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G.I.P: Global Internship Program

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Mid-Term Review Paper

My CAPA Florence internship program, including professional seminars with Dr. Kraczyna and working for Flod, is an educational and fascinating experience that has started to improve my cultural intelligence quotient, abbreviated as C.Q., increase my professionalism, and bolster my resume with useful soft and hard capabilities ranging from technology to language to interpersonal communication.

First, the seminars with Dr. Kraczyna at the CAPA Florence Center have provided me with many resources and pieces of advice to make the most out of my internship at Flod and to construct my global career for the future. The regular reading assignments for this seminar are among the most important sources of knowledge and guidance for my employment at Flod and my career development. The readings that I found to be the most relevant and crucial for me were the excerpts from Middleton’s CQ book, the masterclass and PDF document on workplace wellness and work/life balance challenges, the Belbin test, the excerpts from John Hooper’s The Italians book, and the Forbes professionalism article. I have also found outside sources of reading material that are especially relevant to my program. These outside sources are an article on life-long learning from The Economist, one of the world’s premier analytical publications, and an article on immigrant entrepreneurialism in the Harvard Business Review.

As stated in Julia Middleton’s interesting work, C.Q., the cultural intelligence quotient is a critical component of a successful global career. It refers to the ability to navigate between, interact with, work in, and live in different cultures around the world. However, Middleton clarifies that there are not only national cultures, but also unique cultures for every group of people and organization. Having a high level of C.Q. means combining the interpersonal communication of high emotional intelligence, also called E.Q., with the technical and intellectual capabilities that signify a high intelligence quotient, also called I.Q. C.Q. applies this combination of practical abilities to help one overcome challenges in diverse and international workplaces, such as miscommunication, unintentional insults, and errors resulting from misunderstanding.

In my internship with Flod, I need to understand how to communicate successfully with my coworkers in both Italian and English. I need to understand office dynamics, so that I respect the hierarchy and manage to resolve challenges efficiently without disturbing my colleagues. C.Q. is also important for the Italian-English translations that I perform, because I must write clearly and translate everything that is written in the original article, but I must balance that aspect with the aspect of writing in a colloquial manner and keeping a readership of English-speaking tourists engaged.

The CAPA masterclass on workplace wellness and work/life balance is another resource that I found vital and stimulating. These are two topics that everyone needs to face, and they take on a special significance for people working abroad. For example, I needed to create a realistic calendar for my internship with Flod, to ensure that the amount of work and time that I put in would satisfy the requirements of both Flod and CAPA. However, I needed to confirm that I would be able to take on that amount of work without feeling pressured to skip classes or leave homework assignments incomplete. I also needed to plan time for myself, whether it was for eating proper meals, getting sleep, relaxing, exercising, or spending time enjoying the sights of Florence and of Italy overall. Understanding how to navigate the workplace in a healthy and effective way leads me to my next significant resource to describe, the Belbin test.

The Belbin test illustrates two main points about the workplace. First, teamwork and compatibility are crucial to success. Second, one needs to understand oneself as a private individual, as a worker, and as a team member. This is necessary because it allows one to maximize one’s own potential and reach one’s goals. At the same time, it allows the company to maximize its potential and reach its goals.

I took the Belbin test and my two main results were the Implementer and Monitor/Evaluator team member types. In theory, these types are accurate and play to my strengths. These results confirm that I enjoy intellectual work that demands attention to detail, that I prefer analyzing situations and options in depth before making decisions, and that I naturally focus more on systems and ideas than on people and their respective talents. However, the Belbin test, along with the Meyers-Briggs test, the DISC assessment, and other professional assessments, show me that I need to work on my weaknesses. The Meyers-Briggs test refers to this as an individual’s “shadow sides.” For me, these “shadow sides” would include working with unclear instructions and systems that are not finely attuned. I need to become more outgoing and be more of a “people person,” taking the time to discover others’ talents and strengths. I should also be prepared to make decisions more quickly when that is needed.

The Italians by John Hooper is another excellent guide to better understanding other people. It is a clearly-written and engaging book in its own right, but within the context of my internship and seminar, it becomes even more useful. Its relevance to my program lies in its connection to C.Q. with the broad national cultural portrait that it provides. This is a general framework that minimizes misunderstandings on both sides of a cultural divide. However, it remains up to an individual intern to fill in this framework with crucial details of relevant ‘sub-cultures,’ such as the culture of the workplace and the culture of the city or region.

I find this general framework very useful for comprehending Italy better as a whole. At the same time, I recognize the ‘sub-cultures’ that I need to add to it. First, I need to recognize central Italian culture, which is between the self-confident and wealthy north and the more challenged and impoverished south. Then there is Tuscan culture, which has a proud heritage as the birthplace of the modern standard Italian language. Florentine culture adds a pride for being the birthplace of the Renaissance, with beautiful architecture and art. Finally, in my personal experience I need to take into account the cultures of CAPA and of Flod. CAPA is a hard-working study abroad organization that mixes Italian and international business practices and norms because it is composed of employees from around the world. Flod is also industrious and internationally-focused, but its business practices and norms are more traditionally Italian. For example, the employees eat lunch together at a large table in the office. The management of and interactions in the office are relatively relaxed and organic. Flod is also a very creative communication company, using humor and innovation regularly in the workplace.

The last helpful reading assignment that I will list is the Forbes professionalism article, because it demonstrates the importance of seemingly ‘small’ aspects of acquiring and maintaining employment. It focuses on resumes and cover letters for job applications. The article confirms my belief that resumes and cover letters must be created very precisely. One should use appropriate power words to highlight important information for employers, and the best resumes will feature predominantly the individual’s strongest skills and experiences. The layout and format also need to be appropriate for the situation, which usually requires a PDF document.

I consider proper resumes and cover letters to be central skill sets for everyone, and I believe that they can make the difference between being hired or not. As a university student, I need to decide how to list my academics, my skills, and my experiences to show that I am not only a serious student, but also someone with skills and experiences outside of academia that can be applied broadly in the work world.

Moving on to the two outside sources that I found to be relevant to my program, there is The Economist’s article, “Life-long Learning as an Economic Imperative,” and the Harvard Business Review’s article, “Why Are Immigrants More Entrepreneurial.” I will start with The Economist’s article on life-long learning. It describes how young professionals today must be able to constantly adapt to changing conditions. While the article primarily focuses on the societal impacts of changes in technology, education, and employment flexibility, its concept should also be applied easily to culture. Young international professionals should be able to adapt to a variety of cultural situations and be willing to move freely between these cultures in order to find the best opportunities and build their careers.

I enjoy learning, I follow technological advances, and I admire travel, culture, art, and language. Therefore, my ideal career is in the realm of multinational and cross-cultural organizations, and to build this career, I need to use the strategy of life-long learning.

The Harvard Business Review article on immigrant entrepreneurs is another example of the value of cross-cultural experience. It confirms that cross-cultural experience creates professional success. Cross-cultural experience shows an individual different points of view and different styles of life, so it can be a boon for creativity and entrepreneurship. Elon Musk of Tesla and Sergey Brin of Google are both immigrants who benefitted from cross-cultural experiences.

This relates directly to C.Q., professionalism, and The Economist article on life-long learning. Many companies that are ‘Italian,’ ‘French,’ or ‘American’ national champions are actually founded by immigrants who benefitted from their unique perspectives. I can use my experiences in Italy, France, Switzerland, Belgium, and the United States to fuel my creative and entrepreneurial passions, to improve my career, to increase my adaptability, and to work on my professionalism.

Now I will move on to a reflection on my learning goals. One of the goals in my Learning Agreement was to improve my social media knowledge for business purposes. I can now expand on that, changing the goal to using my newly-acquired understanding of Instagram to better promote Flod’s client companies. I can also add editing videos for time and substance to my list of technical skills.

A second learning goal to elaborate on is the goal to improve my level in Italian and my writing abilities through translations. I can start to focus more on keeping my translations colloquial, engaging, and clear for an audience of English-speaking tourists. There is a balance between needing to translate everything and needing to make the writing clear, colloquial, and engaging.

Another previous learning goal was to understand and successfully navigate office dynamics and office politics. My new modified goal is to use my improved understanding of office politics and dynamics to better handle periods in which I have multiple active projects for different people. This will enable me to continue performing translations for The Florentine, working on Instagram company promotions for Flod, and to start taking on more projects for Mr. Badiani, for whom I created an Excel document recently.

This internship includes many experiences that build skills and encourage cross-cultural navigation, adding value, breadth, and depth to my resume. First, working in another country for a private company for a full semester is the ultimate cross-cultural internship experience.

It builds upon my previous internship experiences as a teaching assistant for European history and culture at an artistic magnet high school, creating and executing a lesson plan on Western European art over time, as an International Program Assistant for Advanse International, performing research and administrative tasks for a consulting organization, and as an International Program Coordinator for Advanse International, creating and delivering presentations and mentoring Italian student-interns.

This internship at Flod in Florence also builds on my previous international experiences. These include a summer program in advanced French language in Nantes, France in 2016 and classical vocal education and basic Italian language instruction with the Bel Canto Institute in Florence, Italy in 2014.

The social media capabilities that I have obtained can be featured prominently on my resume as well. Social media skills are in high demand in the work world today.

The translation and Italian and English language skills that I have developed through this internship can be applied broadly. These are in-demand skills, and they connect closely to my career goals. They help me to promote cultural diplomacy, contribute to social entrepreneurship, and construct a globally-focused artistic and cultural career.