

Overview

Your peers boast of plum positions in management consulting and investment banking, but you're not impressed. Since you were a kid, you've dreamed of working in television, film, music, or sports. Unfortunately, you find standing in front of a camera and pretending you're someone else as pleasurable as a deep tooth-cleaning, you stopped playing oboe in junior high school, and you do most of your quarterbacking on Monday morning in the office, not Sunday night on the playing field. You don't have to let that stop you, though—you can get in on the excitement by working on the business side of entertainment and sports.

Every year, hundreds upon thousands of job seekers flood Los Angeles and New York seeking jobs in entertainment. They soon find that despite the myth of effortless work and exorbitant salaries, the norm for entry-level employees is long days, low wages, and an ample dose of drudgery. Though sports-business hopefuls don't necessarily have to trek to these meccas to enter their field of dreams, the challenges they face are similar. And they may need to change locales at least once or twice to advance their careers. In either industry, there are exciting and high-paying business jobs to be had, but it takes hard work, an undying passion for what you do (or want to end up doing), and good luck to get them.

Before going any further, let's define what we mean by the entertainment industry. With the rise of the Internet and other new communications technologies, the field is increasingly difficult to define, but in this Insider Guide we're talking about film, television, and music, as well as sports—each a form of entertainment raking in millions of dollars. The first three of these businesses are dominated by enormous, vertically integrated companies such as Sony, Time Warner, and Walt Disney, which have interests in multiple segments of the industry. But there are also thousands of jobs in the entertainment industry at smaller, less corporate companies—film and television production or

distribution companies, for instance, and small independent record companies, talent agencies, and management companies. Similarly, pro sports is dominated by the four biggest spectator sports—baseball, football, basketball, and hockey—but there are many other sports out there with varying degrees of business sophistication, and even at the Big Four there are numerous, albeit unglamorous and low-paying, jobs in minor-league outfits.

Because of the variety of film, television, and music employers, it's impossible to speak in absolutes about what it's like to work in the entertainment industry. In general, though, you'll find it's dominated by a young workforce—especially as television and film focus more and more on young audiences. Many entertainment companies offer creative, unstructured work environments that allow rapid advancement for ambitious types; this is an industry that rewards bottom-line success much more than it does loyalty or tenure. As an insider says, "Someone who's an intern today can be your boss next week. That's the way it works in this business." And people who are successful in the industry find that entertainment is more a lifestyle than a profession; to remain plugged in, you have to spend much of your leisure time networking with fellow industry professionals or attending industry parties. "You have to give up your life to deal with the reality of the business," an insider says.

In sports, career advancement is glacial by comparison. There are a lot of people who love what they're doing and have found a way to live with the low salaries. Also, it's extremely hard to rise to the very top because sports organizations are all privately owned, and the owners tend to put their people—relatives, even—into the top slots.

You'll find plenty of competition for jobs in entertainment and sports. While the number of entertainment companies and related operations has grown exponentially since the early '90s, the industry is no longer in an expansion phase. Film studios are cutting back on project budgets and the number of movies they produce, and record compa-



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