

**An Interview with [Andrew Dean](#)  
Account Executive, National Sales for IMG: Finding a Niche**

By [Joseph Bringuier](#) ('17)



Andrew Dean, a Baltimore native, attended James Madison University from 2006-2010 and earned his bachelor's degree in Sport Management. As an undergrad, Mr. Dean liked most of his courses in Sport Management, but especially enjoyed Professor Ben Carr's legal class. After a summer internship he returned the following fall to earn his Masters of Science in Sport Leadership while working for Front Row Marketing in a Graduate Assistant role.

Soon after completing his masters he obtained a position with the New York Yankees, through TeamWorkOnline, as an Account Executive of Corporate Sales and Sponsorships. Mr. Dean was on a team of six people responsible for generating all corporate sponsorship revenue.

After just over two years there, Mr. Dean was presented with an opportunity to expand his network and move to IMG, a global leader in sports, events, media and fashion. He started in October 2013 in the role of Account Executive of National Sales. Working in IMG's college division in New York, Mr. Dean negotiates partnerships between colleges and universities around the country with potential sponsors.

While at JMU, Mr. Dean volunteered for the athletic ticket office before he worked with Front Row Marketing. He completed three internships before starting his professional career. Those internships were for the Philadelphia 76ers, Baltimore Ravens and Northern Texas PGA where he had roles ranging from ticket sales to running junior golf tournaments.

But before all of that Mr. Dean had to start somewhere and like many Sport and Recreation Management majors he had a passion for sports and knew he wanted to make it his career. But simply wanting something is different from actually going out and getting it. So for a little help, Mr. Dean offered some advice on how to not only land your first job, but also how to discover a path for your career:

First, get involved and get work experience.

In order to get involved you have to be a go-getter. Take advantage of the benefit of JMU's athletic department being readily available to help out and provide opportunities. Try to attend conferences, like the Sports Industry Networking and Career (SINC) Conference, because you cannot beat the networking opportunities at those events.

Also, the school requiring a practicum and internship is great and it is on the student, but they do set you up with the path.

Second and probably the most important, find a niche.

If a class or section interests you then it should trigger you to pursue that as a career, job or internship. Take whatever excites you or what you enjoy, whether it is sales, marketing or business development and if you can see yourself as someone who is established in that role then go for it.

Mr. Dean was always interested in and really enjoyed learning about brands and how teams could leverage things. He wanted to learn the rationale behind partnerships and found interests in the sponsorships and who covered which teams.

A lot of young kids enter the sport industry with the mindset 'I'll do anything to just put my foot in the door.' And while one general area is good and still gives you a great opportunity to network, finding a niche allows you to network more strategically and focus your energy and time more effectively. Networking with the right people lets you build those blocks higher and create a stronger network with more valuable connections.

It is also important because of the continued rise of the competitive landscape in the industry where more and more schools are graduating more students from these programs. Finding one thing can give you a path for your career as you can focus your skills and get a position in your desired field.

Third, network! Use LinkedIn.

Keep your profile updated, always have a photo and be smart with direct messages. Direct messages can help to network with people but do not go too high in the organization because the President will not be as inclined to help you as a mid-level director or hiring manager might be. Always send personalized messages and try to set up meetings and build relationships. LinkedIn or not, always know who you are talking to and whether they would want to help you.

Fourth, do your best to stand out.

Superiors will take interest in you if you break your back for them. They are way more inclined to help you get to where you are going if you work hard. Get feedback from them and read the *SportsBusiness Journal*, read everything to stay constantly informed because that can lead to other things. Networking and being informed got Mr. Dean the GA position with Front Row Marketing.

Fifth, outline a career path.

People bounce around a lot in this business. Opportunities will come to you if you do well, but you have to be very strategic about when you take your opportunities. A little bump in salary might not be worth it because there are many factors. Especially in a sales role, your knowledge of the business is your strength, so the more comfortable you get, the more success you can have with that company.

When you start a position, make goals and try to reach those goals before you leave. Before making any career decisions you should take a detailed survey of your surroundings, take great opportunities and evaluate them thoroughly and remember that sometimes there is more value in stepping back and not accepting a new position.

Mr. Dean still has goals that he wants to accomplish before thinking about the next step in his career. Above all else, make sure to have open conversations with your superiors about the future when you are approaching your goals.