

IE3 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS
J. TRAN: TOKYO, JAPAN
Run for the Cure Foundation
Spring 2016

Question Set #1

1. What are your initial impressions of the organization and an overview and thoughts about the kind of work you've started doing; how does the work match your expectations, how does it match your goals?

My initial impression of The Run for the Cure Foundation is that it is very efficient – there are only three people who work for the organization! The organization works in conjunction with another organization called Paradigm so it is very interesting to be in an office space with two companies. So far, I have helped with advertising for an event and soliciting donations from potential donors. I have also helped with the organization's annual Thank You Party. Every day has been different so far and I absolutely love it. I think the work I've started doing will match my goals because I came in wanting to learn as much as possible about the work that non-profit organizations do. Because each day is so different, I know that I will be learning a lot more than I had anticipated!

2. What stood out to you the most regarding your arrival?

In terms of what stood out to me during my arrival, I was surprised about how calm everything is. I was expecting this huge, bustling city because to Americans, or at least to me at least, that is the epitome of Tokyo. But because I live a little bit outside the city in a relatively suburban area, things are calm and quiet – it almost feels like I am back in Oregon. Another thing that stood out to me is the amount of vending machines that are around the area! Vending machines are to Tokyo like Starbucks to Seattle – there is at least one on every corner! I was expecting to see a lot of these machines but what I have seen is on a completely different level!

3. What was your greatest anxiety prior to departing and how do you feel about that now that you have arrived?

My greatest anxiety prior to departing was getting from the airport to the Sakura House office (the shared house I am staying in) because I only had three hours after landing to get there. I was anxious about finding transportation and getting lost. After arriving, that anxiety is gone. I made it to the office in time (with twenty minutes to spare!) and made it to the Sakura House I am staying in safely. In general, I felt pretty anxious about transportation just because it is a completely different system than what is used in Oregon and then there is a language barrier. However, I got used to the system (or at least the one that takes me to work) quite quickly and now it is a ton of fun and I absolutely love it.

Question Set #2

1. How are things going at work now that you have settled in for a bit? How does this align with your professional goals that you set for yourself? What would you like to achieve in the remainder of your internship?

Prior to my internship, my professional goal was to learn new ways to interact and communicate with people of various backgrounds. Overall, I think things are going well. I really like my colleagues so far and pretty much everybody is from a different country but ended up in Japan somehow, which helps me achieve my goal of interacting with people of various backgrounds. Since I work in a specific segment of the organization right now that has me only interacting with a few people, by the end of the internship, I would like to build strong relationships with everybody in the office instead of just the people I primarily work with. I think this will build both my professional and cultural competency.

2. How are things going relative to your personal goals? In what areas have you made progress and where do you still have some room to expand? What do you want to make sure you address before you leave?

Prior to my internship, I set a personal goal to strengthen my independence and assertiveness. I think in terms of my assertiveness, I have become better: in the office, I want to do a good job so I speak up when I don't understand something instead of trying to figure out things for myself and then outside of the office, I speak up when I need something because I lack some of the cultural tools that would typically allow me figure out how to do things. An example of the latter happened while I was trying to cook. I was trying to turn on the stove and could not figure it out. If I was in the U.S., I would have just tinkered around until I got the stove to work but since I was in a different country and did not want to burn the building down, I asked for help. In terms of independence, I also feel that I have improved because I generally can only rely on myself but I know there is still much I can do. Before I leave, I want to have the confidence to just do things without necessarily worrying about the consequences (in a safe manner). The reason why I say this is because when I go out to eat or explore, I become nervous when I should speak out or I won't go out unless I have a game plan. I think part of being independent and assertive is having the ability to go with the flow and being vocal so I think going out spontaneously will encourage me to strengthen these skills.

3. How are things going relative to your cross-cultural goals? What kinds of experiences have stood out to you so far? What do you want to ensure to experience before you leave?

Prior to beginning my internship, the cross-cultural goal I set was to appreciate a new culture in depth. I would say that overall in this department, things are going okay: I am doing the best I can but there is definitely still room for improvement. I think the problem for me is time management – by the time I am done with work, I am usually too tired to do anything beyond eating dinner and doing homework/catching up on emails. If I can manage my time better, I think I can experience the Japanese culture a little better. I have a whole list of things I want to do and one of those things includes traveling during the Golden Week period. I think this experience will really improve my confidence and open the flood gates by removing any lingering

discomfort or fear I have about putting myself out there because I still have some hesitation when I go out. For example, I still get nervous when I speak Japanese because as a foreigner, I get self-conscious about not sounding like a native speaker (which is ridiculous, but I can't help it!). Before I leave, I want to experience more of Japan's traditional culture. I hope to wear a kimono at least once and experience the tea ceremony! I would also like to go to a theatre performance of some kind so I can experience Noh, Kabuki, or something similar that is culturally rich.

Question Set #3

1. Describe a day in your life – what is your work schedule like, what do you do after work, how do you balance your time between work and exploring life outside of work?

I currently work seven hours a day (with a one-hour break for lunch) four days a week. What I do in a day varies based on what my supervisors need me to do but a typical day usually consisting of responding to emails, soliciting donations from potential donors and updating the distribution lists for the Run for the Cure Foundation's quarterly magazine, *PiNK*. After work, I usually eat dinner and spend the night relaxing by catching up on correspondence with my friends on Facebook or working on homework I have for the credits I am getting while abroad. Since I only work four days a week, I try to just focus on work and making sure that I am well rested for the next day and then I spend my three days off exploring.

2. Housing: What is your living situation like? Knowing what you know now, are there other options you would have chosen instead? If you can provide some resources for future interns, that would be most helpful.

I currently live in a shared house called Sakura House. In my eyes, it's analogous to a dorm because I get my own room but I have to share the bathroom and kitchen with others. Knowing what I know now, I probably would have chosen a different location or explored different housing options (though I do not know specifically which ones and I do not intend to look because I do not want to be filled with regret with my decision) because the rent I pay is relatively expensive for my budget (although I do understand that the cost of living in Tokyo is high) and I feel that my housemates are quite noisy, even during quiet hours, and they can be rather messy. So, for advice for future interns, I would highly recommend that they think about whether or not they are okay with living with random housemates and/or roommates.

3. Finances: How is your budget working out for you? Are you spending more or less than you expected? How much do you typically spend on food, recreation, travel, etc.? What would you do differently knowing what you know now?

I am spending more or less than what I expected. In a day, I probably spend around \$10-20 for food but that's because I am not cooking at all (although there is a kitchen where I live, my housemates don't really keep it clean so I've decided to just stay away from cooking while I'm here). The amount I spend on travel and recreation really varies because the cost of transportation is dependent on distance traveled and recreation is dependent on the type of activity (i.e. hiking on the mountain is going to be a lot cheaper than spending a day in a shopping district). Knowing what I know now, I probably wouldn't change anything because

although I am becoming more comfortable with exploring and living abroad, I am still trying to figure things out and because there is so much to do in Japan, it's really hard to have a rigid budget.

4. Travel and Transportation: How do you typically get around town and to work? Are you satisfied with your choice? Would you recommend other options? Do you have time to explore the surrounding area on time off? How do you manage that? What do you recommend for travel options? Where do you recommend exploring?

I currently get to work by taking the Yamanote line on the JR train. I have a commuter pass and I am absolutely satisfied with my choice and would definitely recommend the commuter pass. The train I take is really busy because it runs through major stations such as Harajuku, Shibuya, and Shinagawa and I commute during rush hour, which means that I am often crushed on the train. But, I absolutely love this because it makes me feel truly integrated into the work culture (or at least the workplace commute culture). I also really like the commuter pass because the cost covers not only the station I depart from to get to and from work, it also covers the cost for the stations in between so I can use it to explore the surrounding areas during my time off without worrying about paying extra.

In terms of traveling for leisure, I would recommend that anybody going to Japan think about where they want to go if they are traveling outside of their internship site because there are passes (such as the JR pass) you can get that cover unlimited travel within certain areas (such as Kyoto and Hiroshima) for a certain amount of time that is only available to tourists. I wish I had known about this before I arrived (because you can't get some of them in Japan) because I would have taken advantage of this in order to cut down on travel costs. In terms of exploring, I have no advice because there is so much to do that even though I am spending eleven weeks here, I feel that I am barely even making a mark on the surface of what Japan has to offer. I could probably live here for the rest of my life and I wouldn't be able to cover everything!

Question Set #4

1. How well did your coursework prepare you for your internship? What knowledge of your field has been most important so far?

As a triple major, I've taken a multitude of courses that range from the liberal arts to the sciences but so far, only the courses I have taken in English have been useful for my internship because most of my internship has been "labor" intensive and the skills I learned from my English courses are what I have used the most for my other tasks, which consist mostly of composing letters or articles (so thus far, my experience from working at a non-profit has actually been more useful than my coursework). So far, the most important knowledge I have is my writing skills because a large component of this internship has been soliciting donations from potential donors, which means that I consistently use my writing skills to tailor letters to my audiences.

2. Have you learned about any new possibilities for career paths? Have you done any informational interviews (formal or informal) to learn about the field?

Prior to the start of this internship, I played around with the idea of getting my master's in public health but the issue was the timing because I wanted to obtain it concurrently with my medical

degree. This internship has made me reconsider my timing and now I am seriously thinking about obtaining my master's in public health with a concentration in international health before I even apply to medical school so that I can do my thesis in Japan. Because I was already interested in getting my masters prior to this internship, I had done informational interviews regarding the field but since I've started my internship, I have not participated in any interviews.

3. Describe an event where you misunderstood something due to cultural differences. What did you do? What would you do next time?

There are times when I will wait for the train and usually, especially during rush hour, when the train arrives, I will stand to the side and then after everybody gets off, I will rush on board so that I can find a good spot to stand. However, there have been a few times when everybody will get off the train and then I will get on the train and I'll be the only person sitting on the train. The same has happened where I will be sitting on the train and then suddenly everybody gets off except for me. Usually, I just go with the flow and follow where everybody else is going but there have been times where I will get on the wrong train, which takes me in the opposite direction of where I want to go. I always tell myself that I will ask somebody what is going on next time, but somehow I always become stubborn and decide to go with my gut and follow everybody.

4. What is the most frustrating aspect of your host culture? What is the most rewarding aspect?

I think the most frustrating aspect of my host culture is that no matter how hard I try to understand the culture or practice my Japanese, I will always be an outsider. I know this is the case with most countries and I know another large portion of this frustration is my limited time in Japan, but I feel like no matter how hard I try, there are some cultural aspects that I can't nail down, such as the etiquette at restaurants.

The most rewarding aspect about my host culture is that because it is so different from Oregon, Japan constantly pushes me out of my comfort zone and has taught me so much about not only its culture, but also myself. Japan makes me feel frustrated, happy, excited and so many other different emotions – it's like an emotional roller coaster that I absolutely love because it constantly keeps me guessing and constantly tests me in so many different ways to help me grow.

5. What are the most important things you have learned about yourself thus far through this experience?

For me, one of the most important things I've learned about myself is that I am okay with being alone. Going to college at Oregon State University, I was only a 90-minute drive away from my family and I ended up going to the same university as many of my high school friends so I have always been in a bubble. However, in Japan, casting aside the help I get at my internship, I have to rely on myself, especially when I travel outside of Tokyo. I have learned that I can survive on my own and this rewarding feeling has taught me to rely on myself. I've also learned that I actually really appreciate being alone and having this sense of independence because I am free to

do whatever I want instead of putting aside my desires to make somebody else happy, which is what I would typically do at home.

Question Set #5

1. Now is the time to begin thinking about how to articulate all your experiences you have been gaining for your next endeavors. Identify 3-4 accomplishments or successes in your internship of which you are most proud. These can be professional, personal or cross-cultural. Explain them briefly below.
 - Increasing the distribution list of *PiNK* magazine amongst libraries in Japan.
 - Writing articles for the summer 2016 issue of *PiNK* magazine.
 - Successfully soliciting companies for donations for the Run for the Cure[®] Foundation's Casino Night 2016 charity event fundraiser.
2. After identifying 3-4, pick two of these and expand on them with the following:
 - Outline the context of the situation
 - Describe any challenges you faced
 - Describe the actions you took to overcome the challenges

PiNK magazine is a women's health magazine published by the Run for the Cure[®] Foundation. The magazine is free and is placed throughout Japan in areas where women can easily access the periodical. For examples, the publication is placed in libraries, hospitals and salons. The Foundation wants to increase its distribution of *PiNK* in order to raise awareness in the population. In order to increase the distribution, I created a database of libraries. Creating this list was difficult because of the language barrier as the website was usually in Japanese. It was also difficult to make the list because the address in Japan is different than in the U.S. To overcome these challenges, I used my resources and asked my supervisor about the cultural differences. I also learned which kanji were commonly used to help me identify the information I would need.

During my internship, I was asked to write two articles for the summer 2016 issue of *PiNK*. The first article was difficult to write because it was a summary of an event that I had never attended. I didn't know what to write and was very anxious because I also didn't have experience writing magazine articles. In order to overcome these challenges, I looked at previous articles that had been written in the magazine to understand the style that was expected. I also did research about the event in order to obtain information for the article. So, I think the most important step I took was being proactive about writing the article instead of sitting around and panicking about the situation.

3. Describe the workplace culture at your host organization. How does your personal cultural lens work within the culture of your host organization?

The workplace of my host organization, the Run for the Cure[®] Foundation is relatively relaxed compared to a traditional Japanese workplace and the environment is very supportive. The organization truly values its interns and from day one, I felt like my contributions were important. The Foundation is also very encouraging about my career goals. In terms of my personal cultural lens, the Foundation's culture actually reminds me a lot of the workplace in the

United States (because it is an international workplace) so I think my own personal lens as an American fits quite well within the culture of the host organization.

4. What words of advice do you have for future interns as they prepare for this internship and living in your host country/culture?

The biggest piece of advice I would give future interns is to come into Japan and this internship without expectations. Japan is a really dynamic city and in my experiences, the image I had of Tokyo was completely warped based on western myths so I think it would have been better if I had come in with an open mind. I also believe it's important to relinquish any expectations because if you come into an internship clinging on to these hopes, you risk becoming disappointed when those expectations are not met.

Question Set #6

1. Looking back at your pre-departure journal or notes, how have your impressions of the host culture changed?

Although I had studied quite a bit about Japanese culture prior to coming to Japan, what I had studied vastly pertained to the traditional aspects of the culture so my understanding of the contemporary culture was built upon stories from the internet and social media. Basically, prior to coming to Tokyo, I expected this crazy city where I would constantly encounter weird things. However, after living in Japan, I have come to realize that these weird stories about other people's experiences in Japan are just hyped up stories because I never experienced anything out of the ordinary. Honestly, living in Japan was like living in a big city and if anything, I was impressed with the efficiency and quality of life as opposed to being shocked by something completely out of the ordinary. I did not think it was possible, but my impression of Japan is even greater now than when I first started living in the country.

2. What were your greatest challenges and rewards on this internship in each of your three development areas?

- Personal

My personal goal was to strengthen my independence and assertiveness during my internship. I think my greatest challenge was learning how to be assertive without stepping on anybody's toes because there were times when I would want to do something, but I did not want to speak up because I felt that as an intern, I should just wait. I think it was also hard to be assertive because my time at the internship was relatively short so by the time I really became familiar with the workflow, it was time to leave. In terms of rewards, I think I have become less afraid of asking questions, which I believe will act as a gateway to increasing my confidence and assertiveness.

- Professional

My professional goal was to learn new ways to interact with and communicate with people of various backgrounds. My internship was the perfect place to accomplish this goal because from Japan to the U.S. to Italy, there were so many

different people of varying ethnicities and backgrounds in the office. In terms of challenges, I think the difficulty I encountered was interacting with those not working with the Run for the Cure Foundation (since the organization shares an office with Paradigm) because the work flow for both organizations were so different that there weren't necessarily opportunities to communicate often. In terms of rewards, I think the biggest professional goal I learned is the power of positivity in the professional work environment. Although I had known that optimism was important in the workplace prior to my internship, I was really able to see the extent of that power during my time working because it made the environment so much more welcoming and fun, which also increased productivity.

- Cross-cultural

My cross-cultural goal was to appreciate a new culture in depth. For challenges, I think there were two major challenges I faced: the first was timing but I think that even if I were to spend the rest of my life in Japan, timing would still be an issue because there is just so much to see and experience within the country. The other challenge was the fact that I am a gaijin. I think in a relatively socially constrictive culture like Japan, there is only so much a person can experience in terms of culture when he/she is an outsider. For example, I'm sure there were times when I would commit a faux pas but instead of getting corrected, I would get away with it because I am a foreigner. I think my greatest reward was rediscovering and deepening my passion for Japan. Although I have wanted to go to Japan for a really long time, as my college career progressed, I became less enthusiastic about it because I was always stressed and overwhelmed with academics, work and extra-curricular activities. However, having the time to actually live in the country made me remember all the reasons why I fell in love with Japan in the first place and in some ways, I feel like a piece of me that was missing was found. I really feel like I belong in Japan and I can't wait to continue learning more about its culture in the future.