

TESTIMONIAL - JCU Career Services Center, Fall 2015



Studying at university can open your eyes to many things and give you the opportunity to widen your knowledge horizon from the interaction with amazing professors and great classmates. *John Cabot University* is a perfect environment for this due to the unique combination of the liberal education system and the variety of cultures that mix under the same roof. **But can only studying really prepare you for the real life?** Beyond the classrooms, there are the challenges that firms have to deal with on a daily basis and, no matter how well strategies and approaches to them are explained in the textbooks and case studies: one can never fully understand how things work without having encountered them on his own.

I am graduating in December this year and, while searching for how to plan my future, I thought it would be a great experience to obtain an internship to potentially help me understand where I want to go from here. At the **Career Fair** last Fall, I met a representative of **Absolute Internship**, a company organizing internships for students with companies in Asia. **Hong Kong** was the city I chose because it seemed to be the best fit for my interests, as an Economics and Finance major, who does not speak Chinese.

My internship was in a startup called Bitspark that deals with remittance transfers through digital currencies. The firm is quite young and is still in the process of coming out on the market, but this is certainly not a drawback. **Interning at a startup enables you to grasp the whole picture of the business as the team is smaller and you have to closely interact with all aspects of the firm.** Among the other two interns at Bitspark, my responsibilities were daily updates on the social media platforms of the company, market research and competitors' analysis, economic evaluation on the APEC region and preparation for a pitch the company had to participate in. It is not the first job I had and yet I learned so much more about the life of the firm, investments in Hong Kong, the Asian market and the developing crypto-currencies.

This is not my first experience abroad either; however, to be honest, **I did experience a strong culture shock at the beginning.** Even though Hong Kong is a former British colony, it is far from the truth to claim that everyone speaks English. The climate is very humid and hot, the people are many more even than Rome when crowded with tourists, the buildings are all tall and shiny, and even the traffic is on the left-hand side! Yet even though Hong Kong may have left me speechless at first, it did charm me with its loud street markets, quiet vast parks, the delicious food and the many more contrasts the city is full of. The month I spent there was full of discoveries about the culture of the city, meetings with people from all over the world and life-lessons about who I am and who I want to be.

Taking a full time internship in a foreign country is not an easy thing to do, but I consider it an incredibly enriching experience that leaves a mark on you, not only as a student and future employee, but also as a person. By challenging yourself and exploring the unknown for you, you can truly enrich your personality and develop qualities and skills that will be really useful later on in life when we step out into the real world.

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