

# **Effects of Intern Involvement with Change Agent Productions, January – December, 2012**

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## **Introduction**

Change Agent Productions (CAP) is a social enterprise of the YMCA of Greater Long Beach Community Development Branch which began in October, 2007, and is currently funded by a grant from Beneventures Foundation. Change Agent Productions (CAP) is comprised of professional digital media artists who work alongside urban youth who have graduated from the YMCA Youth Institute (YI) to carry out professional media projects. CAP was specifically designed to provide challenging, positive youth, and career development opportunities for low-income, culturally-diverse high school and college-age youth. CAP work opportunities for youth are designed to build on the job skills training they received while in the YI and to help them more fully develop their business, academic, technical and social skills. This research explores the effects of internship participation with Change Agent Productions among low-income, culturally-diverse, urban teens and young adults.

CAP was primarily designed to provide media services to community-based organizations and non-profits. CAP provides a wide-range of media services including video (documentaries, advertisements, public service announcements), graphics (corporate branding, brochures, professional reports, magazines), web (construction, layout, domain registration), audio-visual (on-site tech set-up and support, presentation equipment), photography and training (movie-making, animation, graphic design, media lab consultation). Whenever feasible, CAP offers interns stipends to work on their paid projects.

## **CAP Interns**

YI alumni applied for internships with CAP by submitting an application form, filling out a survey, providing their grades, and completing an interview. This process was designed to help them to develop skills in obtaining a job. In the application, youth were asked to list their recent YI involvement, current extracurricular activities, number of hours per week they could work, the types of software and equipment they were most proficient with, and, the technology skills they would like to further develop. In addition, they are asked about possible time obstacles, skills they would like to acquire, potential career fields and their relationship to CAP, and what they personally hoped to accomplish through internship participation. They were selected for projects depending on their skill sets, availability, interests and acceptable grades. As of December 31, 2012, 50 (70%) alumni had actually worked on at least one job in the past two years, with 24 (48%) of those working on at least one job in 2012. This report focuses on those 24 youth.

## **Methods**

### **Data Collection**

As part of the application process, interns completed a self-assessment survey of their interpersonal, professional/job and technology skills. This assessment provided baseline skill levels. YMCA staff gave all interns who worked on a job during 2012 the self-assessment form during November and December of 2012. Both forms were then given to the research team. CAP staff independently completed assessment forms on each intern during the last months of 2012 as well.

## Sample

As shown in Table 1, interns ranged from 15 to 19 with the majority falling between the ages of 17 and 19 (67%). Fifty-seven percent were male. Just over half (58%) were Latino, followed by African-American (17%). Interns worked between one (50%) and nine (4%) jobs with an average of almost 3 jobs per intern. The types of jobs varied and included filming and editing of videos, photography, technology purchase, set-up and trainings, graphic design, an animated photo timeline and repair of a laptop computer.

Table 1  
Description of Change Agent Production Interns  
(N = 24)

	%	N
Age		
15	21%	5
16	12%	3
17	21%	5
18	25%	6
19	21%	5
Gender		
Male	58%	14
Female	42%	10
Ethnicity		
Latino	58%	14
African-American	17%	4
European-American	13%	3
Bi/Multicultural	8%	2
Asian American/Pacific Islander	4%	1

## **Instrument**

Both CAP staff and interns completed rating forms designed to explore the effects of the project on interns' interpersonal, professional/job, and technology skills. These forms were designed, in part, based on focus group findings from the first two years of the project. Participants rated their agreement with each skill on a scale ranging from 1 "Strongly Disagree" to 4 "Strongly Agree." Higher scores indicated higher skill levels.

The interpersonal skills scale consisted of 12 items that measured skill levels in working with and communicating with others. Questions included, "I am confident and comfortable working with clients," "I can effectively resolve group conflicts," and "I am respectful of different ideas and viewpoints." The alpha reliability was .63 to .70 for interns and .81 for staff.

The professional/job skills scale consisted of 16 items that measured basic skills required to hold a job. Questions included, "My work with CAP has helped me to be on time," "I manage my time effectively (prioritizing projects)," "I can identify creative solutions to a variety of situations," and "I accept responsibility for my mistakes." The alpha reliability was .81 to .88 for interns and .87 for staff.

The technology skills scale consisted of 8 items that measured skills in working with different technologies. Questions included, "I have excellent skills in digital video editing (Final Cut Pro, iMovie, After Effects, etc.)," "I have excellent skills in graphic design (Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign)," and "I have excellent skills in web design (construction, layout, domain registration, maintenance, applications, Dreamweaver, Photoshop, HTML, peripheral configuration)." The alpha reliability was .77 to .82 for

interns. Due to low reliability for the staff technology skills scale, the technology skill questions are only analyzed individually for the staff.

### Analysis

Self-report changes in the three skill scales and the individual technology skills as well as comparisons between intern and supervisor ratings were investigated using paired samples t-tests.

### Results

#### Intern Self-Assessment of Changes in Skill Levels

As shown below in Table 2, interns did not report significant improvement in their interpersonal, professional/job or technology skills at the end of their CAP internship.

Table 2  
CAP Intern Self-Report of Changes in Skill Levels

Scale	Pre- CAP			Post-CAP		
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	Difference
Interpersonal Skills	3.34	.33	22	3.40	.38	.06
Professional/Job Skills	3.20	.37	22	3.26	.43	.06
Technology Skills	3.03	.41	22	3.21	.51	.17

\*Approaching significance at the .10 level

\*\*p < .05

#### Intern Self-Assessment of Changes in Individual Technology Skills

As shown in Table 3, these CAP youth did not report significant improvement on any of the individual technology skills at the end of their CAP internship.

Table 3  
CAP Intern Self-Report of Changes in Technology Skills

I have excellent skills in:	Pre-CAP			Post-CAP		
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	Difference
Graphic Design	3.26	.65	19	3.37	.68	.11
Web Design	2.44	.78	18	2.50	1.04	.06
Digital Video Filming	3.40	.68	20	3.65	.59	.25
Digital Video Editing	3.26	.65	19	3.53	.61	.26
Audio/Visual	3.20	.70	20	3.25	.79	.05
Digital Photography	3.50	.61	20	3.40	.60	-.10
Animation	2.45	.83	20	2.65	1.09	.20
Technology Training Skills	3.16	.69	19	3.42	.84	.26

\*Approaching significance at the .10 level

\*\*p < .05

### Supervisor Assessment of Intern Skill Levels

As show in Table 4, at the end of the year, supervisors rated interns substantially higher in interpersonal skills than in professional/job skills.

Table 4  
Rank Order of CAP Supervisor Intern Skill Assessment Scales

Scale	Mean	SD
Interpersonal Skills	3.43	.33
Professional/Job Skills	3.16	.34

\*Approaching significance at the .10 level

\*\*p < .05

As shown in Table 5, supervisors rated interns highest in digital video filming, digital video editing and graphic design skills, and lowest in web design, animation and audio/visual skills, at the end of the CAP internship.

Table 5

Rank Order of CAP Supervisor Intern Skill Assessment of Individual Technology Skills

Intern has excellent skills in:	Mean	SD
Digital Video Filming	3.83	.38
Digital Video Editing	3.79	.51
Graphic Design	3.70	.56
Technology Training Skills	3.62	.65
Digital Photography	3.50	.51
Audio/Visual	3.37	.71
Animation	3.35	.98
Web Design	3.17	1.34

### Comparison of Intern and Supervisor Assessment of Skill Levels

As shown in Table 6, there were no significant differences between supervisor ratings and intern ratings in either interpersonal or professional/job skills at the end of the CAP internship. However, CAP supervisors rated these interns significantly higher in graphic design,  $t(17) = 2.36, p < .05$ , web design,  $t(16) = 2.16, p < .05$ , and animation skills,  $t(18) = 3.44, p < .05$ , and somewhat higher in digital video editing,  $t(18) = 2.04, p < .10$ , than the interns themselves, at the end of the CAP internship.



Table 6  
Comparison of Intern and Supervisor Assessments of Skill Levels

Scale	Intern			Supervisor		
	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	Difference
Interpersonal Skills	3.40	.38	22	3.43	.34	.03
Professional/Job Skills	3.26	.43	22	3.15	.35	-.11
<b>Graphic Design</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>.70</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3.78</b>	<b>.55</b>	<b>.39**</b>
<b>Web Design</b>	<b>2.47</b>	<b>1.07</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3.06</b>	<b>1.25</b>	<b>.59**</b>
Digital Video Filming	3.65	.59	20	3.85	.37	.20
Digital Video Editing	3.53	.61	19	3.79	.54	.26**
Audio/Visual	3.25	.79	20	3.35	.75	.10
Digital Photography	3.40	.60	20	3.55	.51	.15
<b>Animation</b>	<b>2.63</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>1.02</b>	<b>.84**</b>

\*Approaching significance at the .10 level

\*\*p < .05

### Conclusions

This research examined the effects of youth internship participation in CAP, a social enterprise of the YMCA Community Development Branch. Changes in intern skills were measured by self-report before and after CAP participation, and by staff after CAP participation. Unlike last year when interns reported significant improvement in technology skills, there were no significant changes in interpersonal, professional/job or technology skills reported by interns working in 2012. It is possible that the lack of change may be related to the fact that half the interns worked on a single job which may not be enough to aid in the development of the skills investigated here. It is possible that additional job skills or technology training or efforts to expand ways for interns to work

for CAP may prove beneficial in promoting these skills. For example, youth could potentially gain organizational, job and technology skills by learning to work in an administrative capacity to support the CAP office. Since both CAP staff and interns reported their professional/job skills as relatively low in comparison to the other skills measured, additional training and modeling of these skills may prove particularly useful.

It is interesting to note that CAP staff rated interns significantly better in three technology areas and somewhat better in one. It is possible that interns were not fully aware of their skills, and thus, not confident in their talents in these areas. It might be useful for CAP supervisors to engage in more formal yearly performance reviews with interns, both to give them some experience in this aspect of employment and feedback on their strengths and areas for growth. There was great variation in the ratings of skills in the areas of technology, probably because the jobs that interns worked often drew on different technology skill sets. If it is a goal of CAP to help interns gain skills in multiple areas, technology workshops may help in this aspect given the variety of job assignments.