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### This Is The Newhouse Network

Clay LePard  
*Syracuse University*

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# **This is the Newhouse Network**

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of  
the Renée Crown University Honors Program at Syracuse University

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Candidate for B.S Degree  
and Renée Crown University Honors

December 2011

Honors Capstone Project in Broadcast Journalism

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## **Abstract**

Over time, Syracuse University and the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications have built a vast alumni base, featuring some of the top executives and voices in the media community.

Prior to this project, the only place you could find these Newhouse alumni featured was in a gallery that was last updated sometime in the mid-1990's.

"This is the Newhouse Network" is a dynamic webpage that allows users to hear stories and advice from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications' Advisory Board (the A-list alumni).

The website is displayed on an iPad in Newhouse III where current students, faculty, alumni, prospective students and others can explore Newhouse's Advisory Board to hear stories ranging from their time at Syracuse University to what they're up to now.

As a webpage, the project can be easily updated and altered long after my graduation.

To view the page, go online to  
[http://newhouse.syr.edu/mobile/youtube/js\\_player.cfm](http://newhouse.syr.edu/mobile/youtube/js_player.cfm)

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## **Acknowledgements**

While I am proud of my work and this project, it needs to be said that I owe a lot of success to those who helped me along the way.

First and foremost, Jean Brooks has gone above and beyond in helping make this project a reality. From aiding in my logistical nightmares, to assisting in the design and layout – Jean has been there every step of the way.

To Lynn Vanderhoek – whose creativity helped draw the original blueprint for this Capstone and whose constant “Yea, we can do that” mentality helped open a number of doors to make this project special.

To the Newhouse Advisory Board – thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to help a student on this lofty endeavor. I learned quite a bit throughout this entire experience, but nothing more than the fact that the Newhouse family is more than just relatives. All along the way, you mentored me and exposed me to an industry I am eagerly awaiting to join. You made this project – and you made it even better than I possibly imagined.

To Jim Zullo and Mike O’Mara – without both of you, this project is dead. You both had a tremendous impact on teaching me technology and about improving this project. I’ll never forget the original idea of a stand-alone, self contained kiosk and how you both explained to me that forward-thinking and making the content dynamic was the smartest way to go. Because of both of you (the gurus of technology), there is a working

webpage that anyone can view anywhere and can be easily updated and accessed from anywhere as well. As I've said before, individual ideas are great, but collaboration brings different perspectives to create a stronger idea. Jim and Mike taught me that technology is always changing and that the best thing you can do is prepare yourself to change with it – otherwise you're going to be left behind.

To Susan Nash – you were the ring leader who made sure everything got done on time. You took a chance and had the school stand by me, helping in any way necessary. For that, I will always be grateful.

To Vince Cobb, Ryan Koletty, Maggie Maxwell and Jason Kohlbrenner – You didn't have to help me, but you took it upon yourself to make sure I had everything I needed and assisted me whenever possible.

To Frank Currier, Eric Holzwarth, John Nicholson and Sharon Hollenback – while Professor Currier was my “official” Capstone advisor, all of you were more than willing to advise and help me out with whatever needed to be done to make this not-just-another-capstone project. Professor Hollenback told me to go for my idea sophomore year and see what happens. Professor Nicholson was the constant reinforcement that reminded me what I was seizing was an incredible opportunity that doesn't come along very often. Eric Holzwarth stood by me when I doubted whether or not this project would be completed, or even live up to the standards by Honors. And Professor Currier was always there when I

needed guidance, but made sure to take the child gloves off and let me do what needed to be done.

And finally, to my parents – you put up with a son who, for more than a year, was obsessed with this project. You supported me all the way and helped keep me in line whenever I started to lose a little control.

So to everyone, while this Capstone Project fulfills my own graduation requirement, I believe it will always be viewed as a collaborative effort. And as it should be.

## **Advice to Future Honors Students**

This project will be the most demanding and yet rewarding endeavor you will complete during your time at Syracuse University. At the end of it all, you will look back and tell yourself “I cannot believe I pulled that off.”

Do something that you’re passionate about – because it makes all the difference in the world when you’re grinding out all the paperwork and avoiding [or at least try to avoid] senioritis.

I encourage everyone to do the Capstone Project. It is very intimidating when you’re starting out or trying to find the perfect idea, but once the ball is rolling – you can’t stop yourself because you’re having too much fun along the way.

Your Capstone Project is what you make of it. It's incredibly easy to put it off until your final semester, but the best advice I could give future students is to have your final semester be your "tie up loose ends" semester. The bulk of your project should be completed and that last semester is meant for cleaning it up and further enhancing it.

Have fun with it – because it’s a blast.





## Chapter 1

### Conception

It's not that easy to summarize a project that has consumed the last year of my life. But here goes...

Over the course of my time at Syracuse University, I learned that in order to succeed in the media business you need to have the following skills/mentality:

- Be a one-man band journalist who can do everything: report, shoot and edit.
- Embrace new technology and be dynamic in the way you deliver content because the industry is always changing.
- While quality still rules, journalists need to churn out more material faster.

With that in mind, I knew that my Capstone had to be something different and new. I'll never forget the moment sitting in the Honors office looking at old Capstone projects and seeing the same generic broadcast news story 15 years ago and nearly identical ideas from 2008.

At first, my initial Capstone Project idea was supposed to be a profile story on a member of the S.I. Newhouse family. I had approached my COM 107 professor about the idea, to which I was greeted with a huge laugh. As a naïve sophomore, I was unaware of \*why\* the Newhouse family shied away from the spotlight. I had hoped this could be my

revealing 60-Minutes style look inside the family. Looking back, I'm very happy that idea did not pan out.

My actual Capstone idea grew out of a meeting with Lynn Vanderhoek and Jean Brooks. Both work with Newhouse's stellar alumni - and have more connections than anybody I know. The exact moment where the idea was born escapes me, but it was a whirlwind meeting with ideas bouncing off the walls and this was the one that stuck.

In this instance, I knew going into the meeting that I wanted to utilize the Newhouse alumni resources to create a project that showcased my abilities as a journalist. I had no idea of how I wanted to accomplish that, but knew that's the track I wanted for this project.

### **Explaining the Capstone**

At its core, my Capstone is a series of videos from members of Newhouse's Advisory Board. Each member of the Advisory Board features three videos, averaging 45 seconds each, containing anecdotes exploring topics such as "Going Abroad as a Student," "Memorable Syracuse Experiences," "Why Students Should Choose Syracuse University," and much more. For a full list of those interviewed for this project, please turn to page 18.

The videos are meant to involve visitors in an intimate conversation with alumni about Syracuse University and the S.I. Newhouse School of

Public Communications. Imagine being able to sit down and listen to successful leaders in the communications community about their time at Syracuse and learn about some secrets to their success, as well as some of their favorite memories from college.

These videos will be on display on an iPad in Newhouse III where anyone can check them out. The actual videos are stored on YouTube, and are grabbed by a website and embedded accordingly. This allows for them to be easily moved across a digital platform as well as uploaded and updated effortlessly.

I have no doubt that in ten years (more like five), my Capstone, in its earliest form, will look obsolete. But that's why one of my top priorities is to ensure the content I create is dynamic and easily transferrable to different platforms. Content will always be there – but nobody is going to view it unless it's in a form allowing users to enjoy and be engaged.

With a streamlined webpage on an iPad, I know that future students who continue this project can move the content onto any platform with ease.

The actual process of putting videos on the site is quite simple:

1. Upload Video to YouTube Account
2. Under "Info" – insert what you would like to appear under the video
3. Insert a pre-built code for each additional video added.

And as board members change occupations, all you need to do is edit the info box on YouTube and the information on the webpage changes instantly.

Originally, there was only supposed to be one video per person and each video would be a little longer (in the range of 2-3 minutes). Here was the intended layout:



Then I realized I was getting a lot content from each board member and that if each board member had several videos that were shorter – the end product would be stronger and allow the user to have more control:



Ultimately, this idea won out. Users enjoy being engaged, and giving them more options is almost always better. Let them decide what content they want to watch. With an enormous amount of help and advice from Jim Zullo and Mike O'Mara, here is the layout in its current form:



As you can see, simplicity is the look I was aiming for throughout this entire process. I was influenced by looking at various digital products and seeing what worked. Companies like Google have succeeded in the marketplace for users by living on the mentality “how can we make this simpler for customers?” Gmail should not have surpassed AOL Mail and Yahoo! Mail – but because it pushed itself to be easier and simpler, it became one of (if not THE) leaders in email management.

To reinforce my decision to go simple, I visited multiple museums to check out their interactive touch screens. I found the ones that were the most simple were the ones I enjoyed the most. There were many at Boston’s Museum of Science where I found myself overwhelmed with

information and somewhat lost. But at the New England Patriots' Hall of Fame Museum, it was a simple click-and-go screen that showcased all of the best players ever on the Patriots. That interface had a big influence on the design of this webpage.

Another key element I wanted to ensure was visual stimulation. Very often, users are less likely to absorb media if it does not stimulate them visually with graphics and pictures. With screen shots, users can recognize board members without knowing their name. I could easily imagine a parent walking by saying, "I can't remember his name, but doesn't he work for ESPN" and then clicking on Mike Tirico or Sean McDonough's page. Ideally, I would like to incorporate more text under each video using different fonts and colors to better display to the user why the each alumnus is successful and well-known in the media community.

## **Chapter 2**

### **We're Experiencing Technical Difficulties**

Using any form of technology means that it's inevitable you will encounter problems. From a faulty computer, a sensitive hard drive, to poorly maintained cameras – I dealt with it all.

I'll never forget the moment I learned that the camera shoots two inches outside of what it says. Here is what I thought I was shooting when looking at the camera's display:



Here is what my camera was actually shooting and what I discovered during editing:



The difference is subtle, but has the potential to make a huge difference. In the first picture, the microphone is out of the shot – and it appears in the second. The difference exaggerated the display as the subject was moved farther away from the camera. This forced me, going forward, to shoot closer shots than I actually desired to compensate for the camera's "quirks." While this was a small technical problem, it is important for other broadcast journalism Capstone students to note these potential issues that can arise and to plan accordingly.

With the webpage, I encountered many difficulties with things outside my control. Initially, I had planned on videos to automatically play when clicked. But on an iPad, this is not possible. Apple does not allow for



videos to play automatically. By doing so, Apple protects itself from potential lawsuits. For example, an individual could accidentally leave their iPad turned on the website, allowing it to play a hundred videos before anyone might notice it was left on. If the user is on a data plan, they will rack up an incredible bill and argue they didn't knowingly download all of those videos.

Formatting issues with the webpage have also restricted some creative elements. It became clear very early on that the webpage could appeal more visually, but at the expense of the ease involved in updating it. Right now, anyone could update this page from any location in less than three minutes. If I were to incorporate more text and graphics, it would become increasingly difficult for anyone to be able to update it in the future. Hopefully, those options are not mutually exclusive in the future.

### **Dealing with Logistics**

Whenever you tell yourself you're going to interview some of the busiest individuals for a 15-minute sit-down interview, you are going to encounter problems – guaranteed.

In my Capstone proposal, I said I was going to try to interview all 41 active members of the Newhouse Advisory Board. After re-reading that, I laughed. The truth is, the Advisory Board is scattered across the nation and they are “moving targets.” There were many instances where I tried to

coordinate interviews in New York City with a board member only to find that business meetings were moved, flights were cancelled, or the city was shut down because of snow.

Speaking of snow, the New York City storm in January, 2011 was indeed something that I could not have planned. Kudos to Brian Edelman and Nick Godfrey, who did not cancel our meeting, citing it was going to take more than snow to stop them from commuting to work (That's Syracuse alumni for you).

I was successful (with the aide of Jean Brooks) in making two trips to New York City where I was able to interview 13 board members over three days.

I cannot forget the detailed Google Maps that were made, showing directions all across Manhattan to ensure I did not get lost when conducting interviews in as many as five places on a given day.

As a result of these logistical challenges, I had to adapt and capitalize on every visit any board member made to Syracuse. Thankfully, Syracuse alumni are passionate about returning to campus, and that was a huge help for me in completing this project.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Stories**

I'm surprised that I was able to sit down and talk with some of the smartest media individuals in the business. I will never forget how awestruck I was to be talking with Larry Kramer, one of the biggest innovators in media and someone who was embracing this new technology that was challenging the traditional business model.

And then there were those board members who I knew very little about beforehand, only to find out the impact they have on society.

Gary Lico, the President and CEO of CABLEready, an independent program representation firm, told me the story of how he helped developed and sold "Inside the Actor's Studio."

Arthur Liu came to the US with just seven dollars in his pocket – he is now the President of one of the largest multicultural radio companies in the US.

George Verschoor went into great detail about how he helped start up MTV's successful show "The Real World." Even after helping the show grow to be one of the first (and most successful) reality shows of all time, Verschoor did not stop there; he is currently the executive producer of Extreme Makeover: Home Edition.

## The Lessons

But even more than that, I learned a lot about breaking into the business and what it takes to succeed. Everyone underscored the importance of networking and finding what you're good at and going for it. I don't think I'm going to find a better example of networking than this project!

Something that really impressed me during this process is not what the board members said, it's what they did. My first interview was with Eric Mower, Chairman & CEO of Eric Mower and Associates. The public relations and advertising giant was critical in pointing out certain aspects of our interview where I could improve. He noted a way to frame my shots better, ask my questions more efficiently and evoke better responses from my interview subjects. At no point did Mr. Mower have to tell me any of that or show me the better way to do it – but he did. He gave me the tools and ideas I needed to succeed and how to better handle myself in these situations. I'm very grateful for him taking an interest in my work, and I think the final product is a reflection of those early suggestions.

As successful as all of the board members were, I was amazed at how personable each and every one of them was. I'll never forget Joyce Tudryn, President & CEO of the IRTS Foundation, calling me the day before our interview to make sure I was going to be able to safely make our meeting despite the amount of snow that pummeled New York City.

Everyone on the board was responsive to my email inquiries and accommodating to my schedule and it meant a lot to me. As I further my career, I will always remember how much respect was given to me. I hope there will come a time when I can help out a student in a similar way.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Reflection of Myself**

Whether or not it's my preference, visitors who walk by and see this will instantly have a first impression of me based on their experience with this technology. Advisory Board members, who have already met me, will have an impression about the kind of worker I am based on the quality of this project. This project will reflect what I hope will be a lasting impression of who I am at this university – so I knew I had to make it count.

In the beginning, I wasn't sure what I wanted this to look like. Honestly, I was just happy to be embarking on this endeavor and honored that the school trusted me to this degree. It's not very often a student is given the master contact list, featuring the school's extensive alumni contact information.

But as this project began to grow, I learned what did and did not work for me and what decisions needed to be made. For example, I knew I had to stand by my belief in presenting three videos per board member instead of one longer video.

I made mistakes along the way – it wasn't until I was nearly done exporting all of the videos that I realized they were exported in 720i HD, instead of its maximal dimension of 1080i HD. Sticking to the mentality of making the technology the best possible and most dynamic, I had to redo every single video to ensure it was the highest quality.

But with every obstacle, I took each one as a challenge. There were some who doubted whether or not this project could be completed (including myself for a brief moment) and whether or not it would live up to certain lofty expectations it garnered.

### **What This Means to Me**

I knew very early on in high school that I wanted to attend Syracuse University. It was my #1 school choice, and was my last. I think I visited the school four times before enrolling, each time trying to leave my mark by telling anyone and everyone that this was my dream school.

I was not the first person accepted to Newhouse. In fact, I learned early on that I was the LAST person accepted in the batch of early decision students. I have not forgotten that throughout my years here at Syracuse.

Newhouse took a risk with me, and I have never been able to thank the school for that. I hope this project is something the school can use and

develop down the road and accept it as a small gift for letting the above-average kid from Wenham, Mass., into their family.

What this work means to me is that I was able to not only make it through my time at Syracuse, but graduate with honors and with something that I believe makes me stand out from the rest of my class.

By completing this project, I am showing prospective students the plethora of exceptional alumni who have graduated from Newhouse, who went on to do great things in the communications community. As many of the board members told me, Syracuse University and Newhouse have an exceptional group of passionate alumni who still bleed Orange.

This project will help convey to potential students how far the school reaches, and yet how close to home everyone remains with this university. I'm not sure what my life would have been like had I attended a different university, but I can assure you – I made the right decision. I'm very thankful for all the experiences Syracuse has afforded me, from working at the Winter Olympics to reporting for Good Morning America – it has truly been unforgettable.

I hope one day I can join these alumni with my own page on the Advisory Board Gallery.

## **To The Future**

While my Capstone is complete, this project is not done. Like any project, you will always look at the end product and say, "I wish I could have done this, or I wish we had time for that." Thankfully, fellow honors student Perry Russom will continue to build and improve my existing project. He will continue to interview more top alumni and develop the webpage and make it even more user-friendly. I bequeath to him a list of ideas I wish I could have pursued further that I believe will improve the Capstone.

1. Develop a tab where users can sort the videos that best suit them.  
The tab would include sortable options such as "Sports, Going Abroad, Why They Chose Newhouse, WAER, Outside the Classroom, Public Relations, Advertising, Photography, Newspaper, Broadcast Journalism, Graduate Program, etc."
2. Improve the titles under each board member to better entice the user to click on a board member's respective page
3. Allow videos to automatically play as opposed to having to click on each and every one.
4. Incorporate B-roll for board members when it adds something new (like Tirico with ESPN footage)
5. Incorporate graphics of each board member's respective company on their page



6. Include some sort of biography for each board member on the side
7. Include a picture of the board member from their college years on the side by their biography (Idea courtesy of Howard Polskin)

### **List of Interviewed Advisory Board Members**

- Andy Heller, *Vice Chairman, Turner Broadcasting System Inc.*
- Angela Robinson, *Host/Executive Producer, In Contact*
- Arthur Liu, *President & CEO, Multicultural Radio Broadcasting Inc.*
- Bill Doescher, *President & CEO, The Doescher Group Ltd.*
- Bob Miron, *Former Chairman & CEO, Advance/Newhouse Communications*
- Brian Edelman, *President, Crossborders LLC*
- Camille Massey, *Vice President of Membership and Corporate Affairs, Council on Foreign Relations*
- Charles Stevens, *Editor-at-Large, Bloomberg News*
- Don Lockett, *Senior Director of Media Technologies, Corporation for Public Broadcasting*
- Eric Mower, *Chairman & CEO, Eric Mower and Associates*
- Gary Lico, *President & CEO, CABLEready*
- George Verschoor, *Executive Producer, Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*
- Howard Polskin, *Senior Vice President of Communication and Events, Magazine Publishers of America*
- Jack Myers, *Media Economist, JackMyers.com*
- Joyce Tudryn, *President, IRTS Foundation*
- Julie Singer Scanlan, *President, Singer Scanlan Group Ltd.*
- Larry Kramer, *Former Chairman & CEO, Marketwatch.com*

- Luis Torres-Bohl, *President & Founder, Castalia Communications Corporations*
- Michael Terpin, *Chairman & CEO, SocialRadius*
- Mike Perlis, *CEO & President, Forbes Media*
- Mike Tirico, *ESPN Play-by-Play Announcer*
- Nick Godfrey, *Co-President, Crossborders LLC*
- Peter Horvitz, *President & CEO, Horvitz Newspapers Inc.*
- Sean McDonough, *ESPN Play-by-Play Announcer*
- Seth Solomons, *Global CEO, CMR365*
- Stephen Wilkes, *Photographer, Stephen Wilkes Photography*
- Steve Fuchs, *CEO, True North Inc.*
- Steve Leeds, *Vice President of Talent Relations, Sirius Satellite Radio*

## **Summary of Capstone Project**

Over time, Syracuse University and the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications have built a vast alumni base, featuring some of the top executives and voices in the media community.

Prior to this project, the only place you could find these Newhouse alumni featured was in a gallery that was last updated sometime in the mid-1990's.

“This is the Newhouse Network” is a dynamic webpage that allows users to hear stories and advice from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications’ advisory board (the A-list alumni). Members of the Newhouse Advisory Board include Mike Tirico, Sean McDonough, Larry Kramer, Eric Mower, Robert Light, and many more.

### **What it Does**

When directed to the page, users may view three videos from each advisory board member and learn about everything from “Why You Should Attend Syracuse University,” “Going Abroad at SU,” “Career After Graduation,” “Working at WAER,” and much more. These videos are meant for users to feel an intimate connection with these prestigious alumni and encourage prospective students to apply to Syracuse University. For a full list of those interviewed on the Newhouse Advisory Board, please go to page 18.

Because the videos are featured on a webpage, they can be viewed anywhere...on your phone, computer, iPad, and whatever else the work of technology throws at us.

I encourage anyone to visit the exhibit in person on the third floor of Newhouse III, or go online:

[http://newhouse.syr.edu/mobile/youtube/js\\_player.cfm](http://newhouse.syr.edu/mobile/youtube/js_player.cfm).

The website is displayed on an iPad in Newhouse III where current students, faculty, alumni, prospective students can explore the Newhouse School's Advisory Board to hear stories ranging from their time at Syracuse University to what they're up to now.

### **Techniques Used**

For this project, I interviewed more than 25 members of the Newhouse Advisory Board. I utilized my skills acquired at Syracuse to be able to one-man band almost all of my interviews (meaning I was the interviewer, the camera-man, the editor, and the audio and lighting engineer). In this ever-changing media landscape, it is critical for reporters to be able to do-it-all. It can be difficult at times lugging equipment and setting up a shoot while entertaining your subject, but it is essential for success.

After each interview, I would edit them in AVID Media Composer where I would produce three videos (ranging from 0:18 – 1:39 in length) for each board member. It is important to find a balance in the content

chosen – you want your videos to attract as wide an audience possible and not be geared towards any given subject.

After each video is produced, it is exported and uploaded to YouTube, where it is almost ready for viewing. Details about each board member and their corresponding video would be added to the “description” section of the YouTube video, where it would be instantly streamlined to the webpage.

Once each video is added, it is viewed on the page and ensured it is maximum quality and fitting the same style as every other video.

### **Significance**

As a webpage, the project can be easily updated and altered long after my graduation.

With this project, the Newhouse School moves forward and has a digital database of its alumni that can be shown to students, parents, prospective students and visitors. The still pictures in the basement of Newhouse I were a glaring reminder that the school needed to be updated. Very often, media professionals are changing jobs and most don't have the same occupation as they did in 1995. The significance of this project is that Newhouse can follow the careers of its alumni, and update the Syracuse community on what they're doing. It showcases how the school embraces new technology and how it is constantly adapting to this changing landscape.

With the successful completion of this project, future students can continue to grow and develop this project by adding more members and improving the webpage's interface and features.