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ADV 350: Advertising for PR  
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**Interviewee:** Quentin Ayukesong

**Current position/employer:** Production, Programming and Broadcasting Trainee for the National Basketball Association (NBA)

**Strategic Objective:** To highlight recent alumni success and encourage/inspire students in the College of Media to pursue jobs they are truly passionate about, even if it means making difficult sacrifices along the way.

**Key Message:** Dreams are possible with persistence, passion and strong will. Former UIUC advertising alum, Quentin Ayukesong, left his friends, family and home and fled to New York to go after his dream of working in the sports industry. His story illustrates how the College of Media has set the foundation of skills needed to be able to thrive in a competitive industry and environment.



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## U of I Alumni Pursues Basketball Sports Passion

When University of Illinois alum Quentin Ayukesong first came to campus, he knew that he wanted to pursue opportunities that would satisfy his love for basketball.

“I knew the entire time that I wanted to work in the sports industry,” said Ayukesong.

On campus, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity and got involved with the Illinois Basketball team as a Men’s Basketball Project Assistant Intern. He wanted to immerse himself in the basketball culture as much as possible.

“I kept up with basketball all the time. I would read about it. I would play the sport, I would go into the Illinois basketball facility in my free time and observe and assist the players of the Illinois Men’s Basketball team. I tried to be active,” said Ayukesong.

After graduating from the College of Media with an advertising degree in 2013, Ayukesong accepted a position with Liberty Mutual Corporate. He said that his professors in the Department of Advertising were supportive of his dreams but offered advice to be realistic with goals immediately after college.

After making progress with his job, Ayukesong was exhausted and apathetic about a long-term job in this field.

“I just was not passionate about it,” he said. “I knew that if I left Liberty Mutual for a Publicity Associate job with popular sports book publisher, Triumph Books, that my pay might suffer at first, but at least I would be reunited with my love for sports.”

He stayed persistent and decided to try something new. At his new job in sports publishing, he managed publicity campaigns for multiple sports.

“I enjoyed the job, but I knew that I would not be here long-term,” he said.

Ayukesong used his networking and communication skills he learned from his classes in the College of Media to help land a basketball operation internship with Excel Sports Management in New York. He also worked as a Production Assistant for the Big Ten Network in Chicago, an Associate for the Brooklyn Nets, and freelancer for CBS Corporation Sports. These opportunities eventually led him to his job with the National Basketball Association.

The National Basketball Association (NBA) is the pre-eminent men’s professional basketball league in North America.

As a production trainee for the NBA, Ayukesong works with the Broadcasting, Programming and Production department. He is responsible for NBA documentation and game analysis, along with other hands-on training duties.

“My days are long and tedious, but I am inspired and motivated each and every day by the people around me,” said Ayukesong.

His desire to learn and grow his sport knowledge came back in full force, as he is pursuing a sports management master’s degree from Columbia University in the City of New York. He hopes to attend law school in the future.

He said, “I want to be proficient in both the account and field side of basketball. I don’t want to have to ask for answers, I want to be the expert.” Ayukesong said that it is beneficial to understand legal terms of the sports business; he reads the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) that he referred to as the “Bible for the NBA”.

“My ultimate dream is to become a general manager for an NBA team. I would love to stay with the NBA in New York and move up the ladder, or eventually move back home to Chicago and work for the Chicago Bulls,” said Ayukesong.

However, his career journey working was not easy. Ayukesong had to make difficult life choices early on in his career to get to where he is today. He left friends and family back in the Midwest to move to New York with only enough to pay two month’s rent.

“I regret nothing,” said Ayukesong. “So many people would love to watch basketball everyday and get paid for it.”

Ayukesong acknowledges that the road is still long ahead, but he is thankful to be where he is today.

“Persistence is key if you want to make it into the sports industry,” he said. “Be a chameleon. Adapt to your surroundings. Show them you are serious.”

As Ayukesong continues to examine plays in basketball tournaments and games at the national level, each time he finds himself in a time-out or calling a foul shot in life, he will be reminded that it is very easy to get lost in your pursuit.

“It’s not an easy career choice, but I am doing what I love and will continue to be strong to continue in my trajectory,” said Ayukesong.

With his persistent attitude, NBA bible by his side, and role models cheering him on in the sidelines, the young professional Quentin Ayukesong has grown into will help him dominate in the sports industry with the simple, honest mindset to: “Stay hungry and stay humble.”