

Report of my stay-abroad in Vancouver/Canada

Name: Magnus G.

Time: 09-27-02 until 12-23-02

Location: Vancouver / Canada

Homestay:

My homestay parents have been very nice and friendly. They have been a few years older than me so we had interesting talks and discussions because of similar interests. Thus I was able to practice and improve my English.

Additionally living in a homestay family led to recognize differences regarding the culture between Germany and Canada.

With me there lived two students more, whom I got along with. Coming from different continents I have experienced insights in the Asiatic and Latin American culture.

Every student got its own room. The kitchen was available for everyone. Food was ok, too. It has been taken care of special wishes regarding the food. I prepared my breakfast by myself, because I was the first who left the house in the morning. My homestay mother prepared lunch packages, that included sandwiches and a beverage. In the evening I had a warm meal for dinner. Because every student did not return simultaneously, we rarely ate all together. In that case the meals were deposited in the fridge so we could warm up the meal whenever we wanted.

The washing-machine and dryer could be used without a restriction. In addition to this several TVs were available to the students.

Even though the short description of my homestay which I have received in advance, was about an internet access for the students, there was not internet connection at my homestay at all. So we had to bypass to public Internet Cafes.

I received useful recommendations and advices from my homestay parents regarding sights, pubs, clubs and activities in Vancouver and surroundings.

To summarize I really enjoyed my homestay family. I got along with them all the time.

Business School: A. College

At A. I participated in the Business English-Course BEC III. I really liked the lessons particularly because I only had Asian class-mates, so that interesting discussions and exchanges of experiences could arise. Despite our instructors presented many interesting topics to us, the talk-ratio of the instructor was to high in my opinion. Nevertheless I liked the choice of the topics.

The difficulty level of the course varied. On the one hand some homework and essays have been very sophisticated and demanded a high effort of time. But on the other hand other assignments have been pretty easy.

To summarize I could take benefit from my attendance at A.-College, because at the beginning of my Vancouver trip it was a good chance to get used of the spoken English and to overcome the shyness to talk about difficult topics in English.

Furthermore I succeed to get to know good friends in my class. That was important for activities in the leisure time.

Support from the representative of the exchange organisation in Vancouver

The support from the representative of the exchange organisation in Vancouver was great. Starting with the picking up at the airport to the placement regarding an internship opportunity, everything was organised excellently. In the case of questions and worries I was able to reach Timothy W. even at the weekend around the clock.

This tremendous assistance at Vancouver was a big contribution to the great time I had in Vancouver.

My internship at a broker company

S., is a well-known and one of the biggest broker companies in Canada.

My main assignments were the acquisition of new clients, the preparation of seminars and the creation of support instruments for the investment advisers along with Microsoft Office.

At S.'s request the interview took place without the presence of Timothy. I spoke with two Investment Executives and one assistant about possible tasks for the case of an internship. I expressed clearly my expectations. The atmosphere during the interview was comfortable and the content sounded very interesting, but I also realized that the broker have a lot of time-pressure and that it would be up to me to show self-initiative and to claim challenging assignments.

The first days I supported the assistant of some brokers in doing back-office-tasks. Those also included tasks, which were not that much interesting, for instance a lot of administration and filing. But particularly at the beginning of my internship it was important to get used to the way how clients' data have been organized.

According to the branch manager my task was to support four Investment Managers depending on their quantity of work. The advantage of that was to get to know different investment styles and strategies, because young brokers are focussed on building up their business by acquiring prospects while experienced brokers emphasize to take care of their existing clients.

When one broker was too busy to supervise me I addressed one of the other three.

Unfortunately the coordination between the brokers did not always work out well. On some days they were all absent because of holidays or business meetings etc., while on other days they demanded my help simultaneously. Additionally some brokers have not been reliable regarding their announcements.

Consequently I worked with and for only one Investment broker, Peter B., the next weeks who has created projects, I was responsible for on my own. 80% of his work time he tries to acquire prospects. So it was my job, too, to phone prospects on the base of directories and try to invite them to seminars, that were given by Peter himself.

I enjoyed those projects, because I had the opportunity to practice and improve my English. In addition to this prospects with a lot of assets are difficult to reach, because they are busy or their assistants and secretaries try to filter the amount of phone calls for them. Thus I also could test and improve my sales abilities.

Furthermore I accompanied Peter to presentations of investment funds and to presentations of companies, which were just before an IPO. Those meetings took place at exclusive locations (e.g. Hotel Vancouver, Hotel Four Seasons) and generally a free-lunch was served. I was considered as an equal employee of S. and had the chance to talk to Managers and CEOs of big companies and to shake their hands.

To summarize I did not gather so much new aspects regarding investment strategies or financial instruments, because most of them I already knew because of my studies in Germany or my bank-apprenticeship.

But I have gathered a great insight in the corporate-culture of a North-American company. The client relation and the relationship between employees themselves are totally different in comparison to Germany. Employees hardly do not talk about private topics. Furthermore they are very succinct, because they have a lot of time pressure and their salaries are full commission-based. They focus on their clients.

Additionally I took the chance to improve my English. S. gave me the opportunity and confidence to phone with prospects on my own. Certainly I will benefit in the future from the experiences that I had.

Not only did I have contact with my co-workers in the office, I also got along with them in the leisure time. We went together to the gym or to a bar.

Peter even invited me for dinner to his home and introduced me to his family.

S. also invited me to the big Christmas-party, that took place in the Vancouver-Club“. I always got the feeling being part of the staff.

Peter B. had a big part in the success of my internship, because it was important for him, that I took as much impressions as possible with me. He made sure, that I had challenging assignments to do.

But I also want to mention the following negative aspect. I got the luck, that one co-worker was absent for some weeks, so I was able to use unrestrictedly his desk with his workstation. When this colleague returned during my last week at S., I could not continue my projects, because there has been no workstations left. Despite of my own initiative the system administrator did not seem to take potential solutions into consideration. On those days I just could use workstations temporarily during the lunch break of the colleagues or when they had a meeting.

I would like to give potential interns at S. the advice not to be shy. It is necessary to express expectations clearly and not to stop claiming tasks. Because of the employee's time-pressure, potential students should not hesitate to remind them walking the talk. But without a student's initiative staff-members will hardly pay attention to them.

Hamburg, 01-27-2003

Magnus G.