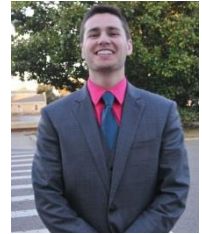


College student runs his own business

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During the week Kyle Sheldon is taking classes at the University of South Carolina in Columbia.

On the weekends he can be found in the Charleston area, marketing his new business Student Painters, also known as Young Entrepreneurs Across America.

YEAA is a program designed to help teach college students how to run a small business. The students develop communication and business skills through a summer of real business world experience.

Sheldon got interested in joining when someone, who would turn out to be his future executive, Christian Chasmer, came and spoke to one of Sheldon's business classes last semester.

Sheldon proceeded to attend a YEAA info session and went through an interview process, and he now operates and manages an exterior painting service in Summerville through Summerville Painters.

"I've always wanted to do something new and fresh," Sheldon said. "I like that how hard I work determines how much money I make."

YEAA implements a painting business because it is seasonal and easier to manage during the summer when students are out of school. The program teaches college students how to maintain, market and budget their own business.

Chasmer is a senior at USC majoring in entrepreneurship and marketing. He said he ran his own business last year through YEAA and now oversees five student businesses – including Sheldon's – and runs his own painting division in Columbia.

"It is such a unique opportunity," Chasmer said. "It's a lot of coordinating but it's really worth it."

Running his own business last year taught Chasmer how to manage his time and gave him real work experience, which is what he told Sheldon when he came and spoke at his class.

“You get what you put into it,” he said. “It’s not for everybody. A lot of people come for the money aspect, a lot come for the experience and a lot come for their resume. Those are the three main things.

“I got into it because I was so worried about getting a job after college,” Chasmer added. “I learned so many lessons I would not have learned anywhere else.”

Sheldon majors in international business as well as business economics at USC, and also has a minor in French. He was officially hired for Summerville Painters in October but was not allowed to “physically” start any work with his business until late January, when he started marketing for Summerville Painters.

The hardest part of the experience so far has been the wait, Sheldon said, adding that during the wait the program required him to write business plans and produce a written explanation on why he wanted to pursue an entrepreneurship.

“There had to be a deeper reason than making money,” he said. “My executive said to me, ‘Why do you wake up in the morning?’ Finally I started writing my reason down instead of thinking about it.”

Sheldon wrote about how he was younger he would watch television commercials about people who lost their homes and were in financial distress. He wrote that he wanted to do something that involved being able to help people.

“It’s not only my ‘why’ but it’s the reason I breathe,” he said. “It fuels with me with purpose beyond myself and has given me a goal that does not reflect on how much I can achieve, but how much I can use my achievements to give others the opportunity to live life as I am privileged to.”

So far Sheldon has a marketing team of two people and expects to hire five to six painters for the summer. Painters start working in May. The team of painters he ends up hiring will attend a training camp held by Sherwin-Williams, where they will become certified painters. While Sheldon waits on summer to kick off so he can officially start painting, he maintains a mixture of nerves and excitement to be starting his own business.

“I am excited and blessed to have this opportunity, as I know that many people my age do not have this opportunity,” he said.

Sheldon encourages other college students to jump on similar opportunities – especially if they are ever introduced to YEAA.

“Listen to your regional manager,” he said. “Be very approachable and implement what they tell you. Understand why you want to do it because that’s the only thing that’s going to drive you towards something.”