

Internship Final Paper

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Section 1:

I must admit that there was no decision made when it came to doing this internship. Throughout my time applying for internships, I was met with rejection after rejection, or no response to my application at all. So, when a family friend offered to help me get an internship at ManTech, I was not going to refuse any help I could get. Three things I hoped to achieve during my internship were as follows: Develop my interpersonal skills in a professional setting, as professionalism is incredibly important and I needed to know if my abilities were up to snuff, I wanted to differentiate what skills that I had were actually going to be used in my professional career, and I also wanted to make a name for myself at the company so that I would hopefully be offered a job after I graduate. Throughout this internship I believe that I have succeeded in all of these goals.

Section 2:

ManTech International is a government contractor based out of Herndon, VA. The company was founded in the 1960s and has since grown to one of the largest government contractors in the world. They serve many government agencies on contracts of various status and importance. During my hiring process, I had to go through many hoops to be cleared to work there, since I would technically be working for the government, I would need to get government identification. When all was said and done, I had my day one orientation, my first day of work was June 24th, and for every new employee, their first day is from home and on Zoom, as ManTech does what they call the Day 1 Experience, this was essentially just listening to a presentation for about four hours, which was able to give us all the details we needed to work effectively at the company, things such as telling us where certain employee services are, or how to do your time card, and how to submit everything in order to get paid.

After my orientation day, I went to where I would be working, it is about 30 minutes away from my house when traffic is not bad, so in the grand scheme of things the commute is not that bad, during my first couple weeks, I really just spent my time sitting in on meetings and meeting the people I would be working with, I was not able to really start doing my own independent work until the third week of

the internship. This is because in order to log into the computer systems where I worked, I needed a special badge that would need to be inserted into a card reader to log me in, when I first tried to get this badge around week two, the people in charge of this messed it up and immediately closed the IT ticket without doing anything, so I needed to wait another week before I could go back down to where they did the badges before I could actually get my badge. But luckily that went relatively quickly, and I got my badge and account at the end of my third week.

Section 3:

The management environment is fairly relaxed. I am not tied down to a set schedule, so I can come in as early as I want to. I usually show up at 6 and work until 2, as traffic is less intense during these times. In the beginning I was being oversaw by two of the programs leads, as they have the time to oversee a new intern, but after I got my badge and began working on my own independent projects, they have become less hands on and have allowed me to work on what I need to during the day. Even though they are no longer dictating my days, they are always there in case I have any questions or concerns, or if I need assistance when it comes to day-to-day duties that I may need for my work. This has allowed me to get a lot more done than I thought I would, as previous internships have been very on-rails for me, and I have not had a lot of freedom to work on my own projects.

Section 4:

So, my major duties have been pretty simple, and I have really only been working on one thing, and that project is a streamlining process for a daily situation report system. In its current state, there are many holes that prevent it from being perfect, and my job was to come up with a way it could be streamlined. In the beginning I just spent my time writing how I think it could be done, my first day on the project I spent 4 hours writing in detail every aspect of how it could be streamlined. After I did that, I realized that a proof of concept would help hammer home my ideas, so I began working on it, and at a certain point I realized that I was no longer creating a proof of concept, but the actual system. One of the major

events for the internship is the Intern Project Expo, that ManTech does every summer for their interns, where they make a poster and display the thing they have been working on, so when I realized that I had to have something to present, I made it a goal that I wanted to get the front end of the system done before the Expo, so that I had the main thing that people would be looking at on display and usable for people to look at and use. So that they could see what they would be working on.

My main goal for this system is to have it up and running by the time the next major event happens, as it will help the people in my section have an easier time managing their situation reports when the next event occurs. My hope is that if I am successful with its development, it will help truly secure me a spot at the company once I graduate.

Section 5:

When I went into this internship, learning what skills I know would be relevant to the job was something that I was truly curious about. But the main things I learned was how cybersecurity was handled in a professional environment. Because everything I knew was based on concepts and hypotheticals, and nothing truly in practice, so coming into a space where cybersecurity was increasingly important helped show me how things are handled. I had to go through trainings at the beginning of the internship that went over things such as how to handle phishing, what not to discuss with strangers or online, and how to classify documents based on their sensitivity. All of this together really painted a new picture of how cybersecurity is actually handled in the workplace.

Section 6:

So, this was also something I wanted to know when I started this internship, I had no idea what skills and information that I have learned at ODU would be relevant to my internship. And when I got there, I found out that while it is helpful to know about all the information that I learned, in this position is not benefitting me in many substantial ways. Now obviously I am not going to complain, or say

that my time has been wasted studying at ODU, because if I came into this internship knowing absolutely nothing about cybersecurity or information technology at all, then I would be struggling a lot more, but in this case, and my ManTech's own admission, 70% of what the employee needs to do on the job is learned on the job. Now with that I am not saying that nothing I learned helped me understand concepts more than someone without the knowledge I learned would understand, because there were times where skills and programs were referred to on the job, such as Wireshark and Nmap, and since I learned about those in class, I was able to follow along much easier than someone who does not know what those are.

Section 7:

So, my three objectives I wanted to complete were to develop my interpersonal skills in a professional setting, I wanted to differentiate what skills that I had were actually going to be used in my professional career, and I also wanted to make a name for myself at the company so that I would hopefully be offered a job after I graduate. Out of all three, I think I have fully succeeded in the first two, and I strongly believe that I have succeeded in the third.

Even though I was nervous about my level of professionalism, after my first few days I knew I had their level of professionalism down, everyone in that office is incredibly kind and laid back, so as long as I returned their kindness with an equal amount of my own, I knew I would be in a good position. I know that if I were to move jobs or do something else after I graduate, I am not guaranteed that level of professionalism, but for where I am now, I know that I can handle what is expected of me.

As I discussed in section 6, I believe that I was able to differentiate what skills that I learned at ODU would actually be relevant to my position. And while I found that they are certainly helpful to have and have benefited me a lot during my time at this job, they are certainly not required to know beforehand, as there are many people and resources who are excited to teach new faces what they do and how they do it. If I were to go into a higher position knowing nothing, then that is

where problems would most likely occur, but since I am coming into the company as an intern, they would be more forgiving if I knew next to nothing.

And for the last one, trying to secure a job after I graduate, I feel strongly that I most likely have given myself a good chance of doing that. I will go into more detail in section 8, but during the expo I had some discussions with some higher ups in the company that impressed them, and they made some comments to my bosses that may encourage them to keep me on long term.

Section 8:

So, like I said at the end of section 7, during the expo I got to show what I was working on to some higher up people at the company, including the CEO, who was impressed with what I had made. To give context, my project was made in a development system that I had no previous experience using, in fact, I had never even heard of it before I started my internship, so the fact that I was able to build what I had, in only a few weeks using only Google to help me, impressed many people, so they were optimistic about seeing it when it is completed, so I believe that if I am able to finish the system and launch it successfully, I will be in a good position when I graduate.

Section 9:

I think the only discouraging things I ran into during this internship have been the roadblocks I have encountered during the development of my project, there were many points where certain algorithms just were not working, even though I was certain the formulas were correct, even though after troubleshooting I found that they were not, but there were so many points where I was terrified that I would not be able to get it working, or times where I realized that the way I wanted to make something just was not possible, and that I had to go back to the drawing board to make something that would actually work. I think the biggest roadblock I ran into though was the week of the expo, I was finishing up the front-end things, and the forums I was using were not working. And at that point I remembered that the CrowdStrike failure was occurring, and that I was effectively in the dark with

what I was doing, as I was finishing up a part that I had no idea how to work. But once the system was back up, I was able to finish the front-end in time for the expo.

Section 10:

I think the most challenging aspects tie into what I described in section 9, I felt a lot of pressure during that stint of development, as I knew that if I showed up to the expo with nothing to show for it, I knew that no one would come to my table and there would be nothing I could use to sell myself as an asset to the company. So, I think the most challenging part of this internship so far is the fear that I would not have the sufficient items to show for my project.

I fully believe that if I just stopped at the concept phase of this project, the comments from the CEO would not have come, my bosses would be much less impressed with me, and I just would not have had as much to say about the project, as having a functional visual aid to show to the people asking about my project was integral to showing people what I was working on and what I could achieve with the resources that were available to me.

Section 11:

Advice I would give to future interns is to explore the options they are given fully, there are multiple sections on this contract, each working on their own stuff that can interest them, there are options to work with hardware, software, policy, and everything of the sort that comes along in this field, and if they show their interest in a certain one, they will most certainly be given the opportunity to go and work in that area as much as they want. These companies take chances on us, and if we can make their job easier on showing them where we want to go, they will give us the opportunities we are asking for. And also go in wanting to learn, I was told by my boss that the reason they hired me was not because someone referenced me, it was because of my attitude and how I presented myself, I made it clear from the get go that my utmost priority in this internship is to learn what I want to do in my future career, and that if I can come out of this internship knowing that I learned

something, I would be happy with what I did. Because according to them, the only thing that having my reference actually did for me getting hired was put my resume in their hands. And honestly that is the best-case scenario for me.

Section 12:

I think at the end of this internship I will confidently be able to say that this was one of the best jobs I have worked in my time as a student worker. My main take away from this experience is that I am much more capable of learning new skills that I thought I was, having to learn essentially a completely new coding language in order to do my project was something that I am impressed with myself that I was able to do. With the future classes I am registered for, for my last semester, I definitely think adding those skills to my skillset will make me even more desirable when I graduate and will hopefully be coming back to ManTech for my career. My hope is that I can continue to grow for my last few weeks of the internship and that I will leave the internship with the opportunity to come back when I graduate.