



SAMANTHA GUTGLASS

SENIOR COPYWRITER

Arnold Worldwide, Boston

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/pub/samantha-gutglass/b/1bb/764/

Twitter: @yosammyjo

My creative journey toward becoming a copywriter began in my Creative Thinking class at Emerson College. I was a graduate student in global marketing communications and advertising department, and I didn't have a clue as to what I'd do after I completed the program. I knew what I liked. I liked thinking. Writing. Coming up with ideas and watching them evolve into realities. But I wasn't sure where my talents fit into the working world. Leading up to the class, I took courses on consumer behavior, market research and accounting. While all of these subjects were interesting for their own reasons, I didn't feel stimulated creatively. I knew that I'd never be happy if I couldn't take my own creative energy and find a way to apply it in my work. The Creative Thinking class changed everything. For many of my classmates, I think it was challenging to shift gears and begin looking at advertising from a creative standpoint, rather than a more practical one. For me, it came naturally.

The class inspired me to pursue a creative internship at an advertising agency in Boston called Modernista! In the 2000s, Modernista! was one of the most successful nontraditional creative agencies in the country. I never went to ad school, and I didn't have a traditional portfolio to share when applying for the internship. What I did have, however, was a series of spec work that I created at Emerson as part of my capstone course. I also had the ability to think

conceptually, which was something I learned in my Creative Thinking course. It was enough to get me the internship, and from my first day at the agency, I found myself referencing many things I learned in class.

As an intern, my first assignment was to use a FlipCam and create a short film that answered the following question: What does Modernista! mean to you? This was my first “brief.” It felt like one of the projects for the Creative Thinking class, and I was eager to come up with an interesting solution. I came up with a few concepts, but ultimately, I decided that as an aspiring copywriter, words should be my focus. The end result was a video made up of scrabble tiles, which I arranged to spell out Modernista. Then re-arranged over and over to tell a story. You can find a link to the video here: <http://blog.modernista.com/?tag=anagram>

The Modernista! anagram video was a hit. One of the chief creative officers watched it, and immediately placed it on the company blog and posted it on YouTube. I began to establish myself as a creative thinker and problem solver, and found myself getting new opportunities as an intern. Eventually I was hired as a copywriter. Working with clients was really no different than working on projects at Emerson. I saw every assignment as a creative thinking exercise. I found new and different ways to brainstorm, to keep my ideas fresh. I used visualization techniques that I first learned in my Creative Thinking course to help with concepting. I cannot stress enough just how valuable these skills are when you’re working in a creative field, or any field, really. You don’t get better at your job by doing the same thing over and over. You get better by changing your routine. By looking at things differently. New perspectives lead to new ideas.

As agencies sometimes do, Modernista! closed. So I moved on to a new position at another Boston agency. I was given an exciting opportunity to work on accounts like Volvo and New Balance, and I couldn’t wait to get more production experience. One of my first projects was to develop a television spot for Volvo. I spent weeks concepting with my partner, thinking about what Volvo meant to people and how we could bring these feelings to life. I thought about their reputation as a brand that values safety, and I thought about how that might translate to a consumer in a truly emotional way. The words I kept coming back to were comfort and home. Volvo’s old tagline was, “for life.” They make cars that are made to go places, to tell stories, to be lived in. I came up with many ideas. Good ones. Bad ones. Ones that didn’t quite fit the brand strategy. Ultimately the one we sold through was a spot featuring glowing cars set in an idyllic environment. We shot three vignettes, featuring couples, families and friends as silhouettes inside the cars. As the camera pulled out, it revealed a series of glowing cars set in a landscape, like houses in a neighborhood lit up at night. There was something beautifully comfortable about the spot, which ended with the voice-over: There’s no place like a Volvo. <http://vimeo.com/24899232>

I’m approaching my third-year anniversary at my current agency and not a day goes by that I don’t feel challenged creatively. I am thankful for the experiences I’ve had so far and know that as the ways people are consuming media are changing, so will the ways we advertise. It is an evolving industry, which requires a willingness to change the way you think, constantly. That’s exactly why I love it.



Key Insights

1. Speak up. Don't be afraid to ask questions at work or to let your colleagues know that you'd like to be involved on a project. Opportunities come to those who seek them.
2. Be open-minded. Ideas can happen anywhere, anytime. Sometimes the best ideas are the ones that initially feel like the worst ones. Taking risks is a great thing. If you believe in an idea enough to make it happen, you'll find a way.
3. Keep a journal. Write down ideas while you're on the train, or bus, or before you go to sleep. Doodle. Find a way to release your creative energy every day.