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CCE CAMP Program

Reflection Essay

As it was for everybody, Summer 2020 was a difficult season for me. I had applied for an internship with NBC Sports in the summer of 2019 and was offered a position on their production team for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics. As a lifelong sports fanatic, I was thrilled about this experience and was disappointed and discouraged upon its cancellation when COVID-19 struck our country. Unsure of what to expect during March and April, I paused my internship search and decided to focus on finishing up online classes as well as just making sure my friends and family were safe. After wrapping up with finals, I decided to explore opportunities on Handshake and found two part-time unpaid internships that would occupy me for most of the summer.

My first internship was as a Marketing & Social Media Intern for an e-learning platform called The Real Aless. The company was run by a recent NYU graduate who had previously run her own marketing and entertainment firm but pivoted her focus to teaching creative writing courses during the coronavirus pandemic. I thought this would be a good opportunity to further my interest in the marketing industry while at the same time providing consumers the opportunities to learn despite being in quarantine.

Considering I was interning at a startup, my tasks were largely centered around laying the groundwork for the future of the company. This involved creating templates for marketing procedures, business strategies, and conducting competitive analysis of other popular online writing courses such as Udemy, Masterclass, and Gotham Writers.

Once the marketing team completed these tasks, we turned our focus to launching the company's social media pages. We prioritized the launch of our Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn pages with the responsibility of the Facebook page placed on me.

My second internship was as a Business Development Intern for an AI security company called xIris. Similarly, this company was a startup run by three college students. My supervisors did not require me to work scheduled hours every day, but rather would notify me whenever they needed me to complete a task and then check in on my progress either a few days or a week later. My primary role for this company was detecting leads that would be interested in learning more about our product (AI security cameras with built-in COVID-19 features such as crowd control, mask detection, cough alert, etc.). This required me to conduct thorough research into different sectors such as commercial and residential buildings, warehouses, and supermarkets.

My goal for these internships was to solidify my knowledge of the marketing and business development industry. On campus, I lead the Engagement team at Columbia's Spectator Publishing Company which has taught me invaluable skills such as how to execute a marketing campaign or best deliver your product to the public. My experiences this summer, however, have taught me that marketing in the corporate world is on a much bigger scale than what I do at Columbia. The most drastic difference between my on campus work and summer internships was the amount of research I had to do in the sectors the company was specifically trying to sell their product to.

While I feel like I learned important skills, at the same time I was left slightly unsatisfied by my internships. I think the reason for this was that I was working in a

startup atmosphere, and along the way experienced the obstacles that a new company often faces. Many times I had to put a task aside midway through and start another one, or my boss would tell me that I needed to put a pause on my work although I had already put so much effort into it. While this was frustrating at times, I think that this has helped me evaluate what I want in my career moving forward. It has taught me that I probably would prefer a more structured workplace with a robust staff of full-time employees. In addition, I learned that I'm not the most effective with free time but rather need a more structured schedule or task list to be most efficient.

While I experienced many successes and challenges throughout the summer, I think the most important thing I realized was that I don't need to work in a specific industry in order to have a successful career. As an Economics major at Columbia, I am fully aware of the culture around me that pressures students to go on to work at top investment banking firms or the Big 3 consulting firms post-graduation. With all the free time I had this summer and through my conversations with my mentor Alex Kardon, I realized that the potential of working in the sports industry is attainable if I put the effort in. Sports has been my passion and I've been able to watch videos, read articles, and engage in discussions with peers, mentors, and friends during quarantine. Getting to see my parents and older brother work from home during the past six months has made me realize that you need to enjoy your job or else you'll never fully appreciate the sacrifices you're making regardless of salary or prestige. I am grateful for the CAMP program because it connected me to people who are where I want to be eventually and allowed me to obtain a better idea of what I want to do, and can do, in the future.