a place in the Florida sun.

JENNIFER ZIEGELMAIER

Marketing at WITC

WITC's Marketing program prepares graduates for careers in a wide range of fields, including marketing management, selling, buying, merchandising, financing, customer relations, and as entrepreneurs. The associate's degree program is offered on the New Richmond, Rice Lake, and Superior campuses. To find out more, go to www.witc.edu/pgmpages/marketing.

Emerson's WITC experience also taught him how to think big. "I do sell ad time, but I consider myself more of a marketing consultant," he says. "I like to give my clients plans that are tailored for them so they'll see results. The more I get into it and the more comfortable I feel with my presentations, I'm seeing that people respect my opinion."

Emerson's associate's degree is not only helping him on a daily basis, it helped him get in the door in the first place. "A degree was a prerequisite for the account executive position," he says. "It shows people you've taken the initiative to attend school, that you took it seriously, and that you are willing to invest in yourself to succeed."

Katie Swenby quality assurance administrator

Katie Swenby always knew she wanted to join the business world, so a marketing degree seemed to be the perfect fit. "I felt that marketing was diversified enough to offer options in the job market," she says. "I could go into sales, direct marketing, advertising, product management, customer service, or public relations."

Swenby began working at National Refund & Marketing Services (NRMS) in New Richmond in January 2002. The com-

pany was established to service the marketing needs of consumer-products companies through fulfillment, sweepstakes, subscription, order processing, and coupon-redemption services. Swenby is the firm's quality assurance administrator and works as an assistant to the owner. "There's something different to do every day, which keeps things interesting," she says.

The organizational management and time management skills she learned at WITC serve her well. "I manage and update our standard operating procedures manual," she says. "I also monitor quality process control, check outgoing orders, and make sure that procedures are being followed and that they work. We also get audited by external vendors that examine our operating procedures. I administer and manage all the external and internal audits. We also do a yearly self-audit, which is a procedures and business review to make sure that what the company is doing matches our standard operating procedures. If we find the need for change, I implement updates and work to ensure the change is practiced throughout the company."

In February, Swenby will complete a bachelor's degree in marketing management at Concordia College in St. Paul, Minn. Her long-term plans involve a greater focus on public relations-related work. Sales and promotion also appeal to her because she likes direct interaction with customers. She can also see herself out in the field, working more closely with clients on sales-related functions. Market research is another option "because without it, you're shooting in the dark as to how to best reach your customers," she says.

Swenby has also enjoyed studying the sociological aspect of marketing. "Learning what motivates people is beneficial because that's ultimately who you're going to market to," she says. "And the interpersonal skills that you learn at WITC obviously translate into how you interact with coworkers, customers, and vendors."



Katie Swenby has parlayed her marketing degree into a great job—and a bright future.

PATRICK KELLY

Stacy White

Web analyst/marketing specialist

In her second year at WITC, Stacy White participated in an ad campaign competition administered by the Wisconsin Marketing and Management Association. What White learned from cocreating and presenting an entire ad campaign for a local company is directly applicable to her job at Rice Lake Weighing Systems, where she works with Tina Slayton.

White, who earned an associate's degree in marketing in 2003, is a Web analyst and heavy-capacity marketing specialist. "Part of what I do for the heavy-capacity line is work on print ads and tie them in with everything else that we're doing," she says. "So that marketing competition definitely gave me an idea of how that's supposed to be done and the research that needs to go into it before you start planning a campaign and deciding on your target market."

For the Web analyst portion of her duties, White does everything from tracking Web site leads to optimizing search engine results to making sure that the right information on all the heavy-capacity products is accurately presented on the company's site. "Before I went to WITC, I hadn't used computers a whole lot," she says. "I knew virtually nothing about marketing, sales, advertising and promotions. I would have been completely lost in this position had I not gone to school for that."

She also works with product managers and graphic designers to create full-color sales collateral and videos. "I work on all the support material for the heavy-capacity product lines," she says. "When any of our distributors want to create their own literature, I work with them to make sure our product is represented correctly."

White continues to find new ways to apply her WITC education. "When our salespeople are working to sell the product, I understand a lot more of what goes into that and what they need to do and how," she says. "At school, we learned how to understand consumer emotions and what's going to sway them to make a buying decision, so that has definitely helped."

White, who plans on eventually attaining a bachelor's degree in business administration, feels fortunate to be doing what she's doing. "I absolutely love my job," she says. "I don't do the same thing all day every day. I like the variety. We're going to be doing more online marketing and I'm looking forward to that. It's just a great place to work."

Tina Slayton

marketing specialist

Like Stacy White, Slayton landed a marketing job at Rice Lake Weighing Systems, a leader in the industrial scale and process-control weighing industry for more than 60 years.

After two years on the job, Slayton is delighted to find that her WITC experience continues to pay off in a variety of ways. "In my job, you have to be adaptable and ready to learn new things," she says. "WITC's Marketing program had classes in general business as well as accounting, business math, and writing. It also had classes in sales, merchandising, promotion and design. Having been exposed to the nuts and bolts of business while getting my associate's degree, I was able to understand the reasons why my product managers need certain things."

Those nuts and bolts included basic but thorough computer training. "When I attended UW-Stout, I found that my computer skills were more advanced than some of the students who had been there two years," she says. "Now, when I'm asked to make a presentation or develop a budget in a spreadsheet, I'm not intimidated because I've already learned all that."

Slayton enjoys going to work every day because she never knows what will be waiting for her. "At the end of a given day, I might have done any number of tasks for the product



PATRICK KELLY

Stacy White and Tina Slayton help keep Rice Lake Weighing Systems' marketing initiatives focused and on track.

lines that I'm a specialist for—that's why they call me a marketing specialist," she says, adding that because Rice Lake Weighing System is a manufacturer as well as a distributor, she creates sales pieces for her own company's use as well as for other manufacturers. "I have to learn all the features and benefits of the products so I can help decide how to best communicate to each audience."

Slayton's attitude toward work can be summed up in three words: never stop learning. "In my current job, I'd like to learn more about graphic design and Web development," she says. "I have entrepreneurial ambitions as well. Owning my own business is certainly a road I'd like to go down someday."

Slayton's grandest ambition is to follow in the footsteps of her WITC instructors. "My goal is to teach business and marketing after I gain more industry experience," she says. "All my teachers at WITC were industry-trained experts in their field and had years of working experience. That's what inspired me to pursue additional education and it's why I'm working in a wide variety of marketing and business-related roles. If I ever came back full circle and was a teacher myself, I would want that same level of experience and expertise in industry before I entered the classroom."

Phil Bolsta is a Blaine, Minn.-based freelance writer.