



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

MEET THE AUTHOR

Columbia native Lindsay Odom recently received her degree in Communication from Clemson University, and is spending her summer as Endeavor's first intern. In addition to social media responsibilities, she's interviewing many of Endeavor's members to learn (and share) more about marketing, agency life, entrepreneurship and what it takes to create meaningful work for clients.



"CREATE WITH PASSION,
SERVE WITH ENTHUSIASM"

MEET THE MEMBER

Who: Nicole Cendrowski

Title: Director of Engagement

Company: A-LINE Interactive

Website:
www.alineinteractive.com

BY LINDSAY ODOM

During my four years at Clemson, I heard a lot of horror stories about life in the "real world" – rude bosses, working long hours, and unhelpful coworkers. The other day, Nicole Cendrowski asked me what surprised me the most about post-grad life. The answer was simple: I was (and still am) surprised at how nice people are! It was ironic that Nicole asked me this, because she broke this stereotype by taking me to lunch during the first week of my internship.

As we dived into a bowl of chips and salsa, we bonded over our similar pasts growing up in Columbia, South Carolina, where Nicole went to high school at Richland Northeast and on to the University of South Carolina. I curiously asked Nicole what she majored in, because I'm always interested to see if people end up in a different career path. "I graduated with a degree in English in 2002, but I felt that the business route would yield the greatest return," Nicole shared. "I was specifically interested in copywriting, as well as marketing, communications and public relations. My hope was that my curiosity, communication and people skills would help me quickly study any role without having a formal business or marketing degree."



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Well, you usually learn more outside of the classroom, I thought to myself. Nicole would agree, reflecting on her first job as a copywriter and account manager at a boutique marketing agency in Columbia, Lux + Associates. “I was able to learn everything immediately while in the trenches,” Nicole told me, reminding me of my own internship experience this summer. “I have the agency's principal and its creative director at the time to thank for being willing to teach me on the job.”

Nicole entered the marketing realm at the interesting age of “new media” where, according to Nicole, “a company may or may not have had a website yet, so we were for the first time having to write and design things called ‘banner ads’ while still faxing press releases to editors.” Nicole gained solid experience managing websites for different clients, which inspired her to freelance and build her own virtual agency called Big Gnome. She subcontracted with web firms as a writer and strategist in Charleston and Greenville.



Nicole with her husband, Brian, on the site of Fireforge Crafted Beer.

“As a small business owner, I was also, by default, my company’s salesperson,” Nicole laughed. I was surprised when she told me this, because as a former communication major, I tried to steer clear of sales opportunities, fearing that I might get stuck and never move on to my dream career. But I was also surprised by Nicole’s positive attitude toward her position. “Admittedly, I struggled with it and invested in getting coached and trained on how to become more effective at business development through a company called Sandler Training.” A year later, Nicole was so successful during training that she joined the Sandler team to sell their consulting services. “It’s no surprise that during this time, a lot of my clients ended up being marketing and web firms, as well as media companies,” Nicole told me.

After five years of personal training, coaching, facilitating, and public speaking in Greenville and Tampa, Nicole and her husband moved back to Greenville with an itch for entrepreneurship in a field that’s quite different from sales and marketing. “I wanted to get back to my creative service roots and we were also pursuing the dream of starting a small brewery, Fireforge Crafted Beer. Around this time, I’d also reconnected with a few friends at A-LINE Interactive, which had been a client from my Sandler days, and had the opportunity to join the team.”

As Director of Engagement for A-LINE Interactive, Nicole and the team build unique and engaging websites with SEO and social media strategies for local and national brands. This year, they were awarded the James B. Thompson Small Business of the Year Award in Spartanburg.

Today, she has the opportunity to combine her marketing and web design skills with her passion for brewing. Fireforge’s mission is a perfect representation of Nicole’s professional life, determination and drive: create with passion and serve with enthusiasm. “Sales and marketing are interconnected and need to flow together. It’s been a fun challenge getting back into web and digital marketing over the past few years, and I’m grateful for a sweet mix of skills and experience to bring to the table for our clients.”