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Professor Duvall

CYSE 368

COVA CCI Cyber Clinic Internship Reflection

What went right?

One of the things that went really well during this internship was getting the chance to work with our new client, Omnicruit. Even though losing our original client set us back at first, working with Omnicruit turned out to be a great experience. My team and I got to learn so much about real consulting work and how small businesses deal with cybersecurity. It gave us hands-on experience and helped us apply what we learned in class to actual problems. We had good communication, stayed on task, and came up with real solutions they could use. It made everything feel more real and impactful, and I walked away from it feeling like I made a difference.

What went wrong?

Not everything went smoothly, though. What went wrong was definitely our original client, Jonathan Cares. They stopped communicating with us and ultimately ghosted us. We had spent so much time preparing for our first meeting with them we made posters, planned out questions, and were ready to get to know them and their business. But they didn't show up, and we didn't hear from them again. That was frustrating, especially because other teams were already moving forward with their clients while we were still trying to find a new one. Once we

got Omnicruit, we had less time to complete everything, and it really put the pressure on. But we pushed through, stayed focused, and got it all done in time.

What are your personal lessons learned?

One personal lesson I learned is that cybersecurity just isn't a priority for everyone, especially small businesses. It doesn't mean they don't care, it's just that they're focused on running their business day-to-day, and sometimes cybersecurity isn't on their radar until something bad happens. That helped me understand that part of my job is being patient and explaining things in a way that makes sense for them. Another lesson I learned was to stop letting fear hold me back. I was nervous about the Valor Top 10 activity because I had to talk to strangers and do interviews, and that kind of thing usually makes me uncomfortable. But once I actually did it, I realized I was capable and I even enjoyed it. That moment helped build my confidence and reminded me to try new things, even if they seem scary at first.

If you could do the project over, what would you do differently?

If I could do this internship all over again, I would definitely speak up more during open discussions. There were times I had ideas or things I wanted to say, but I held back. I feel like I could've learned even more and contributed more if I'd pushed myself to talk more. I also wish I had made more of an effort to talk to other students outside of my group. Everyone was doing interesting work, and I could've picked up more ideas and perspectives by connecting with them more.

How did the internship fulfill or not fulfill the five learning objectives from your Memorandum of Agreement?

The first goal I set was to gain more knowledge about risk management and consulting, and the internship definitely helped with that. We learned about frameworks like NIST, different types of risks, and how to actually help a business understand and deal with those risks. The guest speakers and class lessons helped make it all come together in a way that made sense.

My second goal was to improve my communication skills when talking to companies, and I met that goal too. Doing interviews and assessments with real business owners helped me feel more confident in how I talk about cybersecurity. Greg and Kristin Stephens both gave really helpful tips that I was able to use right away when speaking to clients.

My third goal was to get more hands-on experience and this internship was full of that. We worked directly with a business, did assessments, created reports, and gave presentations. It was a big step up from classroom work and gave me a real idea of what consulting looks like.

The fourth goal was learning how to teach businesses about good cybersecurity practices. I think the design thinking session with Dr. Baaki was a big help with this. It helped us think through how to understand a client's needs and give them solutions that actually make sense for them, not just what sounds good on paper.

Finally, my fifth goal was learning how to assess an organization's cybersecurity needs. We definitely got that experience through our work with Omnicruit. We brainstormed as a team, tested out ideas, and adjusted based on feedback from our classmates, guest speakers, and Professor Duval. That really helped us figure out what would work best for our client.

Describe the most motivating or exciting aspects of the internship. Describe the most challenging aspects of the internship.

The most motivating part of the internship was seeing how happy our client was with the report we gave them. Knowing that we helped their business and that they appreciated our work made me feel proud. It showed me that what I'm doing matters, and it made me want to keep learning and doing more in this field. The hardest part of the internship was the time crunch after our original client dropped out. While other teams were ahead and already writing their reports, we were just getting started with a new client. It was stressful trying to catch up, but we stayed focused, worked as a team, and made it happen. That experience really tested our ability to adapt under pressure.

List your recommendations for future interns in this internship. What preparations do interns need before starting the internship?

My advice to future interns is: don't be afraid to ask questions or speak up. Communication really is everything in this internship. Also, make sure you have a basic understanding of cybersecurity especially things like risk frameworks and threat types because it'll help a lot when you're talking to clients. Be ready to write, speak, and work in a team. It's not just sitting in class this internship makes you get out there and apply what you know. And stay flexible, because sometimes things change last minute, and you need to be able to roll with it.

Summarize your main takeaway thoughts from your internship experience. Describe how your internship experience will influence the remainder of your college time at ODU.

My biggest takeaway is that cybersecurity consulting is something I really enjoy. I like the mix of problem-solving, communication, and helping real people protect their businesses. This internship showed me that I can do this kind of work and that I want to keep doing it. This experience already made an impact on my college path. I've decided to minor in risk management because of this internship. It gave me a clearer idea of what I want to focus on moving forward and helped me find something I'm passionate about.

Describe how your internship experience will influence your future professional path or planning.

Before this internship, I wasn't sure if I'd enjoy consulting since my course classes were more on the technical side. But after getting real experience with clients, I realized that I really do like the consulting side of cybersecurity. It's something I now want to pursue in the future. I'm thankful for this opportunity because it helped me discover a new direction in my career.

What are your recommended changes to the course (add, change, keep the same)?

One thing I definitely think should stay is the guest speakers. Every single one of them brought something useful to the table and helped us understand the different sides of consulting. I also think the course should have backup clients lined up, just in case one drops out like ours did. That would help keep everyone on schedule. Lastly, the course could be clearer about where to submit assignments. Sometimes it was confusing whether something should be submitted on Canvas or Google Drive. Maybe just add reminders or announcements on canvas so we don't miss anything by mistake.

Conclusion

I'm truly grateful for this experience and everything it taught me. Being part of the COVA CCI Cyber Clinic helped me grow both personally and professionally. It pushed me out of my comfort zone, gave me real-world insight into cybersecurity consulting, and showed me the kind of work I want to do in the future. I appreciate the time, support, and knowledge shared by the instructors, guest speakers, and my classmates. I plan to carry everything I learned into the rest of my time at ODU and into my career after graduation. This internship has given me skills, confidence, and direction and I will continue to use the knowledge they provided to help others, solve problems, and grow in this field.