CEO Singapore Reflection Essay

This past summer provided me with an incredible learning experience. It surpassed my expectations of what the CEO program could offer, and left me feeling extremely proud of my personal growth. I learned a great deal from all aspects of the program, and the internship itself. I also realized the immense power of expanding my network and connections beyond my immediate, everyday surroundings. Furthermore, I acquired many new skills, both professional and personal.

One of my favorite aspects of my internship at AmCham Singapore was having the opportunity to attend seminars given by highly influential and talented individuals in my field. Prior to starting at AmCham, I had never heard of most of these individuals. But after hearing them speak and becoming better acquainted with their works, I realized how valuable it was to learn from their experiences and world views. I attended seminars and panels conducted by prolific writers, politicians, and political analysts from both Singapore and the United States. I found their thoughts on the current economic and political climate throughout the ASEAN region both informative, and thought-provoking. I also gained a better understanding of various Singaporean economic operations, and appreciated the level of pragmatic efficiency that was clearly present. All of the speakers I had the opportunity to meet were well-versed in their political/economic sub-fields, as well as eloquent and compelling in their manner of speech. I learned a lot about how I could improve upon my own public speaking skills from attending their talks. Additionally, I had several new books that I wanted to add to my personal reading list. I realized that I had much more to learn about the ASEAN region, and how the future of the ASEAN-US relationship may be shaped in coming
years. From these seminars, I also learned about several new career paths that I may now consider after graduation. They inspired me to learn more, far beyond my usual academic environment, and seek alternative routes towards success.

Most of my time in the AmCham office was spent working the ASEAN Business Outlook Survey, AmCham Singapore’s annual flagship publication. The publication is an advocacy piece, intended to provide valuable business insights from US companies throughout the region. Working on this publication taught me a lot about current trends in ASEAN markets, various up-and-coming industries, and the direction the ASEAN economy is expected to move in over the next 2-5 years. I am certain that this knowledge will be valuable to me in my professional life, especially if I decide to return to work in Southeast Asia.

Furthermore, working on the survey gave me the opportunity to improve my data-checking and analysis skills, as well as my ability to create/format number graphs in large quantities. I also assisted with the design of the publication itself, which was interesting, as I have no prior design background.
I really enjoyed working with the team of interns who were assigned to work on the publication. I think we all had a lot to bring to the table, mainly because we all study different majors at different universities. Nevertheless, we worked very efficiently as a team and were always eager to help each other out. Being a part of this team showed me what a healthy working relationship between coworkers should look like. It also made me appreciate different people for their diverse outlooks. One minor drawback of our project, however, was the somewhat poor communication between our team and our supervisor. Most of the time, I felt as if she was unaware of how long each individual assignment would take, leading her to set near-impossible deadlines. Furthermore, her instructions were often vague, and her working style was very erratic. Looking back however, I think working under her was a lesson in itself. I now know how important it is to be receptive of someone’s style of working that is vastly different to my own, and how I should learn to adapt to this (especially if that person is my supervisor). Despite not agreeing with her style of working, I can still appreciate that she is one of the most hard-working and ambitious members of the company. Furthermore, this experience taught me to become more aware of the qualities that are required of effective leadership.

In addition to working on the ASEAN Business Outlook Survey, I also worked on several PR pieces for AmCham. I assisted in planning out various upcoming charity events for the company’s CSR initiative. I also co-wrote the pitches that would be made to member companies to generate the necessary support and funds for these events. Furthermore, I drafted news articles in preparation for the launch of the ASEAN Business Outlook
Survey. After the launch, these articles will be published in local Singaporean publications, targeted towards the American expat community.

Doing this type of work was quite useful, as it gave me the opportunity to refine my writing skills throughout the whole summer. It also taught me how to write for PR purposes, which is not something I usually have the chance to do during school. Over the course of the internship, I realized how different this style of writing is to typical essay-writing/prose. This was great to learn, as I am sure that having good PR skills will be valuable in any job I pursue in the future.

Another highlight of working at AmCham Singapore was being able to visit some of the organization's member companies. During my time there, I was given the chance to visit Google's Asia Pacific office,
and the Discovery Channel. The tours that were given at both of these offices were fascinating and eye-opening. We spoke with several company representatives, who talked to us in great detail about their most exciting projects. For instance, Google representatives provided us with a walk-through of their current work on artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and augmented reality. This was all extremely interesting. We also learned about the physical mapping process that goes into creating, and consistently building upon, Google Maps (an app that most of us use in our everyday lives). At the Discovery Channel, we learned about how the company has successfully adapted and diversified into the digital age. We spoke with executives about how they have operated in various countries in Southeast Asia, and the tactics they have used to tap into different markets. Furthermore, we were given previews of several interesting new television shows that most of us had never heard of before. Visiting both companies taught me a great deal about the tech industry, a field that is quite far from
my own field of study.
Work aside, living in Singapore was a great experience in itself. It was my first experience living in another Southeast Asian country besides home. It was interesting how I was able to find many similarities, as well as several key differences at the same time. Furthermore, I thought Singapore was a very unique place, with much more to offer than I could possibly imagine. I had never been in a city/country where it felt like so many diverse cultures were celebrated on an everyday basis. Every part of the city presented new sights to see, and new things to experience. Every neighborhood that I visited made me more excited to explore further. I thoroughly enjoyed spending weekends and evenings after work, walking or biking around the city. The architecture was incredible, and breathtaking to look at every day. Furthermore, the city is filled with several impressive museums and galleries. Each of the ones that I visited showcased talented artists from all over Asia. They were all well-designed, interactive learning spaces, which added a lot to the overall charm of Singapore.
Despite being an urban metropolis, Singapore also consists of several green expanses, perfect for outdoor activities like hiking or biking. I was very happy with all the nature Singapore had to offer, and spent a lot of my free time outdoors. In addition to exploring Singapore, I also spent a few weekends traveling to other countries, namely Vietnam and Indonesia.

Living in a new country for the summer turned out to be a time of immense personal growth for me. It made me realize how much more I want to travel to new places, and become immersed in lifestyles that are vastly different to my own. I also feel as if I am now a lot less scared of change. The experience taught me that change can be a good thing, and can open up more doors than I could imagine. I have also come to value the
importance of networking and expanding my professional connections. I learned a great deal from spending time with both my colleagues at work, and attending various CEO industry panels with alumni.

Over the course of the program, hearing about other people’s success stories never failed to inspire me to work harder. After spending the summer abroad, I feel more ready to graduate and overcome any challenges the future may throw at me.