

My co-op placed me in the role of Finance Intern with the accounting department at a firm called ISS Australia. The company itself handles soft services for their clients, such as cleaning, security, hospital support, catering, and other non-core services. I was placed with the accounting team for Health and Facilities Management and set to assist both divisions in their accounting cycles. The job has been my most involved co-op yet and certainly has shed a lot of light on where I want to focus my career path moving forward. My time at ISS carried with it a lot of ups and downs, that ultimately resulted in a really excellent experience and I gained exposure to a large variety of things that could have eluded me otherwise. Even as a co-op veteran, it's important to emphasize that each step in the process can teach you something new.

To start from the beginning, the development process in general was a roller coaster, that left me wondering if I was even going to get to go on a third co-op. I kept pushing my network, and international job boards to their limits in order to make sure I left no stone unturned. My choice to develop a co-op on my own was driven mostly by my desired location, but also by what I wanted to be able to do in my job. While finding the job was quite difficult and prolonged, the interview process was simple. The company had employed interns before, but it was their first time to host someone for so long, and from Northeastern. However, their previous interns paved the way for my easy transition into the job, so after a brief Skype call with my future boss, and some email exchange with the Human Resources department, I had a job. From this I learned, that it's important to try every door and window and not give up the search.

The co-op was self-developed, so everything was a surprise. This It was an international position, so it allowed me to take advantage of the Presidential Scholarship to make up for the fact that my employer was unable to pay me. It was new ground for both me and my employer. On my first day I was informed that I would be taking over the job of a part time worker who had been with the company for 16 years. This meant that I had two very hurried weeks to learn everything about her job. However, after she had left, it meant that I had enough to occupy only a part time position. This meant that my team and I were always on the hunt for ways to fill the other 20 hours in my week. What a cool thing this turned out to be! While maintaining a full position, and necessary part of the team, I also got to hop on to other projects within the division. This was an excellent learning opportunity to figure out what the rest of the team was up to and get a better idea of how the whole division operates and my superior's responsibilities. The lesson here is to always ask how you can help because it's the best way to expand your responsibilities.

My coursework thus far had very little relation to the work that I did while at ISS. Even the basic business and accounting knowledge didn't really link to the work I was doing. Courses that would have been majorly helpful are Excel and Access courses. After doing all my co-ops I am still shocked that Northeastern doesn't teach any of these skills, even though they know that employers will regularly ask for specific Excel skills such as v-lookups or pivot tables as part of interviews and other things. However, as time passed throughout my co-op, I could see the larger picture and integration of accounting concepts, some of which was relevant to my coursework and some of which is just good, basic, real world accounting knowledge to carry forward for future jobs. I wish I could say my studies had more impact than they did, but in truth the largest knowledge asset that I possessed was my experience at previous co-ops. My co-op was certainly an exercise in preparing for the unexpected, and learning on the fly. I learned exactly how important it is to challenge the expectations set up in the classroom, particularly in an international setting.

My role at ISS, as previously described, had several different moving parts. I learned that this is a very good environment for me. It is not a problem for me to keep track of the different projects as they moved around, as well as maintain my daily, weekly, and monthly tasks. I learned that I do not have much patience for process oriented jobs that are the same day to day, month to month, year to year, but have come to understand their importance in running a company, particularly in the lower levels of the organizational hierarchy. Also, the project nature of the majority of my work gave me excellent exposure to programming new templates from scratch. This kind of creativity and problem solving was something I enjoyed, and as it turned out, something I was good at. The more I asked for this kind of project, the more I received it, which was an excellent lesson in learning how to expand my responsibilities.

Asking for new responsibilities also opened doors to many things that I hadn't done before. The largest, and most nerve-wracking, was in the implementation of a new purchasing program. Somehow, I became the go to person in my office concerning this program. Upon seeing this, my boss decided to send me to some of the hospitals to teach the site managers and other staff how to use the program, trouble shoot, and maintain the program. As a co-op, I am usually bottom of the totem pole, so it was quite something for a room full of people to look up at me and be ready to learn from what I had to say. This turned out to be really good for me, and an experience I enjoyed. Going to the sites and interacting with the employees outside my email gave me a fuller experience of what ISS does on the front lines to clean hospitals and meet the client needs. This kind of face to face interaction dramatically changed my correspondence with that site for the better. The lesson here: show up, shake hands, and make a friend.

Overall, this was a very good co-op experience for me, and it served the exact purpose that the co-op program is intended to serve. I had a good role, an encouraging team, and excellent exposure to different elements of my chosen field. I learned a lot about the kind of worker I am, the kind of things I want to do and the different ways I can get there. Though I wouldn't go so far as to say that this co-op has inspired any sort of significant change within me, I feel it would be better put that this role has help answer questions on the kinds of jobs that are available and the skill sets necessary to be good at those jobs. Outside of work, co-oping abroad in a very different setting than my previous jobs was largely eye opening in terms of the kind of life I want to live outside of work and what I need to set myself up to be happy in a new location. In this element too, I now have a much clearer image of what is available, and what I want in these realms also. The trick just seems to be finding the career and the lifestyle that complement each other to allow me to have what I want.

On a similar note as above, this co-op, more than of my previous positions, allowed me access to other people's jobs and understand their role as it fit into the larger picture of ISS. It was very eye opening for me in learning the kinds of roles that are out there, and which ones of those I might want to do. As is always of particular interest to me in job hunting, I also have some insight on where I want to do it. I now know that I want to pursue my Certified Management Accountant certification and I am on the lookout for jobs in London for my post-graduation plans. My time here has also inspired my interest in graduate schools abroad, looking at programs in management that will increase my understanding of how people create the backbone of any organization, and the increasing importance of that backbone as technology come in to replace so many jobs that were previously done by a human touch.

The ideas detailed above are some concepts that prove to be universally true. My experience at my three international co-ops has allowed me to develop a broad understanding of the impact of globalization in the corporate world. Everything is happening on a global scale these days. ISS in particular is a global company, with branches all over the globe, but this is common in the modern world. The shocking concept was that ISS holds global contracts with global companies all over the world. For example, ISS cleaners clean every Hewlett Packard building on the planet. The companies, technology, and ideas are so well integrated, and so globally aware that it is now possible to develop a simple contract and put it into play in every country in the world. Naturally, this changes how management does their jobs, how legal writes their contracts, how accounts payable issues invoices, and many other things. I saw this interaction every day at my office, as decisions are always made in regards to how they impact Denmark, the home of ISS. They made me feel like I was a part of something much bigger than just the office that I came to every day for work. Globalization is undoubtedly an ever force in today's business world.

Ultimately, my time at ISS was a good experience that I would recommend to any who is interested in this kind of field and in Australia. It was a highly educational experience in both the realm of work and the social realm. I feel as though I have a much firmer footing on where I want my career to go and the life I want to have. Overall, I am sad that my co-op experience is over both at ISS and within the bigger picture of Northeastern. However, I know that I am ready to take on whatever comes next.