Overview

As my summer in London ends, it is time for me to reflect on the things I have done, the lessons I have learned and take with me, and the advice I would pass along to next year’s London Experience group. I view this reflection as an opportunity for me to collect and organize my thoughts and also as an opportunity to provide you with a summary of my summer.

Notable Events

– House of Lords with PwC

  One of my most unique and memorable events summer was being invited to lunch at the House of Lords on behalf of the Libyan British Business Council. It was such a privilege visiting the House of Lords – an incredible facility with rich history and tradition. The ceremonial procedure I witnessed at the lunch from the gentleman who introduced The Rt Hon. The Lord Trefgarne PC and proceeded to stand behind him while he spoke before announcing the exit of Lord Trefagrne and following him out to the wait staff who moved about the patio in a finely choreographed fashion – had to have been one of the coolest experiences of my trip.

  Following lunch with the LBBC, we took a walk around the Parliamentary estate and visited the Sport and Social Club by holder of the keys to the Parliamentary Estate and long-time friend of my PwC colleague, Ray Jackson. The estate was breathtaking from the seemingly endless corridors and chambers to standing on the opposite side of the fences from the public and even standing directly under Big Ben!

– Product Launch Marketing with PwC

  o Day to day work at PwC’s Global Crisis Centre was never predictable. One day I was chartering jets and the next day I was updating our website. I greatly enjoyed working in such a fast-paced, dynamic environment.

  o During my time at PwC, I worked closely with the Global Crisis Centre’s marketing consultant, Dominic Parker. Dominic, who now manages his own marketing consulting firm, was formerly PwC’s youngest ever sales and marketing director. Working with Dominic was not only a tremendous opportunity for professional development but he also helped me gain exposure to several fascinating projects. I had an opportunity to combine two interests of mine: video production and business; helping to produce a video package to be part of an upcoming product launch. I worked with the Global Crisis Centre team and an external video production group to produce a video in preparation for an upcoming product launch. I added value to this project by quickly translating between the video group and the rest of the GCC team; in the end, producing a professional video to introduce our new product to the market. I am looking forward to seeing the fruit of our efforts on PwC’s website when the new product launches.

– High-Priority Government Crisis Project
While at PwC this summer, I had the privilege of working on a high-profile project sponsored by the firm’s Global Chairman, Kevin Ellis. The pro-bono project was intended to help government agencies mitigate ongoing risk in addition to rapidly providing aid to victims of a disaster. This project was fascinating to be a part of because of the direct effect we had on a high-profile disaster. Our actions each day were either reported on the front page of newspapers or influenced by front page headlines. The firm’s involvement in this project was highly confidential and thus we had to abide by strict data classification procedures. Any even seemingly insignificant leak of information about the project would be detrimental to both the firm’s reputation and the government’s handling of the disaster. Ultimately through quickly mobilizing to support a government agency in chaos, we helped bring them closer to business as usual- positioning ourselves for subsequent fee-paying work. As part of this project, I worked in the project management workstream – coordinating objectives of the overall project and dependencies between parallel workstreams. Throughout the project I was responsible for tracking our spending on project hours – ensuring time was charged to the appropriate cost center and reflective of hours previously agreed to. This was a great way for me to learn the intricacies of finance operations in a large firm.

Learning and Development at PwC

Learning and development is a large part of the corporate culture at PwC. Resources for learning and development are not only readily available but taking advantage of them is an expectation. I took courses on maintaining brand continuity through our deliverables, managing engagement finances, and much more! I particularly enjoyed learning about how PwC brands themselves. I was most surprised to learn PwC’s branding guidelines encourage writing deliverables in a conversational style – avoiding technical jargon and overly formal writing. The firm sees producing boring reports which aren’t read as a significant risk to their value proposition. Additionally, as part of my role on a project, I learned how potential engagements are assessed from a risk and quality standpoint. Throughout my role on the project, I was expected to identify gaps in my knowledge and find relevant courses to close gaps.

Networking at PwC

When it comes to thriving at an organization like PwC, getting inside is only half the battle; once on the inside, you must continually sell yourself to others to be resourced onto top engagements. Top engagements aren’t resourced by drawing names from a hat but instead through networks of top performers. Who you know can greatly impact engagements you are resourced onto and thus, the trajectory of your career. Additionally, professionals at PwC have extensive networks in industry from clients on previous engagements or former colleagues in industry. These connections are essential to remaining relevant in your industry and becoming a trusted advisor. Your interview gets you in the door -your networks helps you thrive and stay.

Jackson Browne with my landlord, Peter Clarke
One of the coolest experiences I had this summer was seeing Jackson Browne live at the Royal Albert Hall with my landlord, Peter. Peter Clarke, is a retired production manager and owner of Supermick Lighting. Peter managed international tours of U2, Michael Jackson, Tom Jones, The Clash, and many more. Peter also managed production for the wedding of Charles and Dianna in 1981. Now retired, Peter keeps in touch with many of his former clients, including Jackson Browne. After talking to Peter about his former business and sharing my experiences in TV, he invited me to Jackson Browne at the RAH to meet some of his former colleagues and show me around. In addition to a tour of the magnificent RAH, I met Jackson on stage during rehearsal, and sat with his wife from the artist’s box. A fun night of great music and interesting people!

My set-up for a future at PwC

Concluding my summer in London at PwC, I received an offer to return next summer with another GSU Honors student in tow. I am very proud of this offer and consider it the ultimate compliment following a summer of hard work. I am thrilled to return to PwC next summer, be part of some of the firm’s most fascinating engagements, and learn even more from some of the brightest in business. GSU’s footprint in London is growing – and I’m proud to be a part of it.

Key Takeaways

Business is 70% politics and 30% technical

I was most surprised to learn just how political life is when working in an organization like PwC. Melanie was upfront with me on day one that politics are fact of life at PwC and effectively navigating them is essential to success. According to Mel, “success here is 70% political and 30% technical.” While I found this notion surprising at first, I saw it play out time and time again throughout the summer. The most prominent example occurred while at the Royal Albert Hall for The Prince’s Trust Business in the Community awards dinner. After introducing a product PwC had been working on to help match non-profits with donors in times of disaster, Mel stepped off stage and stood in the front row of a small crowd. Standing directly behind her were two individuals engaging in a conversation about how unimpressed they were with the product Mel just introduced. Once presentations were over, Mel walked over to me and asked my colleague Dom to, “Go meet those two individuals over there – I think you would be interested in what they’re up to.” Upon Dom’s return, Mel asked where they were from and upon learning they were from PwC, noted their names. Mel remarked, “That’s a career limiting move. You never know who is listening to you. Therefore, you always tow the company line in public.” This incident was a great reminder that a seemingly innocent comment made in the wrong company can be detrimental to your career. As you climb the ranks in a large organization the relationships you are able to build and maintain define where you’ll go.

Never turn down an opportunity to grow your network
After learning the importance of networking not just for getting a job but thriving within an organization, I never turned down an opportunity to meet new people at work. Opportunities to meet new people were all around – from chatting with people before meetings to getting to know people at after work drinks. By attending and actively participating in social events, I strengthened relationships with colleagues I worked with on a daily basis while building relationships with others across the firm. Getting to know your colleagues on a personal level helps build trust – essential for working as a team in a stressful environment. Additionally, I enjoyed sharing stories with other interns across PwC.

Advice to Next Year’s Group

– At your internship
  - At your internship, say yes to any project you can. Even seemingly mundane or insignificant projects can be of great benefit to you – helping to build your professional reputation, exposing you to new skills, and introducing you to new people. The most valuable things I gained while working at PwC was increased soft-skill proficiency, new connections in a field I am interested in, and a greater understanding of what I am looking for and a career post-graduation.
  - Dive into your team and your work from day one. The sooner you connect with others on your team and prove you can contribute, the more opportunities you will have and the more you will gain from your experience. Your employer isn’t looking for a robot – showcase your personality and be yourself. All while being professional, of course. Be confident! You are in London for a reason.

– Once you arrive
  - Once you arrive in the UK, getting settled into your new home can seem like a daunting task but with some planning, it doesn’t have to be! I found choosing the optimal Oyster card payment scheme and opening a UK bank account to be the two most challenging aspects of settling into London. When it comes to choosing the optimal Oyster card payment scheme for your situation, the two factors that will have the greatest influence on your decision are which zones you are traveling between and days per week you will travel by tube. Building a simple model in Excel to determine your cost per day under various scenarios is the best way to choose the optimal scheme. Keep in mind, costs for the same tube services can differ by nearly 100% between schemes. Opening a UK bank account as an intern who is only in the country for 3 months is a matter of luck and tact. Banks are generally uninterested in completing the legally required research to verify your identity and comply with anti-money laundering regulations for an intern who is only in the country for 3 months. To have the best chances at opening your account: come prepared with all required documents (your visa, proof of address, and letter of employment); be courteous to the banker; and most importantly - keep trying different banks until you find the yes you are looking for!

– With your cohort
Taking time to meet and bond with your cohort will go a long way to helping you settle into your new life in London – filling your weekends with fun activities and others to share internship stories with. Although my group did not, I would recommend planning an outing in Atlanta prior to your trip so everyone can get to know each other before London. Putting together a group message for everyone to plan events and share stories worked quite well for us. It was always easy to find someone looking to go the museum or visit a town with you! Our cohort bonded which not only made our transition to life in the UK easier but also fostered friendships.
Dalton Muzyka

GSU Honors College – London Experience
Dalton Muzyka

GSU Honors College – London Experience
Dalton Muzyka

GSU Honors College – London Experience
Dalton Muzyka

GSU Honors College – London Experience
Dalton Muzyka

GSU Honors College – London Experience