

## Interview with Devon Barrett

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS****What is your current job and how did your Professional Writing major at MSU help you prepared you for it?**

*"Starting tomorrow (2/9), I will be working as a copywriter/communications manager with MSU University Advancement Marketing & Communications. In my role, I'll be writing for print and email marketing materials, social media, and various publications like the MSU Alumni magazine. This kind of job is the reason I studied Professional Writing. As part of the hiring process, the hiring manager narrowed down the field of applicants by sending us a writing sample, where we had to edit an existing print article into a piece that would work online, then provide headlines and preview copy to accompany it on different social media channels. Thanks to PW, these were things that I immediately knew how to do, and I could do very well. In fact--after surviving all of the interviews and writing samples and nail-biting--when the hiring manager called to offer me the position, she said that of all of the applicants (there were 66), I was the only one TRULY qualified for the position because of the program I came from. That's a major compliment to the PW program and how well it prepares its graduates for this kind of job."*

**How has your portfolio helped your career?**

*"My portfolio has been endlessly helpful during my career-advancing process. I've included the link to my portfolio in every single job application I've done (which, since 2011, has been somewhere in the 130 range) and I've sent it to countless people who know someone who knows someone who might be hiring. It saves me from having to upload or email a dozen PDF writing samples. I just provide the link to the portfolio and all the samples are right there. And, of course, having my writing out and about on the Internet has been a great way to attract freelance opportunities because sometimes people looking for a writer/editor just stumble across it and like what they see!"*

**Do you still use and update your portfolio today?**

*"I do! In 2014, I started actively job-searching again and my first step was to give my portfolio a full re-vamp so it would be on-hand for job applications."*

**Why did you choose the items you included in your portfolio to represent your skills?**

*"I've said it before and I'll say it again: my personality is way more "quirky commercial fiction" and "conversational narrative non-fiction" than "stuffy*

*academic paper" and "bare bones press release," but I can definitely write all of those things, and I think by having a little sampling of each, I can make people/potential employers realize that. Most of the time, I'm trying to sell myself solely as a writer-of-all-things, but I also want people to know that I'm also an editor, I'm active on social media, and I know my way around various design concepts. Hopefully my portfolio pieces reflect that."*

## **MY TAKE-AWAY**

One of the major points that I took away from interviewing Devon Barrett was how useful having an online portfolio can be. With just a simple link, you can allow a company to evaluate each of the pieces that you've done and see for themselves the exact work that they can expect from you. The fact that she has used her portfolio in all of her job applications really shows how much we will be using it in the future.

From the interview, there are certain things to keep in mind. According to Barrett, she hopes that her viewers see her "solely as a writer-of-all-things" but includes writing samples from a variety of fields because she also wants to be identified as capable of editing, navigating social media, and working with various design concepts.

I also see how important the CSS part of coding is for our portfolio. The design of our website is our chance to allow future employers see our taste level and also a bit of our personality, which is a huge part of getting hired in a PW career. In her interview, Barrett specifically said that she want to be seen as "quirky" and I wish that her website showed more of that side. In my portfolio, I hope that I can make layout and design choices that showcase my true personality to my audience.