Samantha L. Koon

Address: 902 N State St, Monticello, IL 61856 **Phone number:** 217.898.3509
Email address: koon.samantha@gmail.com **Web:** SamanthaKoon.com

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

Executive advisor to senior leaders on organizational transformation, enterprise communications, stakeholder engagement, governance, and institutional priorities.

Organizational change leader with experience guiding enterprise-wide restructuring, strategic planning, policy implementation, and cross-functional initiatives within complex organizations.

Enterprise communications professional with responsibility for executive communications, marketing, media relations, digital strategy, and branding across organizations ranging from international nonprofits to research centers to startups.

Proven leader with experience building and leading multidisciplinary teams of up to 18 professionals while managing budgets exceeding $2.5 million.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Director of Marketing and Communications, National Center for Supercomputing Applications
University of Illinois
11/2025 – present Champaign, IL

- Serve as strategic communications advisor to executive leadership, providing counsel on enterprise strategy, organizational transformation, executive communications, governance, and institutional priorities.
- Lead communications strategy supporting one of the nation's premier advanced computing centers, strengthening institutional reputation among university leadership, federal agencies, industry partners, policymakers, and the public.
- Develop executive messaging, speeches, leadership presentations, organizational announcements, and communications supporting institutional change and high-profile strategic initiatives.
- Build executive partnerships across research, operations, finance, human resources, and information technology to improve organizational alignment and execution of enterprise priorities.
- Spearhead the communications strategy supporting NCSA’s organizational realignment, developing executive messaging, staff communications, and implementation plans to guide the organization through a significant structural transition.
- Direct the development of governance frameworks to optimize content performance in a radically evolving landscape shaped by AI and its impact on the dissemination of research-based content.
- Oversee strategic planning initiatives within marketing and communications, developing operational priorities, performance measures, and service delivery models that align team resources with institutional objectives.
- Lead and develop a multidisciplinary communications organization responsible for executive communications, internal communications, digital strategy, media relations, brand stewardship, creative services, and stakeholder engagement.

Director, The Hoeft Technology and Management Program
University of Illinois
08/2021 – 10/2025 Champaign, IL

- Provided strategic and operational leadership for a nationally recognized interdisciplinary program serving students from The Grainger College of Engineering and Gies College of Business.
- Directed program strategy and operations including student recruitment, corporate engagement, alumni relations, marketing, experiential learning, and advisory board initiatives in support of institutional goals and program reputation.
- Increased applications within targeted recruitment categories by 35% and expanded annual cohort enrollment from 68 to 80 students through strategic recruitment, outreach, and enrollment planning.
- Established and strengthened relationships with corporate partners, alumni, faculty, and university leadership, securing 10 or more industry-sponsored experiential learning projects annually.
- Provided strategic leadership and operational support for the program’s advisory board, partnering with executive volunteers and university leadership to guide long-range planning, governance, and external engagement.
- Facilitated the first significant curriculum redesign in the program’s history by conducting background research, projecting student demand, developing curriculum maps, designing transition plans, and coordinating faculty teaching assignments.

WORK EXPERIENCE

- Designed and implemented an integrated student development model focused on technical competencies, leadership development, and emotional intelligence. Developed a robust student-centered annual calendar of events.
- Directed eight international immersion experiences serving approximately 175 students, overseeing academic planning, logistics, risk management, partner relationships, and student development.
- Administered a $650,000 operating budget, including endowment resources and corporate partnership investments, while leading a multidisciplinary team of professional staff, instructors, course assistants, and student employees.

Director of Marketing Communications, Illinois Extension
University of Illinois
01/2019 – 08/2021 Champaign, IL

- Led enterprise communications for a statewide organization of more than 650 employees, advising executive leadership on organizational communications, public engagement, crisis communications, and strategic initiatives.
- Executed a statewide crisis communications strategy, including development of messaging frameworks, stakeholder communications plans, and supporting collateral materials.
- Consulted with senior leadership across Illinois Extension and the University of Illinois to design and implement innovative public engagement and outreach campaigns across a diverse range of audiences.
- Directed integrated marketing and communications strategies spanning earned, owned, and paid media to strengthen public engagement and advance organizational goals.
- Oversaw a digital ecosystem of 300+ websites generating more than 15 million monthly page views, establishing governance processes and performance measures that contributed to a 40% increase in content engagement.
- Developed performance reporting and analytics frameworks that informed executive decision-making, identified best practices, and guided strategic resource allocation across communications functions.
- Led a multidisciplinary communications teams of 10 professionals delivering more than 1,800 marcom projects annually, including digital strategy, web development, media relations, branding, creative services, and public engagement.

Owner and Chief Strategist
SLK Communications Consulting
01/2013 – 12/2019 Monticello, IL

- Provided strategic marketing and communications consulting services to clients in higher education, nonprofit, and retail sectors. Developed integrated marketing, branding, and communications strategies aligned with growth objectives.
- Led strategic planning initiatives, gathering stakeholder input, facilitating consensus-building discussions, and advising organizational leaders on priorities, positioning, and implementation strategies.
- Crafted and implemented marketing and communications plans that featured earned, owned, and paid media channels. Evaluated campaign performance and return on investment to guide resource allocation decisions.
- Designed market research projects, including survey development, data collection, and analysis. Partnered with clients to translate findings into actionable recommendations that informed organizational decision making.
- Delivered professional development programs, workshops, conference presentations, and educational sessions for business, nonprofit, academic, and community audiences.

Director of Marketing and Media Relations
Millikin University
02/2015 – 05/2016 Decatur, IL

- Directed integrated marketing and communications strategies across all major audiences and channels, contributing to a 15% increase in student applications and a 6% increase in student yield.
- Administered a $2.2 million departmental budget, including strategic management of paid media investments supporting enrollment, brand awareness, and institutional priorities.
- Led a campus-wide brand development initiative, establishing a unified institutional identity and ensuring consistent representation across marketing, communications, and recruitment activities.
- Consulted with senior leaders and administrators on marketing strategy, audience research, and brand positioning initiatives. Pushed for adoption among university leaders to leverage data-driven insights to underpin marketing strategy.
- Directed operations of the Marketing and Media Relations team, including budgeting, project management, production planning, staff development, performance management, and vendor relationships.
- Led a multidisciplinary team with expertise in media buying, graphic design, digital communications, media relations, web development, and content creation. Coordinated external agencies and consultants in support of university initiatives.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Director of Marketing, Sales, and Membership Development
International Society of Arboriculture
02/2010 – 07/2013 Champaign, IL

- Directed marketing and communications efforts supporting 21,000 members and 30,000 credential holders worldwide.
- Led sponsorship development, including partnership valuation, proposal development, and fulfillment reporting. Increased individual giving support by 125% and corporate support by 15%.
- Supervised a team of 18 staff responsible for membership and chapter relations, marketing and public relations, corporate communications, customer relations, sponsorships, sales, and customer service.
- Provided leadership and administrative support for four volunteer committees comprising more than 60 members and collaborated closely with the board of directors on strategic planning, governance, and organizational priorities.
- Partnered with the executive director to implement the organization's strategic plan, developing performance measures and reporting frameworks to track progress and support board decision making.
- Managed an operating budget of approximately $2.5 million, balancing strategic, operational, and growth priorities.

Director of Communications, Military Family Research Institute
Purdue University
03/2008 – 02/2010 West Lafayette, IN

Marketing Manager, Center for Food and Agricultural Business
Purdue University
03/2006 – 02/2008 West Lafayette, IN

Communications Coordinator, Military Family Research Institute
Purdue University
08/2003 – 02/2006 West Lafayette, IN

EDUCATION

Business Administration | MBA
Indiana University
2009

Educational Technology | MS
Purdue University
2004

Agricultural Sales and Marketing | BS
Purdue University
2000

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

School Board Member
Monticello Christian Academy
06/2018 – 08/2025 Monticello, IL

Board of Directors
Monticello Main Street
02/2018 – 04/2024 Monticello, IL

Coach and Mentor
Youth Sports Organizations
04/2022 – present Central Illinois