



AMA Baltimore Interview with Claire Howachyn

GAINING A NEW PERSPECTIVE WITH AMA BALTIMORE

From Communications to Public Relations

The American Marketing Association of Baltimore prides itself on its diverse membership, welcoming marketers in many disciplines at any point in their career. And sometimes, its members aren't even marketers at all. Claire Howachyn, a University of Maryland Communications graduate of 2016, is one of those members.

Claire has always been a big fan of marketing campaigns and advertisements, noting that one class in communications research really impacted her. She was able to complete a research project with her professor, looking into how sports fans and science fiction fans are similar in terms of their jerseys or costumes and attending large events in arenas, yet the social world perceives one as "cool" and one as "nerdy." Through this experience, Claire gained a love for research and testing measurable outcomes, some of the baselines in marketing.

In fact, Claire's first job was at a market research firm, The Research Group, where she conceptualized and executed several focus groups and interviews. She found that the projects she most enjoyed were associated with consumer marketing objectives, product design, and product evaluation. However, Claire handed the thorough research analysis off to the client at the close of the project,

and wasn't involved with implementation based on the analyses. From this experience, Claire found herself transitioning into the big world of public relations.

Today, Claire is an account executive at Van Eperen, originally founded as a traditional PR agency, but today is an integrated communications firm. She enjoys the mix of working on different types of marketing and communications, from digital to print to social media. Although Claire has had an eye-opening transition from research to public relations, she's definitely grown her media relation skills and is now able to see a more complete picture of marketing efforts.



Getting Started with AMA

Claire's firm, Van Eperen, encourages professional development and supports membership of any organization of the employee's choice. She chose AMA in December 2017 and jumped right in as she wanted to meet more people, network, and gain more industry perspective.

At first, Claire was a bit shy, as she hadn't attended many networking events. She wanted to give it a shot despite this, and she registered for a #AMAMingle at Ainsley & Co. in Harbor East. Claire remembers feeling nervous all day and anxious because she was new to the field. She ended up bringing a friend, assuming they would stick together all night.

But the evening ended up becoming one of the most memorable AMA events for Claire so far. Our very own president, Joe Wagner immediately approached her, and she found conversation surprisingly easy. It made her think, "Wow, I'm going to love this field and learn so much." She gained the confidence to talk to other people at the event and could easily see herself fitting in at AMA.

Learning and Growing

One of her other favorite events was at Maryland Auto Insurance, where she got to see campaign evolution from start to finish. Through this AMA event, Claire was able to see an entire campaign, which helped her understand advertising and marketing in full circle.

Even though Claire left her first AMA event feeling welcomed and having met some other professionals, she wasn't sure what to expect of this event before she arrived. This was her first event alone, and she was again nervous to come, but as soon as she sat down, she was instantly relieved at just how friendly the atmosphere was. She enjoyed hearing about different compositions on what a "campaign" is, seeing various kinds of clients that other professionals work with, and seeing different creative ways to solve problems. All of this helped spark ideas for Claire when it comes to her own clients.

Claire only wishes she had gotten involved with AMA earlier, perhaps while she was still in college. The confidence boost it has provided her has been a valuable asset. She's learned new skills simply by listening to other people and watching what they're doing. AMA has taught her to take

a step back and think more critically on her own projects before she moves forward with them.

Joining AMA has easily made Claire more dynamic in the PR field, and she said she feels lucky to have the opportunity to socialize with people in different places in their career. Her own supervisors and bosses are much more advanced in their career, but at AMA, Claire gets to see people who are at all different stages in theirs. She doesn't feel like AMA is a hierarchy, so it's able to level out the playing field, facilitating conversations about marketing without any barriers of job titles.

In the future, Claire hopes to be able to volunteer more with AMA to keep building her network and to be able to give back to the community in the way that it's given to her. When she's not crushing the PR game or using her newfound networking confidence at AMA, Claire enjoys walking dogs as a side gig and strolling through Federal Hill's most beautiful parks. For now, Claire is appreciating the exposure AMA has given her to meet with different companies, see different projects, and improve her skills as a communicator.

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About AMA Baltimore

The American Marketing Association Baltimore Chapter is Maryland's leading provider of networking, educational programming, and resources for marketing professionals. AMA Baltimore provides extensive opportunities for marketers to expand their networks, grow professionally, and learn about current industry trends. To learn more about AMA Baltimore, [visit our website](#).

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