

To: Ron Culp, Program Director of Graduate PR and Advertising Program

From: Jacquelyn Drust, Rachel Kessler & Alexa Ohm, Graduate Students in PRAD 595 Leadership

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Subject: Plan for Edwin Eisendrath/CEO of Chicago Sun-Times Interview

Disruption is commonplace in the modern world with companies like Uber, Amazon and Airbnb changing the way “traditional” businesses approach their decision-making models. However, disruption sees no limitations in the types of industries it can change. One such example is the media industry, where the printed newspapers of yesterday are dwindling in size and scope, and online and digital news offerings are rapidly growing. Given the opportunity to interview the Chicago Sun-Times CEO, Edwin Eisendrath, incorporating how to lead a company through a disruptive time was a crucial element of the interview approach.

The team asked questions that related back to leadership in the age of disruption. These questions fell into three main categories about (1) the executive, (2) leadership and (3) the executive’s current role. While these topics overlap in the content of leadership, they were starting points to direct the conversation. Additionally, to create a comfortable environment for Edwin, he chose the location and time of the interview.

Prior to the interview, the team researched Edwin and the Chicago Sun-Times to gather background information to better inform the interview questions. A few pieces of information incorporated into the interview questions from this research related to Edwin’s diverse career background in areas such as politics, teaching and management. By understanding that he did not attend business school and approached the world, his business, and the media industry in a different way than the “traditional” business executive, the team had a greater understanding of Edwin’s responses. Therefore, the team understood what Edwin valued and why he valued it because the team researched his background before the interview.

Another piece of valuable information that came from initial research was learning about the Chicago Sun-Times, including its recent shift to digital, and understanding that Edwin is a fairly new executive of the Sun-Times. With this in mind, the team could put themselves into the mindset of the executive thinking about what questions he might ask himself when leading new initiatives at the Chicago Sun-Times.

Overall, the team prepared for the interview with Edwin by researching him and the Chicago Sun-Times to ensure questions related back to his specific experiences. Additionally, disruption and leadership were themes sprinkled throughout the full set of questions. On that note, below is a list of questions, separated by topic area, intended for the interview with Edwin Eisendrath.

About You

1. When you were young, what was your dream job?/What is your dream job?
2. Where did you get your start?
3. Did your background in management and politics inform how you lead the Sun-Times today?
4. What's the greatest risk you've ever taken?
5. What are you most proud of?
6. Who are your role models/ mentors? Who is the leader you admire most?
7. How do you motivate others? What motivates you?
8. What are some qualities, values, beliefs, etc. that are most meaningful to you and how does that influence how you lead?
9. What are 5 things you can't live without?

Leadership

1. What does leadership mean to you?
2. Can you tell a personal anecdote that informed your leadership style?
3. In what areas of your life do you define your role as the leader? What are the sacrifices you make to play that role well?
4. What is the most difficult part of being a leader? What is the most rewarding?
5. What are the most important things that leaders can do to inspire and motivate others?
6. How important are stakeholders in leadership?
7. If you had one piece of advice to a young professional about leadership, what would it be?

Current Role

1. How do you guide your employees during this transitional period in the newspaper industry where there's a shift from print to digital?
2. How do you see the Sun-Times as leader in the media industry?
3. When you're considering partnering with another person or business, what factors are deal-breakers for you?
4. What questions are you asking yourself lately - both inside and outside of the category?
5. What trends are we seeing now that will define the culture of our future?