Internship Final Paper

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Background

This is my final paper for my internship at 360 IT Partners. I have enjoyed working there since November as an unpaid intern and have learned more than I can ask for. Finding an internship for this class was rather difficult. I looked everywhere and asked around to see if people knew of any spot hiring or knew someone in the IT/Cybersecurity departments of work who could possibly hook me up with an internship. Once scavenging the internet I came up empty-handed with not having all of the qualifications or they just simply said no. The other problem was that there were not a lot of options either, if you simply look up IT or cyber internships there aren't a whole lot of options as well as ones that would meet the requirements for this class. As I am in a fraternity I reached out to some of the alumni and of course, they hit me back with a job opportunity. He told me it would be unpaid which I wasn't too fond of but I took what I could get and made the most out of my time with them.

Introduction

Now I decided to do an internship not only because it is required to graduate with a cybersecurity degree but also because it looks great on resumes and is an amazing learning opportunity while still in college and taking other classes. Even if the internship wasn't required by the school I would still have been looking forward to getting one and finding one to start my cybersecurity career. There were definitely a couple of things I wanted to take away from the internship opportunity. One is that I wanted to successfully learn hands-on IT work. Everything they teach you in school is just looking at a paper or slideshow and never actually doing any physical work to transfer over into the world once you graduate. I can say that I did get to do a lot of hands-on activities from simply smashing hard drives to taking out RAM sticks and SSD storage to installing hardware for clientele. It seemed a lot more satisfying to do something like that rather than look at a server on a slideshow and name what is what. Yes that stuff is important to know and that is the building block of learning but at some point, hands-on experience is required to properly succeed in the real world. The second thing I really wanted out of the internship was connections, connections are just as important as any other aspect of finding or getting a job. I made sure to be friendly with everyone as well as help wherever it was I could. Having those connections can really help if you ever have any IT problems you know you have someone to be able to help. But, more importantly, the connections can always come back around to help if I ever need a reference for another job or a recent employer to call for an

upcoming interview. Networking with people and creating connections is so important and a skill that can benefit you a lot if done correctly and give off great vibes to everyone around you. I clearly got this internship because of a connection so I want to take this opportunity and connect with even more people as I've got my foot in the door for job opportunities now and in the future. Something that I wished to achieve but wasn't really able to because it was out of my control was being able to have my own projects or be able to give more input to the company. The only reason I wasn't able to was that obviously I am an unpaid intern so therefore by law they can't have me doing direct work to benefit the company if that makes sense. It was quite unfortunate that I couldn't do more in that way cause it seemed like most days I would go in and just get handed more or so busy work to do for them which I did not mind at all but I know my potential and that I definitely could've helped in bigger roles that would benefit the company. Although I don't regret anything and don't blame the company either as the law is the law and they are only following it.

Companies History

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360 IT Partners is an IT company that has multiple clients all over the US. They are mainly local to VB and the 757 area as that is where the headquarters is located but they also have a ton of clients all in the area. They then have clients that are out of state and even some around the country. A lot of the employees work remotely from home and are able to fix about 70% of problems just from their company computer in their house. Now the last 30% of that is on-site guys which is who I was with most of the time. We have 3 onsite employees who do more of the local issues around Hampton roads and even as far up to Richmond and as far south as the Outer Banks. The rest of the on-site guys are out of state and work being the IT managers of the out-of-state clients. The on-site guys and the remote guys work really well together, a lot of the time if a remote employee can't fix the issue remotely then they will send an on-site guy there to give it a more in-depth look as well as work with the remote employees almost as their eyes all by using the app Teams. 360 IT Partners was founded in 1995 when they were known as TOMAR Computer Integration. They then changed the name to 360 IT Partners as they felt it fit more to the services they provide as they do it all hence 360 covering all sorts of IT troubleshooting jobs. They used to have a huge 9,000-square-foot office but then downsized a lot to a much smaller office after COVID-19 they realized over half of the active employees could just work from home and not have to be in the office every day. 360 IT Partners is known for their customer service as there is always a caller on standby as well as they have on-call employees that rotate every few weeks so that no company is left in the dark in case of an

emergency. The majority of their services include managed services, IT software licensing, cybersecurity and compliance, cloud services, custom websites, IT project work, VoIP communications, staff augmentation, backup and disaster recovery as well as document management solutions. They really do do it all and even more they cover all aspects of the IT/Cyber world. The company although with thousands of clients they only focus on small to medium-sized businesses, one of its biggest clients being the Norfolk International Airport. The companies that they work for are a lot of companies that have no IT department and that is where we step in pretty much as their IT department, now some of the clientele will have like one to two on-site IT technicians that work for that specific company and not us.

Initial Thoughts/Management

My initial thoughts and impressions of the company were interesting. I walked into the office with only 4 people in the entire office as at the time I had no idea that 90% of the company works from home so I was wondering what I had gotten myself into and if this company was serious. Turns out I was completely wrong and they just work very effectively with the majority of the employees working from home. Other than that my first impressions of everyone that I met in the office were good, everyone was nice and very easy to talk to as well and some of the guys in there had similar interests as me like golf or other small hobbies that we both seemed to enjoy, so it was easy to talk with them and got along great. The management style is very easy to follow and doesn't stress me out one bit. I had a couple of "bosses" , the intern's main one and the main point of contact was John Aboc the Operations Manager. He was the guy who interviewed me as well as kept me in the loop about what was going on around the office and what I would be doing for the day. Then there was the CEO of the company Martin Joseph, he wasn't your average CEO that you would typically think of being the boss and just kind of mean maybe or not involved with their employees or whatnot but he is quite the opposite. He was very involved with his employee's lives and would come in every day happy as can be and go around and say hello to every single employee in the office at the time, he would also chat a little with them asking about things going on at home or even just simply asking how their weekend or day was. I had a lot of respect for him as he built this company from the ground up and interacts with the employees the way he does. A lot of the "higher-ups" were all just great people and never seemed like a problem or issue when it came to each other or the employees. Overall the management structure is great and not confusing, everyone is so nice to each other and they all work really well together as co-workers.

Work Duties

Work duties were interesting for this internship because it was unpaid and they couldn't really give me assignments to do myself. It was more of shadowing the technicians and then helping them where I could. Most of the time they would try to give me the majority of the work to do as I would ask to do as much as I could. For the most part, the assignments were doable and I already understood most of them just from being a tech guy my whole life and working on stuff on my own. With that being said there were definitely things I didn't know how to do or had to ask a couple of other questions in order to really understand what it was I was doing. Everything I did was necessary for the company as I would always be working on a ticket for them whenever I went with the on-site guys and shadowed them. Now and then I would do some busy work or just some "chores" for the company like resetting operating systems for clients or resetting and returning devices for clients as well. Things that kind of get done weekly and someone just has to do them. I again didn't mind doing it as I enjoyed the work because it is something I have never done before and always learning something new.

Skills and Knowledge

Prior to this internship, I had already finished all of my major classes for cybersecurity as well as some cyber and IT electives. Going into the internship I was a little worried about if I had a lack of knowledge about cybersecurity and the IT world but I ended up proving myself wrong in this case. I also am just naturally a tech guy myself, I always find myself being the one to help either myself or my friends and families when it comes to any tech issues they are having or IT problems as well. I was fairly confident with what I knew but what worried me was how in-depth they could get for the IT department. Working on-site and with my hands on physical machinery was a nice change of pace when it came to learning new things about the IT world. It really opened up a lot of different feelings as it made me feel more comfortable and happier about learning more content in the tech world. If ODU could I wish there was a class where it is like nothing but hands-on learning as it is so much different in the real world and nothing quite prepared me to work with physical tech tools or just pieces of technology.

ODU Curriculum Prep

The ODU curriculum prepared me as much as they could. Like I said before I finished all of my major classes leaving me almost as prepared as I can be. When it comes to classes though as a Cybersecurity major I definitely took a lot more cyber classes than I did IT classes. The one IT class that this internship really reminded me of was IT 315 as it was a lot of slideshow and notes but almost every week we would do one to two hands-on activities in the classroom. That was always fun and had me really thinking and working about what it is I am working on and how to properly set up a device. The cyber classes more so prepared me for specific parts of the IT world as I didn't have much correlation with a lot of cyber information I learned throughout my time at ODU. It's still good information to know as IT and cyber are pretty much cousins and go hand in hand when applying for either of those kinds of jobs. Working as an intern I experienced a different style of learning, it was more one-on-one and in-depth compared to a class of 20 kids and one professor. Not only does this teach you IT knowledge it also teaches you how to properly work in a corporate setting. That is something I haven't really been taught or shown how to do as that did make me quite nervous and scared of what would happen if I mess up. The professional development side of it is something that you just don't learn in college until you get a professional job and learn those traits. I definitely learned a lot about professionalism and how to act and dress around your co-workers and boss.

Fulfilling Goals

This internship fulfilled two out of my three goals. The two goals I achieved were being able to do my own hands-on work and make connections with co-workers and bosses for future job opportunities. The one goal I wasn't able to achieve was having my own project or own assignments to work on by myself. Fulfilling the goal of doing hands-on work didn't seem too hard of a goal when I originally made it, I was able to do just that and it was very satisfying and interesting to be able to do hands-on work compared to just staring at a screen. The hands-on assignments were nice because although it wasn't really MY assignment it felt like a task I had to do to not let them down. So I am very happy with myself and the company as I was able to complete my goal of doing hands-on work and not just paper pushing or just watching. My second goal was to complete building connections in the workplace as well as professional development in the workplace. The connections part was completely on me as I had to do that myself with networking and building relationships with my boss as well as my co-workers because you never know when you are going to need one of them or even a reference letter or

recommendation from a boss. The other half of that goal was professional development which I feel as if I haven't fully accomplished that goal but I definitely have my foot in the door and kind of know what the flow is when it comes to dressing and acting professionally in a workplace. Now every day when I go in I have to wear a collared shirt and khakis or some sort of chino pants. It isn't super corporate like a suit and tie or blazer and some slacks but you do obviously have to look presentable and professional which I think I managed to do well. So I wouldn't say I quite smashed that goal but I have made a good dent in it and am looking good for future job opportunities. Now my last and final goal is the only one I wasn't able to achieve but was out of my hands when it came to really being able to achieve it or not. It was having my own project or assignment to do and learn all on my own. Now they couldn't really do that because I was unpaid but I was more than willing to try and do something along those lines to prove to myself and them that I am a good worker and can do great things on my own. I guess I could've asked them for an individual project but their internship setup isn't very finalized as they don't normally take interns at this company as well and they don't even have a program for it so I can't blame them also just lucky I got the internship through a connection. So unfortunately that goal I was not able to complete but I did have some smaller tasks that they had me do on my own for the company. Those smaller tasks were just small projects or busy work for me to get done for the company.

Motivation

The most motivating part of this entire experience was being able to learn from the older co-workers there. They had a lot of experience which was nice so I took advantage of it every time so I could learn as much as possible when it came to talking to them. I would ask for advice about what they did out of college and how they built their resume to look good for future job opportunities. They also showed me different traits and skills that I either never thought about or just wouldn't learn from being in a classroom. It really motivated me to work hard and always put in 110% as it will almost always come back around for you. Another motivating part for me was just the hunger to strive to be the best as well and only go up the ladder with jobs and always work on myself to make it to where I can almost get any job as I get older from building myself strongly now. Nothing is better than working on yourself and gaining experience and new opportunities every chance you get. When it comes to exciting parts about the internship there aren't too many as it is an IT internship which isn't the most exciting thing in the world but there still are some cool things I got to see. A lot of the coolest things I would see were the IT rooms or server rooms in our client's buildings. Some of them were really big with cooling towers in there to keep the temperature regulated so nothing would overheat. I was never able to see the server rooms of the Norfolk International Airport as I just never got the chance to go on-site

there but that was one I really wanted to see. Some other cool backrooms were the hospitals or smaller health clinics that they work for as those were very neat and set up nicely.

Discouraging Aspects

Now flipping sides to some of the most discouraging events or aspects of this experience. One was still just the fact of it being un-paid as I feel like that makes the whole thing a little less motivating to go and work there especially if it was something I either couldn't figure out or seemed difficult. It was almost like why am I even here? I'm not getting paid. I have no reason to be doing this for them. But then obviously I would talk sense into myself and say I need it for the experience and resume to be great later on in life. Other than not being paid the other discouraging part of it was not having my own assignments or projects to work on throughout my time at 360 IT Partners. I really wanted to prove not only to myself but to them that I can work on things myself and get it done on time. It was really more so myself that I wanted to prove to them that they never doubted me. I just wanted to feel as if I was able to do things on my own or come in and resume a project I was working on since the last time I was in office. I also thought it would've been pretty cool if I got my own badge or myself into the system. That just wouldn't happen though only because I am not a paid employee. All of the discouraging aspects came from just not being a paid intern as that cuts off a lot of different aspects that I could've been doing if I had a paid internship.

Challenges

Now the challenging parts of the internship also kind of intertwine with the discouraging parts of the internship. Although they aren't exactly the same I do have some differences between the discouraging parts and the challenging parts. A big challenge that I would always find myself having to deal with is learning the software that they use. They use a software called Kesaya which is how they can remote into any of their computers or clients' computers to solve a problem. Just learning the software itself was a challenge as there are so many different aspects of the software that I wasn't forced to learn but wanted to learn just for the benefit of myself. Other than that software I didn't have to learn the rest of their software. Another challenge was learning how to reset an OS and set it up properly for a company. You have to make sure that all files are transferred over unless the company has a cloud that all of their files sit in. If not you physically have to transfer all files over to the new computer once set up properly. Before being

set up properly you must wipe it all and then reset the OS and update the BIOS on the computer. Once that is done they then use this site called Ninite where you can select what apps or software you want to install on their computer. So, for our setups, we set up each computer with the exact software and apps that are used for our benefit as well as some apps like Office and Google Chrome for the employees. You then have to check for all sorts of updates as in the OS and Windows updates as well. Once all of that is done the computer is ready to go for whatever client it is. Other than those there weren't too many challenges that I was unaware of or was scared to get into as a whole. Small challenges were just as mental as being nervous about what was next or if there was something I wouldn't know. But overall the challenges weren't too difficult to overcome.

Future Interns

For a student or just anyone wanting to do an internship, I would highly recommend it. It has nothing but benefits that come along with it and understanding what you want to do in your field. That is a huge plus that people don't realize is once you start your internship you really get a feel for what it is exactly that you want to do in your future for your field. The best way to prepare yourself for an internship is to do your own research on the company, read where they are from, how they started, and what exactly it is they do. If you prepare yourself before your first day they see how much it means to you and that you came prepared knowing what you will be doing and who you are working for. I did my own research on 360 IT Partners and whenever there was something or a piece of information that I wasn't sure about I would either ask my IT professor or just simply look it up on the internet. Doing that I was able to familiarize myself with some of the terminology and just simple stuff they do around the office. Another thing to do that will give you a better look is if your internship is in a corporate office or just honestly any office of sorts is to look up videos on how to properly dress in the workplace. Coming from working a lot of blue-collar jobs growing up and recently I was pretty nervous about how to dress and act in the office. Once I did my own research and watched a couple of YouTube videos on the internet on how to dress or what to wear I felt a lot more confident being able to walk on the first day knowing I looked good and understanding how to act. The majority of the way to prepare is just by having background knowledge of the company and what it is they do. Once you do all of those tasks you should be as confident as ever on your first day.

Takeaways

My main takeaway from the internship was maturing and understanding the real world of how it truly is. At the end of the day it all comes down to how much you want it and how hard you are going to work for it. Going into this internship I had no IT experience or even cyber experience on my resume. They hired me strictly off on the alumni connection I had and he told them how much of a hard worker I am. It sucks that a lot of companies can really only judge and base you on your resume when you can be one of the hardest-working people out there. I was very lucky getting this internship but it just showed me that you should give people a chance even if sometimes they don't seem like the best fit. I understand that it is hard to wrap your mind around and almost seems stupid in a way. But, if you can get a good feeling about someone through an interview or just a couple of times being around them then why not give them a chance? Worst case scenario they aren't exactly what you need or want then you can always just get rid of them. I am happy to say now that my resume just got a little bit better now that I have IT experience as well as professional development through my internship. I have taken away a lot and learned a lot, I don't take anything for granted and was so happy I was able to secure an internship and this one at best as they are a pretty impressive company.

Time at ODU

The Internship experience will play a massive role in the rest of my time at ODU. Not only has it jump started my resume and possible career now but it will help me continue my job-searching journey even after my internship. From here on out I am only taking classes just for credits as I have finished everything required by ODU. This will allow me to focus on my professional development and be able to apply for more jobs and more serious jobs post-college. It also gives me an upper hand now as a lot of kids my age and grade have yet to get an internship or any sort of job in their job field. This allows me to take advantage of that since there is less competition around the area compared to if I were to wait later on to do my internship. The internship has just made me feel more confident overall to transfer into real adult life once I graduate college.

Professional Development

Now when it comes to professional development I couldn't be happier than what I learned from my internship. They have taught me so much about how to develop in the professional workspace. I can only learn more but when it comes to what they have taught me since being there since November. I have learned as much as I can but they also taught me unironically on how to properly plan and do assignments that have a strict deadline. To be successful you would need a proper plan and be strict on that plan in order to get the assignment done correctly and on time. Overall I could not be happier with what I have learned from 360 IT Partners and am extremely grateful to have been given the opportunity to work for them and learn the experience of working with hands-on IT professionals.

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