

Kaitlin Balasaygun

Media layoffs leave NBC Pages fearful of graduation

Transcript

NAT SOT: Opening door into 30 Rock and sound of lobby

KB:

It's a busy Tuesday at 30 Rock. Fans line up for talk show tapings. Professionals in fancy blazers rush out of the building. Perhaps, heading home early for the holiday. It's Thanksgiving week.

This is NBC's headquarters. It's bursting with energy from fans and from employees. Like Carolyn Chun.

CC:

So I've gotten to work Saturday Night Live a few times now. And...the check in process is kind of like all of our other shows, which we do every week. But the atmosphere, the vibe, the energy is just so different.

NAT SOT: Carolyn uses NBC ID card to go through turnstile

Carolyn is a Page in the NBCUniversal Page Program. A program that rotates young professionals throughout various roles within a media company. 1.5% of applicants are admitted to the East Coast Page Program. It's more competitive than Ivy League colleges. The program is designed to help Pages figure out what area of the media industry they want to pursue a career in.

NAT SOT: Entering and waiting on elevator

CC:

I actually had no media experience, really, before the program. And I came into it, just wanting to learn everything. And I really did. And I think the program really gave me exactly what I wanted just being able to learn and try so many different things.

NAT SOT: Fades out

KB:

Carolyn's 24. She graduated from Cornell University in 2022. She studied Sociology. But she always had an interest in the media industry.

CC:

What I'm doing a lot now is really all those ambassadorship events like late night shows and other corporate events and things that are kind of once in a lifetime that you can't even expect once you join. (Laughs)

KB:

The on-deadline stress of showbiz invigorates this place. There's some spark in the media industry. Some spark that makes long shifts and late hours worthwhile. And Carolyn feels this spark.

Carolyn joined the program with the fall 2022 cohort. Now she's in her fourth and final rotation in the Page Program. It's called the Grad Period.

CC:

We really get this time to apply to jobs and figure out what we want to do, but also still stay connected to the program, meeting everyone and getting to do a really cool event at the same time.

KB:

But there's a ticking clock.

MUSIC HARD IN

Carolyn's Grad Period ends in February. If she doesn't secure a job before then, she'll be unemployed. Unemployed with the hopes of pursuing a career in an industry that's facing budget cuts and layoffs everyday. An industry struggling to recover from the SAG-AFTRA and Writers Guild of America strikes.

NAT SOT: *Archived from strike* **MUSIC HARD OUT**

CC:

There's kind of this timeline or deadline in the back of my head, it is kind of daunting and anxiety inducing, just knowing that I do have like an end date .
I think one of the hardest parts of the job search is kind of this imposter syndrome that I've been feeling.

So I kind of came in with not a lot of experience. And so obviously, when I compared myself to all my peers, all the people in my cohort, or even cohorts above or new ones coming in, a lot of them go to, like journalism school or did media studies. Obviously, not everyone, but I think that definitely hung over my head a bit.

Now that I'm in the job search, it's kind of coming back, not full circle, but it's kind of creeping in again.

KB:

SCENE CHANGE: *Carolyn at her desk in office*

NAT SOT: *Carolyn on her laptop*

Carolyn is looking for job openings every day.

CC:

So some of the roles I've applied to here at NBC internally are desk producer at Writing CNBC, associate lifestyle reporter at Today Digital, associate producer at NBC News Now Daily, and also a health reporter position at Today Digital. And then today I also applied to a production assistant role at News Now Daily.

KB:

Which one would be your favorite?

CC:

I think an associate producer role would be my favorite just because I think producer role kind of entails a lot more than just one thing where I get to write and produce my own videos. And I'm really looking for a job that kind of balances the two. I feel like this role really just embodies all of that and it's also in news. And so that's kind of where I'd like to get my foot in the door.

END SCENE

MUSIC: *Fades in*

KB:

But Carolyn isn't finding many openings for entry level roles. And it's no surprise. The media industry reached the highest year-to-date level of job cuts on record this year, according to a report from [Challenger, Gray & Christmas](#).

CC:

I think it is sad how kind of numb I have gotten to it.

It's very disheartening, and it is discouraging, like it's just another layer added to the job search, which is already hard in and of itself.

KB:

Carolyn's friend Jane Diaz Bradley is in her third rotation in the Page Program. She's not too excited about the Grad Period ahead of her.

JD:

It is definitely a bit anxiety inducing, having to think about starting the job hunt all over again...especially because it doesn't even feel like it was that long ago that I...was like, in the job hunt and...undergoing the whole application process for the Page Program itself. Now, I'm like, oh, I gotta start all over again, and look for another job. (Sighs)

So you know, not not super thrilling. (Laughs while saying)

Seeing other pages, struggling to secure jobs. It doesn't give me a whole lot of faith in the process itself. I think also, the industry is just in a lot of flux right now, and I think it's been a particularly difficult time to find a job.

MUSIC: *Fades out*

KB:

Carolyn is trying to stay hopeful.

CC:

But for me, as sad as it is I'm trying to really just continue to push through it. I can't fast forward 10 years and be in a different time. I can't go time travel in the past. And so given this situation, I want to just make the most of what I can and just put myself out there and trust in timing.

KB:

Carolyn isn't going to let fiscal reports or rejections scare her away. She'll be here. Carolyn defeated the odds when she was accepted to the Page program. And she's ready to beat the odds again, by securing a job in the media industry.

MUSIC: *Fades in*

Credits:

Onomatopoeia - Sounds like New York - is a production of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. This episode was written and produced by me, Kaitlin Balasaygun. Joanne Faryon is our professor and executive producer. Music by blue dot sessions. Special thanks to Peter Leonard.

MUSIC: *Fades out*