

8-12-2009

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Recommended Citation

Roger Williams University School of Law, "Dean Logan's Blog: Chantal Tocci '04 Profiled in Wall Street Journal" (2009). *Law School Blogs*. 81.

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Dean Logan's Blog

Chantal Tocci '04 Profiled in Wall Street Journal

Posted by David Logan on 08/12/2009 at 12:00 AM

The [WSJ](#) has profiled Chantal Tocci ('04) and her unique career path.

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By • *SARAH E. NEEDLEMAN*”

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Two years ago, Chantal Tocci quit a job as a law-school admissions coordinator to escape a difficult boss.”

“
As she networked to find her next position, Ms. Tocci told her tai chi instructor—also a production executive for the Fox TV show “America’s Most Wanted”—that she was on the hunt. He said the program had an opening for a production assistant in the hotline department. Ms. Tocci applied for the job and got it.”

“
In her second week, she took a call from a tipster that led to an arrest—the show’s 954th capture. Ms. Tocci, 29 years old, has since been promoted to manager of hotline operations. Edited interview excerpts follow:”

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Q: What does your job entail?”

“
A: I'm in charge of hiring and managing our hotline staff. The majority has been with us for a long time. On Saturday nights I manage a crew of 15 to 20 operators, and during the week, about 10. I make sure all our tips are getting to where they need to go, such as to law enforcement and our producers. We don't allow anyone to answer the phones other than our trained operators. There are times when tipsters call and only want to speak to a manager and of course I jump on the line. If a capture is made during the show, I have to let the film crew in the studio and the appropriate one on the road know what's going on. Sometimes a tipster will say a fugitive is my neighbor and he's home right now. Fugitives also call in. A fugitive recently turned himself in from a diner in New Jersey.”

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Q: You started out answering calls to the show's hotline. How did you learn the job?”

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A: I was trained by the person whom I took over for. The best training is to shadow operators by listening in on the calls they take and their standard responses. Most people call in with tips, but some ask how to get their stories on the show or how to deal with a problem like domestic violence, child abuse or legal issues. We refer them to the appropriate resources.”

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Q: What was it like taking the call that led to the capture of a wanted fugitive?”

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A: It was very exciting. It was from a family member telling me that he's at this address and they were very upset and needed someone to get there right away.”

“
Q: What's the most challenging part of your job?”

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A: Sometimes it's just the stories that we deal with on a day-to-day basis. We air a lot of tragic stories, which at times can weigh on your mental well-being. But that's offset by the fact that we know we're helping people.”

“
Q: What do you do when the show's not on the air?”

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A: A lot of people think the show is live but it's not. Except for the stories with reenactments, which are shot weeks in advance, the show is taped earlier in the week. Before each episode airs I'm given a copy to review with our hotline operators. We need to be familiar with the cases being profiled for while the show is airing. About half of the operators you see in the background during the episodes are actually actors. The rest are real operators. After the show airs, I compile a report of all the important tips that came in and distribute it to the entire staff.”

“
Q: You started out working in academia. Do you miss working in that field?”

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A: I thought it was going to be my career. During my third year as a student at Roger Williams University School of Law, I became a program coordinator for the undergraduate university. Two years later I went to work in the admissions department at [another law school]. I really wanted to be a school administrator but I didn't get along well with my boss and left after just six months.”

“
Q: What are your career plans going forward?”

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A: I definitely would love to stay with the show as long as they want to keep me here. It offers the right work-life balance for me. My higher-ups are flexible if I have a doctor's appointment. It's a casual environment during the week. I'm wearing jeans right now.”

“
Q: In general, what does it take to succeed in your current line of work?”

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A: You have to have a good rapport over the phone. You need to have that professionalism and standard in your heart that you want to make each call go as smoothly as possible.”

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How You Can Get Here, Too

- *Best advice: Network and keep an open mind, says Ms. Tocci. You never know where your next job is going to come from.*
- *Skills you need: The ability to listen and communicate well.*
- *Where to start: Any company that deals with customers or that you would call if you have a problem.*

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Write to Sarah E. Needleman at sarah.needleman@wsj.com”