

# From Intern to Boardroom



*By James Orsini, Chief Integration Officer, [VaynerMedia](#)*

As we welcome another class of interns here at [VaynerMedia](#) I can't help but think about my own internship more than thirty years ago. It was 1984 and I was selected by what is now KPMG to do my internship in their audit department. Upon reflection I cannot believe how many important aspects of my life as they exist today were framed by this single internship event.

It started with an on campus interview in 1984 at Seton Hall University in my junior year. I was fortunate enough to have choices and selected KPMG after a visit to their Park Avenue offices in New York City. I knew this was an environment I wanted more of. Today I remain appreciative of the opportunity afforded to me by Seton Hall University and continue to give back to the school to show that appreciation. I serve on the Board of Regents for SHU and credit the securing of the internship opportunity as the reason to this day I give back to the University.

While working at KPMG one of my clients was [Siegel and Gale](#); a then small branding subsidiary of Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising. I remember while serving this client as an auditor in a public accounting firm thinking "I absolutely love this creative environment I'm observing and could see myself working in a place like this someday". The marketing seed had been planted.

I left KPMG knowing the Partner track was not for me. I spent

several years on Wall Street at an Investment Banking firm. While the company treated me well and paid me handsomely I recall being unfulfilled in my cubical. One day in the summer of 1988 my phone rang and it was the audit manager I had worked under on that Siegel and Gale client at KPMG on the other end. He too had left KPMG and went to work for Saatchi and Saatchi. He went on to tell me a story of what the future could be. The Saatchi Brothers had just bought a single public relations firm in NYC and wanted to create a worldwide network. He said if you leave Goldman Sachs (definitely NOT what guys were doing in the 80's) someday we would build a worldwide company and someday I might be the CFO.

Fast forward I left... within five years we built what was then the 5th largest [public relations](#) firm in the world and I became a global CFO by the time I hit my 30s. I later oversaw 31 offices in 26 countries. Wow, the internship connections came through! 25 years later having worked for Saatchi twice in that time, I remain in the Industry I love so dearly, spending each day in a creative environment that I would have never known existed were it not for the internship.

But can there be more you ask? Yes there can. While at KPMG I worked with a woman who I was instantly drawn to. Someone who understood me, had similar likes, and really understood what I did for a living. This is someone I met when I wasn't looking to meet anyone (in that way). I fell in love with JoAnn who became my wife. We've now been married for nearly 27 years and have 3 wonderful children. Again the internship came through! And so the world comes full circle. This year my son Christian now 20 has begun the application process for his KPMG internship targeting the summer of 2017.



With this reflection in mind, I'm full of excitement for VaynerMedia's interns. Their lives 10, 20, 30 years from now could very well be changed through the 8 short weeks they spend with these now strangers. Could a future Board role be looming in this internship? Could a future career path in media be unfolding through this internship? Could a future partner or lifelong friend be discovered through this internship? All things are possible to those that believe...

***About the Author:** James Orsini is Chief Integration Officer for VaynerMedia a social first digital agency. Working alongside founders AJ and Gary Vaynerchuk James helps manage the agency for success. Mr. Orsini was Chief Executive*

*Officer and member of the Board of Directors of Single Touch Systems Inc. (SITO:OTCBB), the mobile media solutions provider serving retailers, advertisers and brands. A proven leader and author of business articles (Monetize or be Cannibalized and The Race for Mobile Relevance) and white papers (The Authentic Network, Reverse 360 Mentoring and Mastering Procurement). James has over 25-years of finance and operations experience across a broad range of marketing and communications disciplines in both the Omnicom and Publicis Groupe holding companies. He currently serves on the Board of Regents for Seton Hall University.*