Interview With Joe Sargent, Director of Brand Marketing, Kansas City Chiefs

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The use of the word *brand* in any capacity when looking at titles of positions in an organization can only be found in 18 of the 32 National Football League (NFL) official team websites. The growing and relatively recent realization by NFL franchises of the importance of their individual team brand is something that has led to position-specific jobs focused on fostering and developing the symbols, legacy, and other brand-related aspects affiliated with the team. A prime example of such a position is Joe Sargent’s role as the director of brand marketing with the NFL’s Kansas City Chiefs. Through his dedication to a career focusing on the specific element of the brand in marketing, Sargent was able to craft a career and résumé that fit perfectly for what the Chiefs were looking for and needed. The team had never had a director of brand marketing, and thus, over the time that Sargent has been with the team since assuming the director title in 2018, he has been both laying the foundation for such an executive post and blazing his own path in this unique position. Throughout his inaugural year and beyond in this new role, Sargent has often called on many of his past branding and marketing experiences due to this being a novel position in the organization. For certain situations he has been able to rely on the skills and knowledge that he acquired from his two graduate degrees (a master’s in business administration and another master’s with a specialization in sport management). At other times he has had to pull from his knowledge and experience in other industries, such as his work on the collaboration between EFFEN Vodka and hip-hop star 50 Cent (Curtis Jackson). From his entry-level work as an intern for multiple teams in organizations such as the National Basketball Association (NBA) to establishing himself as a marketing and branding professional in various segments of nonsport industries, Sargent is now in a role that appears to be a perfect fit for his experience, interest, and education. The Chiefs have a storied tradition firmly planted in the legacy they have created. As director of brand marketing, Sargent looks for ways in which he can intertwine the historic brand (e.g., symbol, legacy, values) of the team into the lives of the stakeholders affiliated with this legendary 60-year-old sport organization.

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Pedersen and Williams: You have an undergraduate degree in sociology from Cornell University. Can you describe the educational journey (e.g., degrees, internships) that you took after completing your undergraduate studies?

Sargent: After graduating from Cornell, I knew that I wanted to work in sports but I didn’t know exactly what role I was best suited for in the sport industry. To that point, I interned with the New Jersey Nets [NBA] in the sponsorship-activation department during the fall semester of my senior year of undergraduate studies. I decided that my best next step would be to earn a sport management master’s degree, and so I commenced my graduate education right after my undergraduate work. During the 2 years in which I pursued my master’s in sport management I interned with the Philadelphia 76ers [NBA], an indoor professional football team called the Lexington Horsemen, and the Indiana Pacers [NBA]. At this point, I knew I was passionate about sport marketing, so I researched the individuals who held executive positions in sport organizations and, based on that research, decided to pursue a second master’s degree [an MBA]. My plan at that point was to work in brand marketing and transfer those skills into a role in the sport industry.

Pedersen and Williams: After completing your graduate studies, what was your work experience that led to your current unique position in the NFL?

Sargent: I had the great fortune of finding brand-management roles where I could activate in sports and entertainment. This included time as an associate brand manager for Miller Lite working on the NASCAR [National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing] partnership with driver Brad Keselowski, holding the same role

Joe Sargent — Director of brand marketing, Kansas City Chiefs.