IE3 Global Internships - Final Report

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Sydney, Australia - Summer/Fall 2017

**Question Set #1**

1. First Impressions:

Overall, my initial impressions of Believe Advertising & PR were very positive. Before starting my internship I researched the organization and found it to be professional yet fun with clients I was excited about working with. Because I did not completely know what would be expected of me at my internship and I did not fully understand Australian work culture and how the organization fits in to it, I was pretty nervous my first day. Upon arrival, I was impressed with the office building and the first coworker I met was the other American intern who made me feel very welcomed and comfortable right away as she already had a week of experience interning at Believe. As I met my other coworkers and got familiar with the office, I realized that Australian work culture and my internship is the perfect combination of hardworking and professional yet still relaxed and fun.

- Provide a brief overview and thoughts about the kind of work you've started doing.

The main function of Believe Advertising & PR is to get its clients’ media coverage through social media, events, advertising, influencers, etc. All of this work is mainly done on the computer and over the phone, which means that we are all sitting together around computers all day and there is nonstop writing and communication between all parties, including lots of chatting with coworkers. I write a lot of emails, press releases, and blog posts. I send a lot of product samples to media outlets and do a lot of online filing, research, and brainstorming. Everything that I am doing is actual work that is going to the media and shown to clients which I find exciting but also a little terrifying because in journalism a mistake can ruin a company so my work comes with a lot of pressure. I am thankful I have a team of coworkers who are constantly checking my work and I am doing the same for them as well.

- How does the work match your expectations, how does it match your goals?

The work for the most part does not match my expectations, but I still find that skills I learned in school helps me a lot in the kind of work that I am doing. It matches my goals because I hoped to be a part of a small team where the work that I do does not go unnoticed.

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

What stood out to me most regarding my arrival was how much more time it took to get around using public transportation, how shops and restaurants closed much earlier than I’m used to, and how different the Australian English language is than American English.

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

I had to major anxieties prior to departing. The first was leaving behind really personal relationships back in the United States in fear that they wouldn’t survive well. Now that I have arrived I can only put in as much effort into relationships back home as my time allows. I have found that the experience is helpful and letting go of relationships that aren’t right for me. My second was that I was going to get bored and feel stuck in a 9-5 job setting, but I quickly realized that it worked out well for my personality having set aside time to work and then the rest of my time to do as I please.

**Question Set #2**

1. Professional Goals: How are things going at work now that you have settled in for a bit?

Things are getting more fun but definitely more challenging now that I have settled in. As I learn more, I am gaining more responsibility at the company. I have become pretty good friends with my coworkers and enjoy spending my workweek with them.

- How does this work align with your professional goals that you set for yourself?

My main professional goal interning abroad was to get my foot in the door in international public relations and figure out which direction I want to take with my career. Work is definitely matching up with my first goal but I am realizing that the area of public relations that I am in, might not be what I want to continue to work in the future.

- What would you like to achieve in the next half of your internship?

I would like to make more professional connections, create more pieces for my portfolio, and improve my press release writing skills in the next half of my internship.

2. Personal Goals: How are things going relative to your personal goals?

My personal goals are where I find myself being challenged the most. I set many personal goals for myself and although I have achieved some, I have set the bar a bit high and need to reevaluate what my priorities are and what is realistic to achieve while abroad.

- In which areas have you made progress and where do you still have some room to expand?

I have made progress in my professional and social goals, but I could work on my health and travel goals such as exploring Sydney and other parts of Australia more in my free time.

- What do you want to make sure you address before you leave?

Before I leave I just want to feel like I am ready. For that to happen, I want to have crossed off the places and experiences on my bucket list that only this place and time can offer me.

3. Cross-Cultural Goals: How are things going relative to your cross-cultural goals?

My cross-cultural goals are going well. I am learning so much about Sydney, Australia and that is thanks to my Australian coworkers and exploring Sydney.

- What cultural experiences have stood out to you so far?

What stands out to me the most is how difficult it is to make friends with Australians. Most people that I meet happen to be other foreigners and when I do meet locals, they are very friendly but tend to not want to be more than acquaintances with “backpackers”. When I compare this to my experience with how Americans act when they encounter foreigners, it is not far off.

- What do you want to ensure to experience before you leave?

Before I leave I really want to experience Byron Bay, Australia. Before I even came to Australia so many people have recommended the town to me and as people get to know me, more and more recommendations to visit keep pouring in.

**Question Set #3**

1. Describe a day in your life: What is your work schedule like?

I work Monday through Friday 9am – 5pm. I get an hour break midday for lunch and I get public holidays off.

- What activities and tasks are you doing day-to-day?

Most days at the office are pretty similar with the type of tasks that I am doing but once in a while new clients and events come along that really change things up and what I am asked to be helping with. Most days I am working at my desk in the office helping out on tasks with the other intern.

- What do you do after work?

After work I usually run any errands at Bondi Junction that I need to do and then I go home and relax and do chores or go meet up with friends for dinner and/or drinks.

- How do you balance your time between work and exploring life outside of work?

My 9-5 work schedule makes it easy to balance work and exploring life outside of work. I spend most of my workweek focusing on work and exploring Bondi, the suburb that I live in. My weekends are usually spent at the beach if the weather is nice, exploring other parts of the city or surrounding areas such as the Blue Mountains or Jervis Bay.

2.  Housing:  What is your living situation like?

My housing situation has changed many times over the course of my internship. When I first arrived I stayed in a private room in a hostel for 2 weeks, then I moved to a more comfortable fully furnished studio apartment by myself while I looked for more affordable, long-term housing. After a month of my internship, I finally moved into a 2 bedroom, 2 bathroom flat in Bondi Beach close to work and where I like to spend my free time. My flatmate is a 29-year-old Australian girl and her puppy from Melbourne who I have quite a few common interests with but we never became much more than respectful flatmates. My housing is clean, comfortable, and very expensive because I chose to live close to where I work in the affluent Eastern Suburbs of Sydney.

- Knowing what you know now, are there other options you would have chosen instead?

I definitely would have chosen to live in a more affordable living situation with girls closer to my age to make my home life more of a beneficial experience.

- If you can provide some resources for future interns, that would be most helpful.

Flatmates.com is a great and trustworthy website to be able to find fully furnished rooms and share rooms in Australia. I would not recommend trying to find housing off of housing Facebook groups because people often get scammed. Internships Down Under offers support for housing placements, but I don’t know that I would recommend it – for me and many other IDU interns I met, the housing was less than ideal, especially for anything more than a brief stay.

3. Finances:  How is your budget working out for you?

I was told Sydney is expensive, but it is a lot more expensive than I thought. I find myself shopping deals more and taking public transportation and walking rather than taking Ubers as much as possible to save money.

 - Are you spending more or less than what you expected?

I am spending more than I expected in almost every area.

- How much do you typically spend on food, recreation, travel, etc?

It is too easy to spend AUD $30 a day on food, AUD $10 a day on travel, and AUD $50 a day on recreation if I do not watch my spending and make very careful choices.

- What would you do differently knowing what you know now?

I would have saved up much more money before coming to Australia and have searched out more student deals and discounts.

4.Travel and Transportation:  How do you typically get around town and to work?  Are you satisfied with that choice?

I typically get to work by bus which takes me about 20 minutes. I typically get around town by bus, foot, and Ubers which I am satisfied with. It just takes extra time and planning than having your own car.

- Would you recommend other options?

I would definitely recommend getting an Opal card the day you arrive and take public transportation as much as possible. It is pretty good in Sydney and you can get most places with buses, trains, and ferries.

- Do you have time to explore the surrounding area on your time off? How do you manage that?

I have some time to explore the surrounding area on my time off. I usually make plans with friends at least once every couple weeks to explore a new part of the city or surrounding area.

- Where do you recommend exploring?

I recommend exploring the eastern suburbs, the city, Newtown, and the Blue Mountains.

**Question Set #4**

1. Professional Learning: Describe the workplace culture at your host organization.  How does your personal cultural lens work within the culture of your host organization?

The workplace culture at my host organization is very tight-knit and office casual. We are a small team that works on most projects together so we are in constant communication all day long. I am happy that I fit right into my host organization. Although at times there are words and other cultural bits I do not understand, my coworkers are quick to help me on the same page and we often have a good discussion and laugh about any misunderstandings and cultural differences between the United States and Australia.

- What parts of your work have you enjoyed the most? Is there any part of your work that you find particularly challenging?

I have enjoyed the creative freedom with my work the most. I write many articles, do a bit of graphic designing, and I am involved in most brainstorms, which are some of my favorite parts about public relations work. I find communicating with media and clients particularly challenging. My English accent and my name being the same as the city seem to really throw people off when I make phone calls. Working on deadlines, it is often hard to be the middleman and manage responses so I can get my work done in time.

- Describe a professional accomplishment that you are proud of - be specific.

I am very proud of my boss offering me a full time paid job at my host organization once my internship is over. Within the first half of my internship he was very proud of the work I was doing and was excited to hear that I could stay a full year in Sydney and work with my working holiday visa. I never expected to get a job offer through the internship and for my organization to appreciate me and my work as much as they do.

2. Cross Cultural Learning:  Describe an event where you misunderstood something due to cultural differences.

When I arrived to my pre-booked temporary accommodation (an apartment hotel), they asked me to pay thousands of dollars up front before I could check into my room. Not having that kind of money on me, I asked if they could charge the credit card on file but they said no because the credit card was in my mother’s name and not mine. She even spoke to the front desk on the phone and authorized them to charge the card but they still insisted on me paying with a different card upfront. After checking the fine print and reviewing our booking, we found out that we were in the right and they were wrong, but the young boy at the counter still didn’t budge so I was left without accommodation after a day of travelling.

- What did you do?  What would you do next time?

Although I was exhausted from travelling, I found WiFi and researched a hostel nearby that had a private room for a good off-season deal. That day I moved my luggage over to the new hostel (luckily down the street) and completely cancelled my booking at the apartment hotel.

3. Personal Growth: What are the most important things you have learned about yourself thus far through this experience?

I have learned that I can succeed farther than I believe if I just put myself out of my comfort zone. So many wonderful things have happened in all areas of my life just by pushing myself and taking risks during this experience. The experience has also empowered me to search out additional career and travelling challenges.

- What has been the greatest personal challenge? What has been the greatest reward?

The greatest personal challenge has been time management. While I have always struggled with it, coming abroad I struggled with it especially. Seeking help from my family and local resources has helped me take steps in the right direction toward mastering my time.

**Question Set #5**

1. Professional: Have you learned about any new possibilities for career paths?

I have learned about new possibilities for career paths but I have mostly learned what I do and don’t want to do within public relations.

- Have you done any informational interviews (formal or informal) to learn about the field?

I have only done informal informational interviews within my organization. Outside of work I took the time to meet with my coworkers and get to know them and ask them questions on their public relations journey.

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

My host culture is a lot less “hippie” than I originally perceived it to be. It reminds me of my home, San Diego, California in so many ways. The people, the land, and the culture is very similar and I feel very at home here but there were also many reasons I moved away to attend college at University of Oregon. I know that I am not meant to live in my host culture long-term after experiencing it for many months, like I originally thought I could. Overall my impressions were pretty different from pre-departure to living here.

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

I think the lack of acceptance and open-mindedness of my host culture frustrates me the most, but as an island nation, Australia is very protective which I can understand. The most rewarding aspect of my host culture is the health-orientated lifestyle that the culture promotes.

**Question Set #6**

1. Your Culture Curve: Outline your personal W Curve or cultural adjustments so far -  starting from when you arrived in your host country to the present-marking the highs and lows with approximate dates and descriptions of events that represent some of these phases (recognizing of course, that you are still in the process).

When I first arrive in June I was pretty uncomfortable, lonely, and struggling through many personal, social, and housing challenges. By August, I was at such a low my mom decided that would be a good point to make a visit for a week to me to cheer me up. I didn’t have much of a honeymoon phase, if one at all. Once my mom came to visit my perspective and life in Sydney took a positive turn. I took time off to take care of myself, explore the city with my mom, and relax. It completely energized me and inspired me to stick out the 6 months and by October I was thriving! I had lots of new friends and I was a lot happier with my life in Sydney. Since then it has been a pretty uphill curve.

2. Summarizing your Experience (thus far): Considering your culture curve, try to sum up you experience thus far in one paragraph (we’re practicing for later). Consider some of your biggest/more influential learning moments and some of the challenges you’re dealing with/recently dealt with. This may be a sort of reality check for things that you want to improve in the last months of the internship or areas that you can further develop.

So far my experience has been a great challenge but also the most rewarding experience I have had in my life to date. Some main things I have learned are to treat myself as I would want other to treat me, to say yes to positive experiences that put my out of my comfort zone, and how to time manage better. Although I have learned a lot professionally, I feel like the main takeaways from my experience are much more than that and are skills for life in general rather than for my career which I never expected and am so thankful for.

**Question Set #7**

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

You can never prepare enough before you leave! A lot of my problems could have been avoided if I did my research and got organized before I arrived. Also don’t be afraid to disconnect a bit from your home country and fully immerse yourself into your host country, because life-changing things will happen when you put yourself out of your comfort zone. Say yes to as many positive experiences as possible!

2. Articulating your Experience: Please write one paragraph to sum up your experience, touching on the professional, the cross-cultural and the personal.

Overall, my internship experience in Sydney, Australia was life changing. It was the biggest challenge as well as accomplishment I have achieved in my life so far and I feel incredibly lucky to have had the opportunity and experience that I did. Leaving everything behind in the United States and moving across the world alone for an indefinite amount of time was something I could not have mentally prepared myself for. I learned so much about myself, my relationships, the world, my career, and have made connections with people from all over the world, which is priceless. It was so much more than I originally imagined and I don’t see myself leaving Sydney any time soon because I feel like it is more of a home now than the United States is for me. I have decided to stay and take on a full time, paid role at my host organization for at least another 6 months, which I would never have done if it wasn’t for my internship.