Setting a high bar: My experience as an editorial intern

By Abigail Monti
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Abigail Monti joined E Source in July 2023 as an editorial intern. She's a fourth-year undergraduate student at the University of California, Santa Barbara, majoring in English and minoring in professional editing. After she graduates in June 2024, Abigail hopes to enter the publishing industry.

When I started applying for editorial internships for the summer of 2023, the last place I expected to end up was at a utility research and consulting company. As an English major and professional editing minor with an interest in creative writing, I always envisioned myself working with fiction.

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To be honest, I avoid reading nonfiction like the plague. (But don't tell my boss—she's picking a memoir for the next book club meeting.) Sure, I edit for my university's newspaper, which deals with all kinds of nonfiction journalism, but utility research? Not even in the same stratosphere.

But I thought to myself, "Editing is editing. It doesn't matter what the topic is."

Turns out, I was wrong. Not all editing is the same. My internship at E Source challenged and stretched my editorial comfort zone, and rightly so. Editing isn't as one-dimensional as I used to believe.

What I learned at E Source

For one thing, I've learned to ditch my fears of substantive edits. E Source taught me the importance of scrutiny, from big-picture themes to the smallest stylistic detail. Every report, every paragraph, every heading, and every punctuation mark needs a purpose. E Source's clients are busy people, and we don't want to waste their time with dangling modifiers and flowery introductions. I've learned to equate

words to time because in this industry, every second counts.

But that's just the beginning:

- I learned the importance of house style for consistency, branding, trustworthiness, and comprehension.
- I learned more about hyphen usage than I ever thought possible.
- I learned that GIFs are a viable form of communication.
- I learned how to use HTML.
- I learned that ChatGPT won't steal my job. (In fact, it happily helped me complete less-interesting administrative tasks. Call AI my personal intern if you will.)
- And I learned that not all apostrophes are created equal. (Sorry, straight apostrophes. It's nothing personal.)

I've also come to appreciate utilities as a crucial part of our everyday lives and communities. By definition, the utility industry connects people from around the world.

I used to pride myself on not having to take a single science or math class during my time at university—I'm a humanities student through and through. Now, I'm reading and coding data-heavy reports on distributed energy resources and enjoying it!

And I'm even finding myself applying utility industry information to my life. If I never worked at E Source:

- I never would have known that I qualified to save 20% on my apartment's gas bill.
- I never would have thought to sign up for a demand response program through my electric utility.
- I never would have gone around spouting to my friends and family about the importance of utility social media channels.

I've also come to appreciate utilities as a crucial part of our everyday lives and communities. By definition, the utility industry connects people from around the world. Who would have thought that there was something poetic about gas, water, and electricity? Plus, their interconnectivity makes utility-related topics a great icebreaker for any situation. If there's a lull at Thanksgiving this year, just bring up fun facts about EV charging. No, really, Auntie Jan, you can charge an EV with a three-prong outlet!

How E Source set the standard for my career

But beyond all that, I've learned that the people you work with are just as important as the company you work for.

Without a doubt, the E Source editorial team is home to the best coworkers I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. Even though I was the youngest on the team, I was welcomed to sit at the big kids' table from the start. My teammates are friendly and supportive and genuinely care about helping me achieve my loftiest career goals. But most of all, they're patient. I couldn't have asked for better mentors during my internship. Even if I never meet them in person, I feel like I have.

And that's the other thing I've learned to navigate: the trials and tribulations of remote work.

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only leaving this internship with more skills and confidence but I’m also leaving excited to enter the workforce.

As a West Coaster operating on vaguely East Coast hours, I’ve had more than a few early mornings. But I came to appreciate the value of remote work and, especially, E Source’s casual dress code. (Read: I wore pajamas a few times and no one ever knew.)

When working from home, there’s reduced burnout and no commuting and snacks are available 24/7. It’s basically the ideal setup. Plus, I never would have had the chance to meet the amazing group of writers and editors from across the country at an in-person internship.

For my first true venture into the corporate world, I couldn’t have imagined a better experience. I’m not only leaving this internship with more skills and confidence but I’m also leaving excited to enter the workforce. And anyone who remembers being 21 can appreciate that only an incredible internship experience could get a college student to say that.

So, while my past self never would have anticipated this future, I’m so grateful I ended up where I did. People like to say that your college years are your glory years, but if this internship was any indication, life keeps going up from here.

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