

**CHANGE AGENT PRODUCTIONS:
YOUTH PERCEPTIONS, EXPERIENCES, AND
OUTCOMES**

Cesar G. Abarca, Ph.D., MSW
Assistant Professor
Department of Social Work
California State University Long Beach
1250 Bellflower Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90840-4602
E-mail; cabarca@csulb.edu

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Report Summary

The purpose of this evaluation is to highlight the positive impact of the social enterprise and youth development program, Change Agent Productions. The program was developed and managed by the Community Development Branch Y of the Greater Long Beach. The program engages approximately 50 youth interns yearly, providing opportunities for the enhancement of technology, multimedia, career exploration, jobs, team building, social skills and personal growth. CAP interns benefit by receiving academic support, college preparation, developing healthy and positive relationships with peers, and acquiring a work ethic.

CAP offers potential employers expert staff and interns who can provide technology support, set-up of audio-visual equipment, technology training, and multimedia production and development. Interns provide quality and valuable services to employers. In addition, CAP interns have a positive impact on the schools they attend, the community they live in, and the city of Long Beach, California.

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Introduction

Change Agent Production (CAP) is a social enterprise of the Y of Greater Long Beach, Community Development Branch. It began operations in October, 2007 with a grant from Zero Divide Foundation and is currently funded by the Beneventures Foundation. When data were collected for this report in October, 2011, CAP was managed by Digital Media Artists who assisted in the technology, academic, and social development of 42 urban high school and college-age youth who had graduated from the YMCA Youth Institute (YI). The YI has an eight-week-long summer program that recruits youth from 8th-10th grades from three middle schools and five high schools in the area with a theme of Creative Digital Arts and Literacy. Upon graduation from the summer program, participants become “Youth Institute Alumni,” who are then able to voluntarily participate in a wide range of year-round programs throughout their high school and college years. Involvement opportunities include, but are not limited to, digital art labs, academic advising/homework assistance, personal/home advising, community service, equipment check-out, field trips, paid technology and mentoring assignments, community leadership positions and social work support.

CAP is a community development program and a social enterprise, focusing on developing technology and multimedia skills of urban youth. It provides career development opportunities for low-income, ethnically and culturally diverse youth. Some of these youth come from immigrant families where English is spoken as a second language. CAP offers a paid internship, freelance opportunities, and options to work in diverse multimedia projects. In addition, interns are offered the opportunity to travel outside Long Beach, and, sometimes, out-of-state. The internship provides opportunities for on-the-job skills training in addition to building on what interns already learned at the YI. Some of these skills are customer relations,

basic business principles, multimedia and technology applications, career exploration, and technical and social skills. Team building is a central skill that is cultivated and is essential at CAP. Interns and CAP staff provide a wide-range of multimedia services to a diverse group of clients. CAP services include digital video production (filming and editing), graphic design, web design, audio visual set-up and support, digital photography, animation and technology training skills. Interns are exposed to real life applications of technology and a unique hands-on training.

CAP Participants

Youth who participated in the YI were eligible to submit an application for the CAP program. They submitted a paper application, filled out a survey, and provided a copy of their grades to CAP staff. Once they were selected for consideration in CAP, youth had a face-to-face interview. This process was similar to obtaining a regular job and it was intended to prepare youth for future job applications. The information requested in the CAP applications included information about their YI contribution, after-school activities, their availability to work each week, their current technological abilities, including hardware and software proficiency, and areas they wished to improve. In addition, they were asked to describe their future academic and career plans, including their desired outcomes at CAP. Youth were selected for intern jobs based on their personal abilities, technology aptitudes, level of competency, and their abilities to obtain good grades in school. As of November 1, 2011, 42 high school and college-age youth had completed an application to work with CAP during the last year. Of those, 30 (71%) youth had actually worked on a least one job and 20 (67%) youth from that group participated in the study.

Community Context

Long Beach, California

Long Beach is a medium-size city in Southern California with 462,257 inhabitants as of 2010. It has a diverse population composed of 41% Latinos, 29% European-Americans, 13% African-Americans, 13% Asian-Americans, 3% Multi-Racial, and .5% each Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders and Native-Americans (U.S. Census, 2011). The major industries present in Long Beach are education (Long Beach Unified School District and California State University Long Beach), defense (Boeing Corporation) and transportation (Port of Long Beach) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

Demographic Indicators

Long Beach has a population of 462,257 inhabitants and it has a significant segment of young person less than 18 years old, equal to 25% (115, 564) of the total population. In 2010, the percentage of people living in poverty was higher in Long Beach (18.8%), in comparison to California (13.2%) overall. In the City of Long Beach, Latino and African American families are more likely to live in poverty than any other race. Furthermore, youth (18- 25 years old) have the highest poverty rate in Long Beach, equal to about 30% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Educational Indicators

Low-income and youth from immigrant families face many challenges in the educational system across the nation, but particularly in Southern California. According to the California Department of Education (CDE), for the school year 2009-2010, the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) had a graduation rate of 78.8% and a dropout rate of 14.1%. By ethnic group, the three groups with highest dropout rate were Native-Americans (18.8%), African-Americans (17.9%) and Latinos (16.8%). European-American students had the lowest rate (8.6%).

Although LBUSD had a higher graduation rate than California as a whole (81.2%) and Los Angeles County (79.7%), minority students in Long Beach still had higher drop-out rates than their European-American counterparts.

Youth Employment Indicators

Urban youth from culturally-diverse and low-income families encounter institutions and services that are fragmented and many times are inflexible and unresponsive to their needs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), from April to July 2011, the number of employed youth (persons 16 to 24 years old) nationwide rose to 18.6 million or 48.8 percent of all youth; however, this number was the lowest since 1948. In addition, youth unemployment was 18.1 % in July 2011, down one percent in comparison to July 2010. By race, Latinos (22%) and African Americans (31%) had the highest unemployment rates, respectively. In addition, many urban youth have to compete with adults for low-skilled jobs, facing bigger obstacles to secure employment.

In sum, youth in Long Beach face many challenges and are in need of a supportive environment to help them to be academically successful, learn valuable job skills, have employment opportunities, and find supportive role models to assist them in their personal and career development.

Method

Evaluation Participants

All eligible CAP interns (interns who had worked on at least one CAP job in the past year) were invited to participate in the focus groups. CAP staff helped the researchers by coordinating with the CAP interns to arrange for times when the focus groups were to meet. Out of the 30 eligible CAP interns, 20 (67%) participated in the study.

As shown in Table 1, over two-thirds (70%) of the participants were male. Their ages ranged from 14 to 18 years old with an average age of 16. The majority (60%) were Latino followed by those who identified themselves as European-American (20%), Asian-American/Pacific Islander (10%), and African-American and Mixed/Bi-Racial (5% each).

Table 1
Change Agent Productions Focus Group Sample Demographics
N = 20

	Percent	Frequency
Gender		
Male	70%	14
Female	30%	6
Ethnicity		
Latino	60%	12
European-American	20%	4
Asian-American/Pacific Islander	10%	2
African-American	5%	1
Mixed/Bi-Racial	5%	1
Age		
14	20%	4
15	5%	1
16	20%	4
17	45%	9
18	10%	2

Materials and Procedures

The methodology for this evaluation was qualitative, which allows the study of the social environment in depth (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Three (3) focus groups took place in October, 2011. In addition, several attempts were made to facilitate more focus groups to include all participants eligible for the study. The focus groups included the interns and a facilitator (the

author of this report). The groups were scheduled in advance, keeping in mind the participants' school schedule. Thus, all the focus groups were held in the evening. CAP staff was charged with notifying the interns, following-up with them, and making sure interns attended the groups. Groups were one and a half hours long and snacks were offered at the beginning of the groups. In addition, incentives were distributed in a random drawing each session to show appreciation for the interns' time. The incentives were \$10.00 gas cards.

The three focus groups had a total of 20 participants. The groups were digitally audio-recorded and permission was requested and granted from participants before turning the digital voice recorder on. To keep confidentiality, participants were given index cards with a unique number to identify themselves when participating in answering questions while recording was taking place. Also, participants were asked to refer to other participants in the group by their number and not by their real names.

Participants were asked to participate as much as they wanted, that they could stop their participation at any time, and stay in the room or leave the room on their own without consequences. Also, they were asked not to answer any question that made them uncomfortable. Participants in every focus group were also instructed that they could request, at any time, to stop the recording if they felt the need to discuss something off the record.

Each of the focus group sessions was transcribed and there were two interview transcription formats; one that included all the focus groups under each question of the interview guide, and another that grouped the answers by focus group.

The focus groups were facilitated by an Assistant Professor of Social Work from California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). Researchers from CSULB, School of Social

Work, designed the study and developed the interview guide in consultation with CAP staff. The interview guide included the following questions:

1. Why were you interested in working for Change Agents Productions (CAP)?
2. What did you have to do to get the job at CAP?
3. What types of jobs did you work on for CAP?
4. What Technical or media skills did you develop in your work with CAP?
5. What other skills did you develop while working with CAP?
6. For those of you who worked with clients, what did you learn from those interactions? What skills did you utilize?
7. Besides the job opportunities, what other help or support did CAP provide you?
8. What would you say are the major benefits to working with CAP?
9. If you plan on going on to college or technical school, how might your CAP experiences help you with your future goals?
10. What kinds of careers do you hope to pursue in the future? How do you think working at CAP might help you in this area?
11. What suggestions would you make to CAP staff to make your experiences better?

Interview notes were taken by the facilitator and these included side notes to keep track of each member's participation in answering each of the questions, observations about the participants' response to cues, and quick notes to remember clarification of a statement or for follow-up questions, in case there were needed.

Data Analysis

Grounded theory techniques were utilized to analyze the collected data. Analysis included initial coding (line by line), focused coding and axial coding, and these analyses were guided by grounded theory techniques recommended by Charmaz (2006) and Bryant and Charmaz (2007).

Findings

CAP provided youth who participated in the internship program with opportunities to enhance their personal, academic, technology and career skills, and provided a positive environment to be young and thrive. Three major themes were found after the analysis of the data with each representing specific areas of impact: (1) Contributing to personal growth; (2) Improving career and technology skills; and (3) Increasing social and team building skills.

1. Contributing to Personal Growth

CAP offered interns a safe and challenging environment to learn and develop personal skills necessary to work on its' projects. Youth learned technology and media skills in a supportive environment. Their experience included the guidance of staff that was dedicated to contributing to their personal growth. CAP staff were mentors and positive role models to the interns.

Mentorship and positive role models. CAP staff were dedicated to developing personal relationships with interns. Youth expressed their appreciation for staff dedication and the time they invested in them. In addition, CAP staff showed patience, guidance, and modeled behavior that youth learned. Interns stated:

They have given me the drive to learn. I'm sure they have done that a lot of times. Over the summer, we'll be here doing jobs, and there will be the one staff member that you love and you always talk to. They're like your friend, they're your mentor. You just want to learn to be better and to be as good as them, so mentorship, drive to learn that's what they have taught me.

We don't just come here to learn on the computers, we also come here to talk to people when we have problems. You can tell them, "I need your advice for something, help me out." They will sit down and talk to you on a personal level. Everyone here has that one person to talk to or group of people to talk to. Whether you're here to learn media arts or get advice for the future or how to make things better.

The emotional connection between CAP interns and staff made a difference since the technological skills they learned were complemented by a supportive environment where youth could talk about their personal lives, as well as the challenges they were facing in their lives. One intern said it succinctly:

Having the staff out there helping you freely, it's a good benefit. If you are trying to get help with your resume, you could go to your school counselor which is not always available or you just try to do it yourself, but it won't come out as great as you want it, and so, if you have one of the staff here helping you it comes out better than what you wanted. There's a better chance of you getting a job because you have on your resume I have worked for CAP, and am able to do this, this, and this. I have people skills and organizational skills.

Academic support. Since many urban youth face several obstacles to graduate from high school, such as high dropout rates, higher rates of poverty and lack of jobs, education becomes an important path for their success. At CAP, staff provides academic support and good academic expectations for interns who participate in the program. One specific approach was to mandate good grades in order for interns to be assigned to a job. Youth described:

You have to keep up good grades and keep up attendance at school. If you miss 2 weeks of school, they're not going to take you anymore. You just have to keep on top of your stuff.

Everybody goes to high school. They have "school loop." It's on the web where you access it and it shows your grades from every class. That's how they check it, or they ask you to bring in your report card. They check up on you all the time, because they want you to have good grades because they don't want to take you out if you're messing up in school, because, for them, school is the first priority, so that's cool.

The requirement of maintaining good grades motivated interns to attend school regularly, keep up with their class assignments, and seek help among CAP staff as needed. One aspect that makes CAP a successful program and an effective tool for academic success is the personal relationships that youth develop over time with staff. Interns commented:

They help with homework too. In my freshmen and sophomore years, I really didn't have any inspiration to do any homework, my grades were pretty bad, and now they ask, 'Hey, how's your homework?' So, doing homework, if I'm stuck on something I'm just like 'Oh, I don't know, but if I come here and they ask me 'Are you stuck?' and I say 'yeah,' they will help me with it. That actually gave me the inspiration to at least try, so I'm trying this year to do better.

Being in this program makes me want to learn more. Like in school, I learned because I had to, not because I wanted to, but here they taught me the benefits of learning something new and how you can apply it to other things, so ever since, like this year, I've had better grades.

College readiness. CAP staff emphasizes the importance of getting a college education and interns discussed how they felt supported in planning to attend college. Interns shared:

Right now, I'm undecided about what I want to be. I'm leaning toward a musician. Another way that they help is that some of the staff helps you with your college applications. They help you fill out applications for scholarships and they look for colleges that are best in teaching you what you want to learn. They also teach you ways to get financial aid and stuff like that to help get you through college.

They provide us with help to getting into college. They help us fill out applications and scholarships, and they help us prepare so we can get into college easily so it will be a smooth process going from high school into college.

Interns stressed how CAP promoted higher education and how the skills learned at CAP helped them decide which career path to pursue. CAP staff's reinforcement about college as a desirable and feasible option for interns helped them to discuss how their current training is connected to their decision to attend college. Youth reported:

Another thing that helps with college, if you are thinking about majoring in filming and the things they teach here, when you go through the program it actually counts for a year in college.

I have always been into the arts, so working here it's great. I do everything I love to do and it improves my skills in every way. So, if I wanted to get into an art college, I think I would be really advanced with all the skills I know. I'm still deciding on being either a history teacher or an architect. If I wanted to be an architect, I would have to work with a lot of people. I would need to know basic concepts. If I need something done from someone else, there would have to

be trust. If I wanted to be a history teacher, I would need to work with kids and teach them stuff they didn't know.

I want to finish my credits. I want to do all my social things and I want to apply to all these different colleges. I have to find out what colleges are good and what I want to do.

College preparedness complemented the academic support and the expectations that CAP staff had for interns that included doing well in school and aspiring to get a college education. Some interns expressed their fears and the challenges they faced being first generation college students. Interns shared:

CAP and the YI, something they provided for me was being like a second family; the way they care about you and how they want you to go to college. They want you to have good grades, they want you to be successful in life, to have a career, and the way they respect you.

I think it's really good that they are helping us as far as college and things like that. Yeah, it's well and good to have these mini jobs, but you still need college to have an actual stable support to build on. My mom and my step-dad, they've never gone to college and I'm just about to go there and none of us know what to do and so it was absolutely terrifying. Now that they are offering us these resources and we're having a meeting to go over this and that, it makes it much more reassuring because we know that they are there to help us. So it's really good that they have those things to help us out.

Travel. For many interns, CAP offered them the opportunity to travel outside Long Beach. Youth were exposed to different places and cultures in California. Interns expressed their excitement of traveling to new places, connecting with interesting people, and being independent. Interns shared:

A lot of our parents, they have never been outside the country, they have never travelled. They never had the opportunity.

Basically, this is a great opportunity to go to new places and meet new people. Like they always say, a lot of people from our family have never gone outside of Long Beach or somewhere else. It's a good experience and you get paid for it and if they see you do a good job, they hire you for another job.

At first, I didn't know what it was all about, until I started going on the trips. I have been to San Diego, Sacramento, Yosemite and other places. I thought it was good. They take you out of school, and I personally think I learned more being over there and doing what I'm doing. Actually, you bond more with people, and they hire you for more jobs if you do well on the first one.

Many interns took the opportunity to participate in CAP and travelled to places their families, or their selves, could not afford to do so. One said:

There are some advantages to working with CAP. I've gotten opportunities twice to go to San Francisco, to go to L.A., to go to different places, so that's one major benefit of it, you get to travel, you get to see things. My parents don't have the stable income to let me go travel and yet I love traveling. It's one thing that I really enjoy doing, to get to look around at new scenery of a place I've never been to. It's really incredible

Work ethic. As competition for jobs have increased in recent years, youth that develop a work ethic early on are more likely to become successful in securing a job later. Interns at CAP learned many work-related responsibilities, such as getting the work done on time, knowing that they were expected to work hard, and that staff counted on them to act professionally while on the job. Interns said:

Along with experience and seniority, it's also the way you act when you are on these trips. Like if they see that you're acting like a little kid and you're messing around/running around when you're not supposed to, they're not going to hire you again. But if you get better with talking to the people and selling the program, they take you on trips where you talk a lot more to adults and try to sell the program.

Now you know what to expect when you walk into an interview; you've got to be face to face, you've got to be serious, and that's pretty much what we do here when we are with a client. You've got to be serious and do what you have to do or what they tell you to do.

One of many positive benefits of CAP was that interns earned a stipend allowing them to manage their own money. Many youth expressed that, through the money they earned, they were able to afford clothing and other personal items and enjoyed the ability to spend money as they needed it. Youth elaborated:

Sometimes you feel bad when you're with your parents and they don't have money, "Hey mom, I need money for this or that." The fact you have your own money, you don't have to ask your parents for money. I can waste my money on anything I want. It teaches you to be hard working your whole life.

I think what we all have on our mind, working with CAP, there's always some kind of incentive, there's an incentive to always come. If there's a job, there's an opportunity and there may be a little money but we are still learning. That's been a major benefit for us, because not a lot of us can pay for a certain book or have a few fines, or have to pay for a bus pass just to get to school every day. That's one major benefit, "Let's go train some high school students to edit and film, why not put money in my pocket?" That's a bonus, that's one of the major benefits in having CAP.

Self-confidence and self-esteem. One essential and significant aspect of CAP is its ability to instill self-confidence in interns. Interns become role models and share their expertise with others and this increases their ability to feel good about themselves. Also, many clients showed appreciation for their technical abilities and this motivated interns to learn and become more proficient. Youth described:

Throughout the days, I got more and more interactive with the group and with the people. I could tell that I impressed them more than just doing stuff for them. So, when you feel like someone respects you a little bit more, you feel like you improved it.

I like making an impression on adults. Being a kid, adults don't respect you much because you are a kid. They think you're a child and you have the mindset of a child, which is not true. Once, this young woman I was helping at a conference and I was talking to her. Afterwards, she was like "You know what? Your words, they changed my life." The next time I went to the conference, I saw the lady and she thanked me again; "You know I've always thought of the words you told me, they always stay in my mind and it's made me a better person." That just feels good to know an adult is looking at you for guidance, so it feels really good.

CAP interns faced clients that had misconceptions about youth and doubted their abilities to assist them. Interns learned to be self-assured about their skills and not to take some of the client's resistance personally. Interns further explained:

With a lot of the clients, they are like, "You are children, you don't know what you're talking about." I kind of get nervous around them, because they are

watching you like an eagle, and if they see you accidentally make a typo, they're going to point it out. I try to show this person that I'm not just a kid, that I know what I'm talking about.

Usually people don't trust kids in huge situations, like you're asking this kid to do a big project for me, that's like giving me a baby to make a major motion picture or major motion video. They can look at us and say all they want, but then when we show our skills and we can prove them wrong. They'll say, "Oh, I realize they do have the skill sets, they're trained well, they know what they are doing, they know what they are talking about."

As interns were exposed to a diversity of clients, they learned how important their knowledge and skills were to others, and their self-esteem increased. Their ability to perform their task under pressure and to keep focus on the job no matter the situation was remarkable.

Interns stated:

Some kids are crazy so you can't stress out. You have to keep your cool and ignore all that, so that they can be interested in learning it. In life there's going to be people like that, and you have to get them into liking it in a way. So you are going to be mentally prepared for that.

Basically, they teach you how to be a good person, they help you with your skills, they help you get ready for the future. They show you the things you can do and to never give up; you can always be better. There's always going to be someone that will be proud of you. You just have to work for it. The harder you work for it the higher you become.

For some CAP interns, the skills learned allowed them to become successful once they transitioned to college life. The attitude and aptitude learned at CAP allowed interns to become assertive, self-reliant, and successful in their lives. Some interns shared:

I was in a competition to see if I could get a scholarship to go to college this year, and I won it because I made a major presentation. I gave a speech about what I thought was possible for me to do this year and how I want to portray my ideas. So, I got accepted and I'm going to college and I've gotten so much experience because of them.

I'm already at the university, and it actually does help a lot, because there are certain projects that you have to work in teams. So, for me, it helps me during class. That first week we got in, I didn't know anybody, so having the experience of talking to people and getting to know them, helped me get to know my

classmates that first time and to start getting along and talking to them. Also, the technology part helps where there are certain projects we have to do. I have that technology background so it makes it easier to get the projects done.

2. Improving Career and Technology skills

CAP interns developed technology skills in several multimedia areas; graphic design, web design, digital video (filming and editing), audio/visual, digital photography, animation, and technology training skills. Besides learning the technical skills, interns learned hands-on and real life applications to the above skills, making their experience as close as possible to a real job.

CAP staff provided assistance, support and valuable teaching to interns.

Computer skills and applications. Before entering CAP, most interns have the basic knowledge and skills in computers and technology. However, after being trained at the YI and further at CAP, youth enhance these skills allowing them to train their peers, children, and adults. The skills they learned at CAP helped to strengthen their resumes. Some interns shared their experience:

With CAP and the YI, they take us places and teach us things that will help us in the future, like media skills. Not a lot of kids can say, "Oh, I know how to make a movie" or anything like that. So, they really boost our confidence.

They are teaching us web design, and later when you get really good at it you can charge companies to work on their websites.

I've done a lot of trainings where we go to different cities or states and we'll teach kids or adults these programs, like how to use iMovie or GarageBand so they can go back and teach their kids. And it's a never ending cycle that way, that's a lot of the CAP jobs we do.

In the future, we do things like work at after-school sites with little kids. We go four times over two months and we teach them about technology. It's like the basics; teaching them how to set up slide shows and little stuff like that.

The technology skills learned by CAP interns are also used to teach others. CAP interns become peer educators and also model to others how to teach technology skills. For instance, one intern explained:

I've done A/V conferences, which is Audio/Visual, where we are basically the technicians there. The only ones I've been to have been in San Diego. I guess it's from schools, people come from different schools, they are from after-school programs that come and they talk with each other about how to make their program more effective or the school more effective.

Multimedia skills. CAP interns learn to challenge themselves in learning and improvising a particular multimedia skill, such as web design, graphic design, digital photography, and even digital video filming and editing. Interns shared their experience at CAP:

First of all you have to go through the whole Youth Institute, it's a summer program, and they teach you all the basic skills you need, such as video editing, how to make a movie. Throughout the year you turn in an application form and they'll consider you for a job. You have to show that you're good enough and prove that you are trustworthy and able to do what they ask you to do. You have to show potential.

Once you learn skills here, and your skills improve, you can actually tell people about your skills, people, like a company might ask, "Can you make me a movie?" You can charge them whatever. Well, I'm a photographer so people will ask will you take photos.

So what we basically do is, we're there to set up their laptops so they can project onto a screen and if they have any technical difficulties we are there to help them and assist. The last time it was three days that we were there.

Some interns have learned skills that not only enhanced their technology abilities, but they have also put them to use in their academic life. The confidence they earned at CAP afforded them to adapt their skills to school assignments, to explore many media choices, and to advance their skill level. Interns reported:

Last year in my Biology class, I had to turn in a 3-D cell, and the teacher was asking that we have all these little things. It didn't have to be too expensive but we still had to go out and buy things for it. Instead of going out and buying little pipe cleaners and stuff like that to make a 3-D cell model, I just came here and

used one of the programs to make a little video of a DNA model just spinning. I sent it to my teacher with a little message, I'm poor. My teacher said it was creative.

I love Photoshop so much I will pledge allegiance to that program. I like the idea of becoming a graphic artist or even a web comic artist because I draw on Photoshop. I don't really manipulate pictures much, but I know that one of the staff here is a digital media artist as well. I've taken that as an idea of what I want to become.

The kind of careers I'd hope to pursue in the future... I'd like to be a special effects artist or digital media artist because I do love creating effects. I love creating animations, I like making videos. I like the behind the scenes of cutting the video, exporting it and all that business. So, digital media is one thing I'd like to look into or pursue.

The combination of technology skills, thinking outside the box, and the ability to apply these skills to academic settings, set CAP interns apart from their peers. Since computers, software, and media artists were all readily available at CAP, interns learned new skills and also put them in practice almost immediately.

I mostly learned how to edit because I really didn't know how. I would see other people editing movies and I would think that it's hard, but then I tried it on my own and I actually liked editing things. That's something I really learned how to do well.

I have learned movie editing and Photoshop. I learned a little bit while I was in middle school, but coming here really made me expand my skills and I got a lot better than how I used to be.

The client was an energy saver company. They asked us to do short films for a group of kids that were coming into the company. The client is trying to get the students to understand different ways to save energy and things like that. Having this client not only broadened our aspect of how corporations and big businesses work, it also showed us the energy efficient aspect of it all... You know, what is so important about keeping our earth greener, so it opens doors for us.

Career exploration. As a workforce development program, CAP was successful in preparing youth for technology and multimedia jobs in media, graphic design and computer

applications. Furthermore, CAP is facilitating interns in learning how to manage the stress at a job, how to better perform at a job, and how to work as a team. Youth stated:

Right now I'm just in high school and I'm just living the daily life of high school, but it gives me other opportunities to continue after high school and know what to do. You can apply some skills that most other people don't have, so that could help you in business.

I felt more like I was applying for a program, but then they pay you and watch you, see how you talk to people, see how you do all that, and that's how it also felt like a job.

It's like going to a technical school. You have to learn how to work with other people to create something, and they teach people skills, like public speaking skills, stuff that you need.

Another advantage of CAP as a youth program was its ability to offer opportunities for interns to explore career choices. In many instances, interns learned what kind of technical specialization they wanted to pursue in their lives; in other situations, youth learned which ones were not their strongest suit. This exploration enabled interns to seek and investigate career choices in a safe and supportive environment that otherwise they would not have access to at school or at home. Interns explained:

I want to be a musician as a career. I plan to go onto college to hopefully master in music, major at least, and this place has taught me different fields of it actually. Producing and creating our own music; I've created a bunch of songs here, made a lot of songs with people here. They've taught me GarageBand and Reason, stuff like that. Producing, there's a bunch of aspects they touch upon here, music and movies, that's a big one too. I think that is one to pursue, there's a lot that they do with music here, for me personally.

What CAP has really introduced to me is going into graphic design. Maybe I'll take a course in graphic design, maybe I'll just want to do communication. Maybe I will want to teach a class, maybe I will go into the study of art history, and get a major in Art. Maybe I'll become an art teacher or a history teacher, definitely keeping the skills that I learned working with CAP and shifting into an actual career.

Another advantage for CAP interns was that they learned they hold technical skills learned at CAP, which will help them to secure a job later in their lives. Having hands on experience and having demonstrated their ability to apply it to real jobs, interns were confident about their ability to utilize these skills once they are ready to seek a job. One youth elaborated:

Experience...like when you go to a job interview there's going to be hundreds of people going for it and you have to show them why they want to hire you and not the other people. We kind of learn that here, and if you have it on your resume that you were a CAP Intern it might help you get the job too.

Entrepreneurial skills. Some of the CAP interns started to explore their career choices, including starting their own businesses. CAP exposed interns to many jobs and technology skills that are necessary if they want to run their own businesses in the future. For instance, interns learned how to create webpages, how to create and manage social media such as Facebook or Twitter, how to create visual media such as digital videos or digital photographs, and how to produce printed media such as flyers or brochures. These skills, along with social skills, could prove to be necessary for a small business. Youth commented:

CAP also teaches you how to make yourself look presentable...so, whether or not they want to hire you, you learn how to talk to people, you learn how to make yourself look good so that other people like you, respect you, and so they want to pay you for something.

I plan on pursuing a career as a musician, and with CAP, they taught me how to film and how to edit. That will help when I plan on releasing a music video. I can come over here and ask to borrow equipment and they will lend it to me, rather than pay some guy to do it for \$300-\$400. I'm actually saving a lot of money by learning skills from here. They also taught me how to use GarageBand where I learn how to record, edit and do everything myself. With Photoshop, it will help me produce album covers. There's all that, plus I could help other musicians too.

For my career choice, being able to do graphic design is a help as a professional tattoo artist. I don't have to necessarily film everything I tattoo, but, for example, if I am able to do digital media artistry with the likes of Photoshop or any of the illustration programs, I am able to design the tattoo flash that I need and it makes it so much easier than having to draw it or having everything to scale. And, having that for my future, I'm able to go to school, so if I want to join the tattoo

school they'll say, "Can you draw Flash?" and I can be like, "No, but I can produce it at mass production faster than any of the students here." Then I can get a job selling Flash books or something flashy, that's how it could help career-wise. School-wise, like I said, it could help me get into a tattoo school way faster.

3. Increasing Social and Team Building Skills

CAP was instrumental in supporting the development of social skills of its interns. These included how to handle difficult clients, how to best manage their interpersonal relationships, team building skills, how to resolve conflicts and how to solve problems. Besides their application during CAP jobs, these skills were essential for interns to use at school and at home. In addition, CAP interns developed a sense of belonging and camaraderie from their attendance at the Youth Institute (YI).

Interacting with clients. Since CAP interns deal with clients from diverse backgrounds, they learned to adjust their demeanor and technology presentations to many situations. They learned how to explain technical terms and skills to young children, youth and adults. Also, they learned how to handle difficult clients and how to act professionally while on the job. Youth elaborated:

The way that I saw it, you really don't learn new stuff, but you learn how to talk to people. You get better at what you are doing, but you learn how to talk to people and that's something you really don't do just sitting here. It's a challenge. I personally haven't done it before, talk to these people and let them know what you are doing. You're just going to open yourself up and let it out, and you get more comfortable the more that you do it.

I think we're all nervous the first time we go out. These are people who have multi-million dollar programs that are funded from the government and stuff and you don't know what to expect from them. Like the last San Diego trip I took, there was one person who was more willing to let the CAP kids, the teenagers, come in and help them with all the technical stuff, and he was really talkative.

When I've worked with clients, I've noticed a lot of them are very uneducated when it comes to technology or programs, so that's when I use my technology skills, talking and my self-confidence and I'm able to teach them. They get pretty

impressed like “How’d you learn all this?” and I tell them I just took a summer program.

Ability to solve problems. CAP trained interns to become proficient in their chosen technology skills, and this, in turn, resulted in youth being assertive which allowed them to resolve problems promptly and efficiently. Interns said:

That’s where the professionalism comes in. You have to act like an adult and that actually ends up impressing them most of the time. You have to slowly earn respect; that’s my view on it.

This also helps you get hired back. That person will tell your boss, “This guy really knows his materials, I would really love to have him back so I can talk to him more about stuff,” so they hire you back.

I gained a technical skill as far as socializing with people and understanding people. Being able to talk with someone and not getting too frustrated if you don’t know how to do something. That’s just one thing I have clearly developed with CAP, and traveling and being able to talk to someone.

Learning to solve problems in CAP allowed interns to use the same skills in their daily lives and solve problems at school, at home, and in other settings. Interns shared:

In my experience, working with CAP, makes you look at every situation in your life as a problem-solving situation. If anything happens with your friends, you can break it down and see what needs to get done, and you get it done.

I plan on being an engineer so it has helped me with how to look at a problem and solve it. Or how to look at something and see, “Ok, is this how I want it, can I lay it out, and make it happen?”

Conflict resolution. One skill that stood out with interns was their ability to resolve conflicts among themselves and also with clients. Since part of their job was to identify and resolve problems, dealing with difficult clients posed a challenge to many interns. They learned to act professionally and respect clients. They elaborated:

They also teach you what it’s like in the real world. In the real world, you don’t always like everybody but you still have to work with them. They teach that principle too, work together bond, if you don’t like them- hold your tongue and get along and work together still.

In the YI, little things can have a great effect. Like one day something might happen and someone gets mad. But, the next day it will be like a big ole' family again.

One of the benefits is the way you present yourself. You have a conflict with a teacher, for example, any other kid would whine and say something bad and they'd get kicked out. But, if you are able to portray yourself like an adult, like if you have a difficult client and you know what to say and how to say it and how to seem older than you are, so as you're talking to them you figure things out and you get your point across. It's important to be able to do that because then that way you don't get in trouble.

Team building. One of the aspects CAP emphasized among interns was teamwork.

Team building activities began at the beginning of the YI and continued throughout the program.

Many of the jobs youth performed were conducted in teams, directly monitored and supported by

CAP staff. An intern shared:

Basically, as soon as you enter the program, they take you to a retreat in which they help you bond with each other because they say you have to be able to work with each other. We are always working with each other in groups and so, if we can't work with each other, the whole group goes down. So, basically, from the get go, they teach us how to help one another. That's the way we actually get the jobs and we get along with anybody, because we are used to getting along with strangers.

Interns learned that teamwork required understanding the difference between down time and time to perform their jobs. This distinction helped interns to develop a sense of responsibility and accountability while working in teams. Interns learned that their share of the work is essential to completing a job successfully. A participant commented:

When we go on this trip, once we are down there with the people, and they are sitting down getting ready to get started, that's when you have to get serious and then focus on what you have to do. Once you're with the group, having lunch or whatever, you can act like yourself because you're not working, just having a good time with them.

Interns also learned at CAP that part of the program is to have fun and enjoy being young so they learned to balance work life with recreation time. Youth explained:

I know we're out to get experience. They do what they have to do and we have a good time. Obviously, when you have to get down to work, you have to get down to work, and when it's time to have fun, you have fun.

We learn here that there's a time and place for everything. There are times when you can mess around and have fun. There are other times when you have to look serious and professional, because if you're just messing around having fun, the customers are not going to take you seriously they're going to think you're doing a bad job. There's always a time and place.

Peer support. One of the many ways CAP is effective is the peer support that is fostered within the program. Interns became peer mentors to one another and to other youth, and they used their skills to teach other people as well. Youth explained:

I didn't get interested in the program until I saw other people doing it and from their feedback. It was a lot about, "I'm in this program, you should do it. I've been to this place and that place," so I pretty much was influenced by older people, people who were 2-3 years older than me that had worked with CAP in the past. So, just their whole feedback brought me to having a particular interest in CAP.

It's more professional over here, we still act like kids and all that, but when it comes to jobs and serious things, that's when we have to start acting like young adults, and so, we stop joking around and behave ourselves.

Basically, we grow our own. We are taught and grow up and then learn that we want certain things, and then go on and then come back and work here, so we grow our own and we also inspire people.

The camaraderie encouraged in CAP motivated interns with more technical skills to mentor and support interns with less skills. CAP staff modeled these mentoring skills by teaching some interns advanced technical skills; in turn, these interns shared those skills with others. This mentoring cycle fostered interns to collaborate with one another rather than to hoard their skills and compete. Interns explained:

They also give us the opportunity, if we are able, to come back and get hired and become a full-on staff member of CAP. We'd be able to teach youth, at our age, the skills that we know.

It's just weird, I grew up. We grew up around this program with people that are good or even better, so when you go to these people who never touched a computer before, and they say, "How do you open it?" and I say, "You double click." So, they can be very uneducated when it comes to technology, which is very surprising nowadays.

They have to bring the new young ones in. They come in during the summer and they learn these skills. They need to give them that opportunity to use them in the real world. That's why they are using more of the new class, because of the new ones coming in, yet at the same time they call some of the older alumni to come and help them adapt to that real world learning environment.

Change Agent Productions Contributions

Change Agent Productions had a profound impact on the lives of their interns. It assisted them by finding supportive staff that care for them, finding peers with similar interests and provided a safe and supportive social space where youth could grow emotionally, intellectually, and emotionally healthy. Besides essential technology skills, youth learned work ethics, collaboration, teamwork, how to respect one another and how to get a job done. Peer support and mentorship were essential parts of their development since they learned to share their knowledge and skills with others. CAP had three major areas of influence: (A) personal; (B) peer group; and (C) community.

A. Personal

CAP interns benefited by developing a sense of self-worth and confidence. Academic support and college readiness were two major areas of growth for interns. CAP staff expected interns to maintain good grades while, at the same time, they provided academic assistance and guidance to interns. In addition, CAP staff made sure that interns were focusing on higher education and made their expertise available to assure that interns learned how to fill out college applications, how to apply for financial aid, and how to use their life experience to secure scholarships.

CAP interns found supportive mentors and friends among the staff and peers. Youth found adults they could trust and talk to on a regular basis. Also, they learned valuable life skills; conflict resolution, team building, and problem-solving skills. They also were exposed to public speaking, how to train people in technology, and how to handle difficult clients. The combination of technology skills and social skills gave CAP interns self-confidence and improved their self-esteem. Many interns found a unique place at CAP where they could be both, young and playful, and serious and professional. CAP interns were supported in their personal and academic life, they were directed and motivated to attend college, and they had a place where they felt safe and accepted.

B. Peer Group

At the group level, CAP interns learned how to collaborate and work in teams and how to get along with one another. Teamwork is essential at CAP and interns learned that the best way to accomplish their tasks was to be responsible and accountable within their work teams. The work ethic learned at CAP assisted them in appreciating their contribution to their team efforts while also bonding with one another. One important skill learned was to distinguish when it was time to relax and when it was the time to work. This distinction allowed interns to remain true to their personalities, while open to accepting others as they were and focusing on the job to be done.

One major benefit to interns is that they learned to share their knowledge and skills with one another and with those they were hired to train. Interns learned to be patient, generous, and forgiving to their mistakes as well as the mistakes of others. CAP staff modeled how to be supportive and interns used this skill with their peers. The collaboration and support that interns gave to each other was fundamental to allowing youth to make mistakes, correct them, and feel

safe with one another and staff. Since computer and multimedia skills require repetition and new applications, the environment created by CAP staff and interns allow for learning outside the box and teaching new skills learned to each other.

C. Community

Long Beach, its public schools, and the neighborhoods where interns study and live, all benefited from CAP, by training skilled and confident youth. Minority youth in Long Beach face a higher danger of dropping out of school, bigger challenges securing a job, and barriers to finishing high school and accessing a college education. CAP provided technology skills, work ethic, and employment experiences to interns and this opportunity could help them become more employable. Also, CAP provided essential skills to support starting a small business, such as how to produce digital and printed media, how to use technology in specialized fields, such as music or graphic design, and how to network with potential clients or collaborators.

A big benefit to the community is the development of young leaders that are improving their multimedia skills and helping others do the same. The positive environment created at CAP is fostering a generation of urban youth who are technologically competent and socially skillful. In sum, CAP interns are on pathways to become successful by finishing high school, eventually entering higher education, and pursuing careers in the entertainment, technology, and multimedia industries. Change Agent Productions is having a positive and meaningful impact on the community where their interns study and live.

Conclusions

In conclusion, Change Agent Productions is an effective youth program targeting mostly urban youth from minority groups in Long Beach. CAP staff is teaching youth to become

technologically savvy. Youth are able to use the skills learned in the program in order to complete high school and apply to college. In addition to supporting healthy and confident youth, CAP is also assisting in developing a local workforce that is socially aware, able to apply their skills to real life settings, and is ready to assume leadership roles.

The multimedia skills that CAP interns learned are beneficial for youth academically, and will be advantageous for them in the future as they become professionals. Youth are benefiting from this program by being able to explore career choices in a supportive and safe environment. In addition, they are learning how some of these careers are challenging but rewarding

Hence, CAP is developing strong youth leaders with technology and multimedia skills that will benefit them beyond the program, while making sure interns are earning good grades, learning meaningful skills, and completing high school. Therefore, CAP is positively contributing to the personal development (intellectual, emotional, and social) of interns, their well-being as a group, and to improving their lives and the lives of the community in Long Beach, California.

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