

Empowering your Career Capabilities – Gear yourself up *by Stephanie Wong*

My final year is coming to an end. Looking backwards, I am so grateful that I experienced a fruitful university life in the past 4 years. University is a place where I can have the time to explore different options and find out the things that I am passionate about. It is also a place that enabled me to gear myself up and achieve my career goals. I am so delighted that these experiences have helped to make my job-hunting process a smooth one.

Explore your career interests ahead

It is never too early to consider what sort of jobs you would like to do upon graduation, yet it will be too late if you start to consider it in your final semester as many multinational firms open their recruitment process in semester A of our final year. Many of them require related previous internship experience, which we already need to acquire in our year 2 and 3 semester break. Therefore, it is always advisable if students can have related internship experience which can increase their chance to seek for graduate positions in their final year.

Seek for career advice

So how can we know which industries/positions are suitable for us? For me, apart from searching secondary information online, e.g. LinkedIn, I also joined different mentoring programmes to seek for career advices. For example, I joined the career mentoring programme offered by the Department of Management where I received insightful advices from business practitioners who are also the alumni of the Department. What can be better than first-hand information provided by people who work in the industries and companies that we are interested in. Through joining these activities, I was given the insight to understand more about the daily operations of the jobs that I am interested in as well as the challenges that I will be facing. Also, I learnt more about the skills that the roles required, thereby helping me equip myself with these kinds of skills earlier.

Broaden your horizon

I joined different exchange programmes throughout my university life. During my year one summer break, I joined study tours to Seoul and London, while in my year 2 summer break, I participated in Sino Group's "Pilot Scheme on Corporate Summer Internship on the Mainland and Overseas 2018" and completed an internship in Singapore. In my year 3 study, I went on a semester exchange to the Australian National University. For me, they were all life-changing experiences as it was the first time I got the opportunity to live, study or work in a foreign language environment for such a long time. I learned about different cultures which helped me to see things from different perspectives and most importantly develop a global mindset. In my freshman year, it was hard for me to seek for internship as many companies usually target year 2 and 3 students. In order not to leave my CV blank and waste my entire summer, I decided to step out of my comfort zone and go on exchange. I am so glad that I made the correct decision to do so. These experiences have not only enriched my university life but also helped me to stand out from other students when I applied for internship and graduate positions. Apart from that, it sharpened my language skills which helped me to excel in assessment centres of the graduate programme.

Yes! It is a rocky road

No matter if you are looking for an internship or a graduate position, it is never a smooth path, rather quite frustrating sometimes. There was a summer when I sent my CV out to more than 50 positions and just a few of them had updates. And sometimes even though you thought you aced in the interview; you may get no response back. I was deeply discouraged back then but I believed that the harder I tried, the higher chances I had to succeed. Mostly importantly, I learnt from my mistakes and reflected on my performances every time, e.g. whether the failure of interview was due to nervousness or lack of preparation on that topic, and never committed those mistakes again. Never give up. One day an email with a "Congratulations" headline will pop up in your mailbox. You have nothing to lose, so why not continue and try?

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