

Internship in the USA

From November 2001 to February 2002 I spent 12 weeks in the United States of America.

I was working as an intern at D., Seabrook, New Hampshire for 10 weeks. D. (www.d.....com) is a company that produces all kinds of cable connectors, i.e. for submarines and artificial hearts, with at least 150 employees. But I was not working in that field because my profession is psychology. I worked as an intern in the Human Resources Department. I should not say department because the department only consisted of one person, a lady who was my supervisor during that internship as well.

The first day of my internship I did not expect my supervisor to be at work because I knew that she was on vacation. I was meant to be introduced to the company by someone else. But surprisingly she was there and introduced me to the whole company. She was very friendly and open, as were almost all of the employees I met.

The first week of my internship I did not work at all. On the second day my supervisors took me Christmas shopping because she still was on vacation. After that I was shown my "office" (I shared a room with two other employees, but I had my own desk and my own computer) and the rest of the week D. was shut down because of the Thanksgiving holiday.

So I really got started in my second week. I talked to my supervisor about possible projects I could do. We decided that I would conduct an internal customer service survey, that was on the to do list of the Human Resources Department. Since I have a background in business psychology my supervisor was eager to see how I would manage that project. Overall she was very supportive and we discussed the things I was working on a lot of times.

The problem was working with her bosses. Those two managers gave different information about the goals of the survey and about the way to do it. The

communication between them was not very effectively and it took a long time until I really knew what I should do exactly and what they wanted.

Meanwhile I was doing research on the internet. I found a lot of information about how to conduct a survey and a lot of samples. So I tried to construct a survey that would fit the objectives of D. as well as the structure.

But as I mentioned above it was not very easy to please the managers and I had to adjust the survey a lot of times because the managers could not decide how they wanted the survey to be. So I was talking to one or the other manager, talking to other employees and my supervisor as well and making a lot of changes.

It took at least six weeks until the final version of the survey was ready to be presented to the employees.

Since D. was also shut down during Christmas time I did not have much time left to actually conduct the survey.

Finally, after Christmas the questionnaires were distributed amongst the employees. I asked them to return the surveys as soon as possible and provided a box in the front hall so that the questionnaires could be returned anonymously.

During the last week of my internship I put the results into the computer and tried to present them to the managers in a way that they would be easy to understand and also be helpful and useful to work with.

Unfortunately I did not have the time to work with the people and the results, so that I hope that my work was helpful for the company and that the results of the survey are being worked with.

To give an overall impression of the internship I have to say that on the one hand I have learned a lot about the american working life and about how difficult it can be to work in a setting where communication is the biggest problem. But on the other hand I was disappointed that I did not have the chance to work with a psychologist to learn from. I would say my internship at D. rather was a cultural than a professional experience.

I would not recommend it for another internship in the field of psychology, even though the people were very nice and helpful and the working atmosphere was positive.

The last two weeks of my stay in the United States I used for travelling. First I took the Bus to Montreal, Canada to stay there for a couple of days. After returning to New Hampshire I left for the west coast where I visited some friends in Portland, Oregon. Having another friend staying in Vancouver, Canada, as well I decided to make another trip to Canada and visited that friend as well.

During Christmas time, while D. was shut down, I took the chance to see another part of the United States and went to Florida. A friend and I decided to take the car to go there. That was a long trip but I also had the chance to see a lot of things while we were taking breaks in different places, i.e. New York City and Miami.

In total I think I have made a lot of experiences and a lot of new friends which makes the time I have spent in the United States very valuable for me even though not all the experiences seemed positive at first. But I personally think that all experiences are good because they are experiences to learn from.