

Case study collection

For the completion by returning student interns
(including solutions)

Elaborated by Tabea Heinz, UAS Kempten and LeTo partners MTI Lapland &
NHTV Breda

IO 4 Erasmus+-Project Learning Tourism (LeTo)

The case studies, developed for the completion by returning interns, serve to reinforce the experiences gained during the internships and build a link between practical knowledge and academic expertise.

The case studies describe specific situations a bachelor-student can encounter during an international internship.

Topics can be:

- Related to the country (e.g. cultural issues, language issues)
- Related to the internship tasks (excessive workload/sparse workload, missing knowledge, bad preparation)
- Related to the intern (e.g homesickness, free-time boredom)
- Related to the organisation (accommodation issues, visa issues)

Returning interns will have time to read through the case studies and - supported by online and desk research and practical experiences gained during the internship - find answers to the posed questions (the section 4 *Possible solutions* is not to be handed out to the students but serves the lecturer to give feedback). The outcomes are presented during the mentoring week after the internship and the students give mutual feedback.

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Case study #1:

OUT OF TASKS

Author: Tabea Heinz, UAS Kempten

Abstract

Mentoring accounts an important task before, during and after students obligatory internships. Especially, if an internship is executed abroad the mentoring during the internship by a company mentor takes on an important role to guide the intern as influence from the university decreases with higher distances. This case study shows, which problems can occur between a mentee and a company mentor and that many influence factors can impair or improve the situation.

Lisa successfully applies for an internship with a tour operator in the city of Dublin. Her responsibilities will be the organisation and execution of group tours in Ireland and the U.K.. She and her mentor Emily get along well during the job interview via Skype, but when Lisa arrives in Dublin, Emily is on parental leave.

Keywords: internship abroad, challenges, mentoring, company mentor

1. Introduction

This case study serves to reinforce the experiences gained during your internship and to build a link between practical knowledge and academic expertise. The elaboration of outcomes for the case studies is inductive with little involvement of the lecturer (bottom-up). Your task is to read through this case study, to develop possible solutions to the challenges stated in the case study using gained experience and desk research, to present your outcomes to fellow students and finally to give feedback on each others outcomes. You can work in teams (maximum three students) or on your own.

2. Case presentation

Lisa always dreamed of an internship abroad in an English speaking country within the EU. Therefore the vibrant city of Dublin seemed a good choice to fulfil this wish. As Lisa is studying Tourism Management at the University of applied sciences in Kempten, she used the university's online database where internship companies of former interns are listed. Quickly she found the tour operator *Isle Tours Ltd.* that had a free vacancy of an internship job. On their homepage the following job description was posted:

Are you looking for a great personal challenge and possibility to enhance your future career? *Isle Tours Ltd.* offers six months internships for international students from October 2016 - March 2017. Our premises are situated right in the middle of the bustling city centre of Dublin.

Your tasks will be:

- Organisation and execution of group tours throughout Ireland and the U.K.
- Online-(Marketing)
- General commercial operations like accounting, customer service and associates services

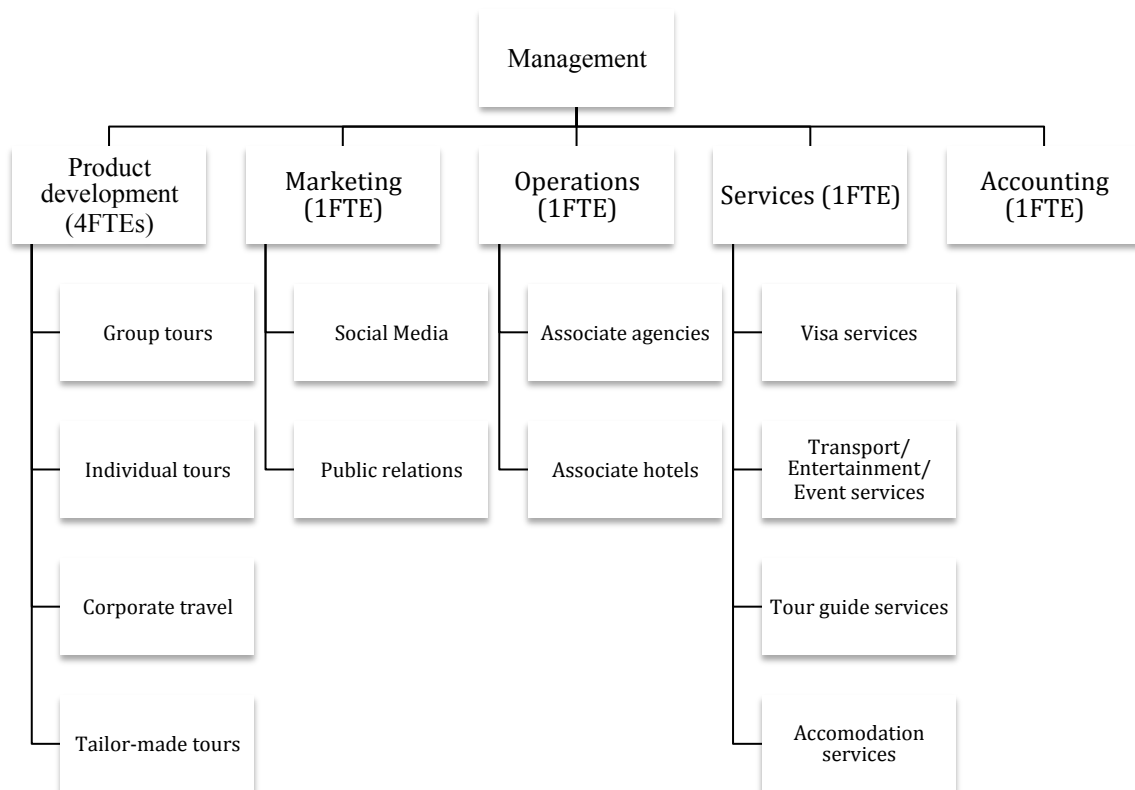
What we wish to find in you:

- Outgoing and proactive personality
- Flexibility and the ability to work in teams
- Fluent in English

If you are interested in working in a great team we are looking to receive your application via e-mail to application@isletours.com.

Lisa got all excited, applied for the internship and after an enjoyable job interview via Skype, where she got to know her potential mentor Emily, she received an e-mail from Emily congratulating her on the position.

During the next weeks Lisa prepared for the internship and passed the introduction seminar of the university, All in all she felt excitement and had the feeling to be well prepared. She also found the organisation chart of *Isle Tours Ltd.*, which made it easier for her to understand the structure and responsibilities within the company



Isle Tours Ltd. has eight full-time employees working for the founder and manager Ryan. Emily, Lisa’s mentor, is working within the product development and is responsible for the organisation of group tours.

On Lisa’s first day at work, she finds out that Emily was pregnant and now is on parental leave. Her substitution Laura just started working for *Isle Tours Ltd.* one week ago. After a short introduction to everybody including three other inters, her desk and the operating computer system, Lisa spends her first days of the internship working through archived proposals and executed tours to get to know the product better. She also analyses the tour operator’s homepage and notes down first suggestions for improvement based on what she’s learned in her Marketing lecture in

Kempton. At the beginning of the second week, Lisa feels a little bit lost about what to do next. She resolves to speak to Laura and to ask if she needs help. When she finds Laura at her desk, she is totally under stress and struggles with finishing an overdue proposal. As she has to finish this quickly, she cannot take the time to introduce Lisa to the system. Moreover, she herself has problems overlooking all functions of the computer software, as it is only her third week. Lisa returns back to her desk and continues reviewing old documents. This task fills up her first month of the internship at *Isle Tours Ltd.* After four weeks, Laura finds time to introduce Lisa to the software and demonstrates the process of developing a proposal for a customized group tour. After that, she mostly asks Lisa to make phone calls to hotels and agencies to request room or tour availabilities and prices.

Lisa spends most of her weekends travelling around Ireland and also undertakes one trip to the U.K.. She is either accompanied by her roommate from Denmark or fellow students from the internship community in Dublin she found via Facebook.

After three months Lisa felt like working under her full potential and is hoping for a challenge to come up. As she has seen Ryan just twice, who is usually in his office or on business trips around the country, she is hopeful when she meets him one day in the little office kitchen. She asks him, if he knows something she can do as a project for the rest of her internship. Ryan answers that her mentor is one hundred per cent responsible for the delegation of Lisa and that she is advised to find appropriate tasks for her. With these words he leaves the kitchen for another business trip.

3. Questions

Question 1: Analyse Lisa's situation and give recommendations for a suitable behaviour and actions.

Question 2: Make recommendations on how Lisa's free time activities can be linked with her internship.

Question 3: Describe international interns as a touristic target group for tour operators within the destination. (Question can be complemented by "Develop a marketing plan for this special target group from *Isle Tours Ltd.*'s perspective")

4. Possible Solutions

Question 1:

To analyse Lisa's situation various tools for situational analyses can be used. The SWOT analysis for example service to identify Lisa's internal strengths and weaknesses as well as the external opportunities and threats during her internship.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proactive personality (application, recommendations for homepage improvements) - Self-reliance - Social skills (contacts outside the office) - Eager to learn new things (computer software, travelling to learn about the culture) 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No relationship at work - Lack of expectations - Timidness (no third party included)
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internship contract - Fellow interns - Laura - Home university (internship commissioner) - Ryan - Other departments 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ryan - Missed career opportunity - Dismissal

Lisa's strategy should be to use her strengths to make the best out of the opportunities, prevent the threats and balance her weaknesses.

Strategy:

- Use the internship contract to clarify the tasks agreed upon before the internship started
- Speak and team-up with fellow interns to find out, if they have similar challenges (e.g. invite them for a leisure time activity)
- Speak and team-up with Laura to learn together, as they both are in a similar situation not knowing the company
- Contact home university and acquire assistance to solve the issue and gain more relevant tasks
- Ryan is an opportunity and a threat at the same time. It could resolve in hustle within the company and problems for Laura, if Lisa acquires him again. Otherwise, masking use of her proactive personality, Lisa could present him a piece of work e.g. a Online Marketing plan
- Contacting other departments, especially the Marketing department, presenting the suggestions for improvement for the homepage.

Question 2:

As Lisa is very active during her free time, she should make use of this and benefit the company.

Travelling the same destinations which *Isle Tours Ltd.* offers in their portfolio she could volunteer to write first hand experience reports for example in a blog or for the social networks.

Moreover, she could invite her fellow interns to group up and organise a trip together. To do so, she could use the insight from the company to get to know associate agencies and hotels. The same accounts for her contacts outside the office. She could improve her sales skills promoting tours from *Isle Tours Ltd.* to them. As interns abroad are tourists themselves during their free time, they reflect great insight and possibilities for tourism companies employing them.



Question 3:

Almost 275.000 students benefit from Erasmus to complete an internship or studies abroad every year (European Commission, 2015). One can assume, that the number of actual students spending several months abroad during their studies is much higher, as Erasmus only covers the exchanges of European students who are supported with grants during their stay abroad. In combination with the European Mobility Strategy, which accounts for an increase of study related stays abroad to up to 20% of all European students until 2020 (EHEA, 2012), international students and interns make a great amount of travel activity as well as a possible target group for tour operators within the students' destinations.

As a target group these students have various common characteristics despite their different nationalities

Age	• 19-25
Generation	• Millenials; Digital natives
Education	• Higher educational level
Profession	• Student
Marital status	• Single / unmarried
Residence	• Cities (where the university is located)
Sinus-Milieu	• Movers and shakers milieu ¹ • Escapist milieu ²
Income	• low
Price sensitivity	• high
Consumption behaviour	• Spend more on activities, fun, entertainment and • less on food, accomodation, status
Interests and desires	• Experiences to remember • Culture; authentic encounters • Making friends all over the world

¹ „The ambitious, creative avantgarde: Transnational trendsetters – mentally, culturally and geographically mobile; networked both on- and offline; nonconformist, seeking new frontiers and new solutions“ (SINUS Markt- und Sozialforschung GmbH, 2017)

² „The fun and experience/adventure-oriented modern lower class/low-middle class: Living in the here and now carefree and spontaneous; often conformist at work but choosing to break free from the shackles of everyday routine in their free time“ (SINUS Markt- und Sozialforschung GmbH, 2017)

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Case study #2:

A PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Author: Mylene Donk, NHTV Breda

1. Introduction

This case study serves to reinforce the experiences gained during your internship and to build a link between practical knowledge and academic expertise. Your task is to read through this case study, to develop possible solutions to the challenges stated in the case study using gained experience and desk research, to present your outcomes to fellow students and finally to give feedback on each others outcomes. You can work in teams (maximum three students) or on your own.

2. Case presentation

Zoe is born in a small village in the Northern part of the Netherlands and studies at NHTV, Breda University of Applied Sciences now for two years. This is the year to complete her internship. She wants to see more of the world, learn about different cultures and improve her Spanish language skills. As a result Central America has her Interest. In the universities' online database she finds a company in Costa Rica. The description of the company and the tasks that are listed directly appeal to her. She already has some experience in working for tour operators and this company offers her challenging daily activities as well as interesting special assignments. The details of the assignment given in the company description are as follows:

The placement on offer is marketing related. During the internship you will have a special assignment and you will work with the office team on various departments:

The assignment: *The goal is to promote Costa Rica as the next travel destination. The student must design and lead a marketing project that involves writing articles about Costa Rica. The student should help distribute the articles in Europe. The European Market is the target.*

Daily activities:

Sales Department: 1 week - Introduction to Sales Department only

Operations Department: 6 weeks

Re-confirm services with new providers or providers

Send confirmation, modification, cancellation requests to providers

Updating reservations about room availability in high demand areas

Answering emails about specific services to providers

Sustainability Department: 4 weeks

Collect data for CST program (Certification for Sustainability Tourism) and/or BAE (Bandera Azul Ecológica/Blue Flag Program

Filing and sending documentation for CST program (Certification for Sustainability Tourism) and/or BAE (Bandera Azul Ecológica/Blue Flag Program)

European Market Research and Marketing: 9 weeks

Campaigns, Tree Planting Campaigns, visits to El Hogarcito San Juan Bosco (Orphanage)

Lead the European Market Research and Marketing Project

Experiences from the Universities' students who have completed their internship with this company the previous years are very positive. They describe the situation on the internal internship webpage as follows:

The people in the office are all very warm and friendly. You will feel comfortable very fast. Make sure you do your job well because if not the other colleagues have to check all the work you do and that will not create a nice atmosphere. If you have any questions you can ask everybody in the office. They are all very helpful and would love to help you. If you would like to change a working day in the schedule they are very flexible.

La Fortuna is a very small town. It has many tourist activities to offer and I highly recommend you to enjoy them. Just be aware that it is very touristy so the prices are quite high. All other destinations are approximately 3 till 6 hours away from

La Fortuna. I was always off in the weekends so I had enough time to travel around. There are many nice places you can visit.

Many colleagues will take you for a drink and you can hang out with them after working hours if you want to.

I am really having a great time here and I highly recommend this placement to everybody. The work at the office is nice, the colleagues are so friendly and Costa Rica is a beautiful country.

The placement office, responsible for maintaining the relationships with the internship company, ranks the quality of internships at this company on a high level. The company is requesting for good performing students. Zoe gets excited and contacts the placement office for more information, as she wants to participate in the selection process.

After a long journey Zoe arrives at the airport from where she is supposed to be picked up. Unfortunately, there is nobody waiting for her. There has been a misunderstanding. They were expecting her only the next day. The company quickly sends somebody to pick her up. Zoe is tired and when the family where she will be staying is also not expecting her either she is very disappointed. There is no bedlinen and there is no possibility to prepare her own food. She would have to go out for dinner every evening. Although having food isn't expensive it shocks her since her budget is not that large.

The first days at the office Zoe tries to make contact with her colleagues. However, the people are all much older and she doesn't find topics to discuss with them. Her level of Spanish is good but not that fluent yet. Her guest family doesn't really talk with her. Although she regularly tries to make contact and to have a chat they leave her doing her thing. The daily activities that the company asks her to do are easy tasks, Zoe is also disappointed in that as well. She can handle more, that is why she decided for this company. In addition to that is the city where she is staying not very attractive and far away from where other international students are located. She feels lonely, starts missing her family and starts to have a negative mindset.

After several discussions with the Universities' supervisor and her company mentor Zoe decides to leave the company and the country after 2 weeks.

3. Questions

Question 1: Zoe has a hard time and she gives up after two weeks. Describe what happened and use Maslow's hierarchy to identify the needs that were most likely important to Zoe and that were not met.

Question 2: Zoe interprets the fact that they were expecting her a day later and that things weren't ready yet, that the host family wasn't communicating directly with her and that her colleagues weren't inviting her out from day one as signs of not being welcome. If Zoe has given thought beforehand to the cultural differences she might have interpreted and experienced things differently. Give recommendations for Zoe on how to prepare for the cultural differences in Costa Rica in order to avoid disappointments.

Question 3: We might conclude that Zoe finds it hard to be flexible and to stay positive. Analyse Zoe's situation and give recommendations for suitable personal preparation and actions in the company using the core quadrants. Give 3 illustrations.

4. Possible answers

Question 1:

Zoe has a hard time and she gives up after two weeks. Identify the needs that were most likely important to Zoe and that were not met.

The student could for example use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



(Bluehillresearch.com, 2017)

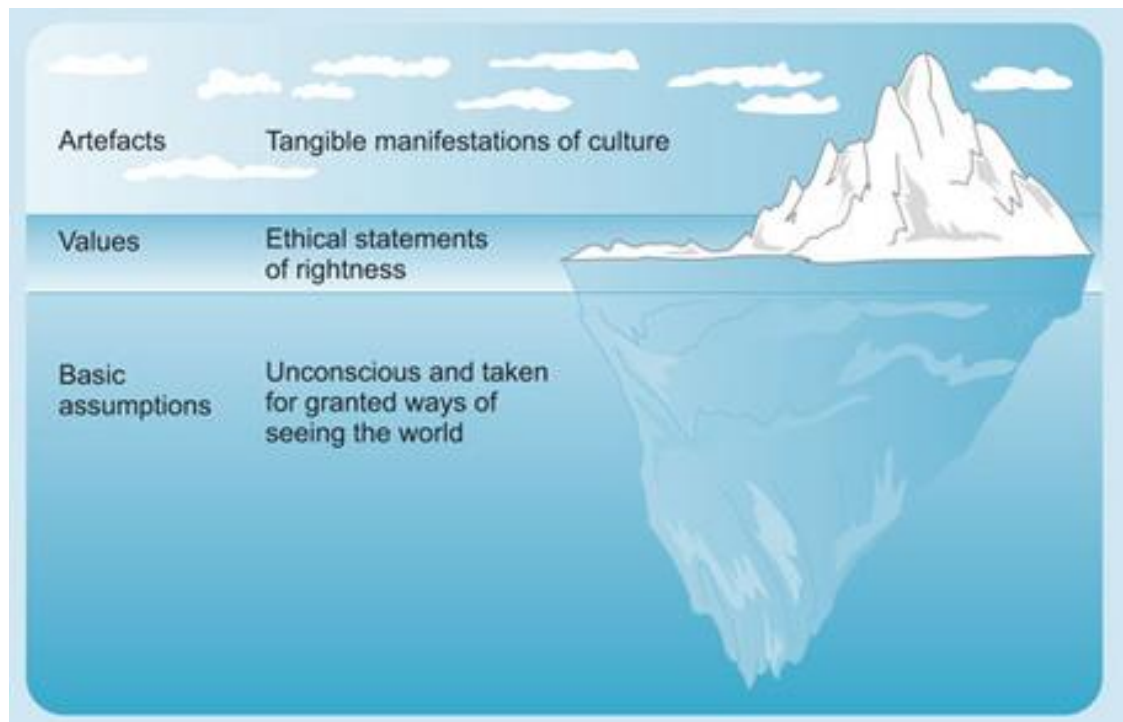
	What happened	What needs were not met
Self actualization	She had to do easy tasks in the office	She did not feel she could develop professionally
Self esteem	She had to do easy tasks in the office	She did not feel respected
Love/belonging	The host family didn't talk much to her The colleagues at the office didn't invite her directly	She wasn't warmly welcomed She wasn't part of the group
Safety	She was standing alone at the airport and was not picked up	She felt vulnerable
Physiological needs	Her accommodation was not ready for her arrival Getting food might be very expensive	The place doesn't make her feel at home Fulfilling basic needs like food might become a challenge

Question 2:

Zoe interprets certain things that happened as signs of not being welcome. If Zoe has given thought beforehand to the cultural differences she might have interpreted and experienced things differently. Select some situations and formulate recommendations for Zoe on how to prepare for the cultural differences in order to avoid the disappointments.

The student can identify situations like the fact that they were expecting her a day later and that things weren't ready yet, that the host family wasn't communicating directly with her and that her colleagues weren't inviting her out from day one.

The students can choose from various models that are helpful to analyse cultural differences. Shein's iceberg model (1992) is a very interesting one that is being thought in our first year already.

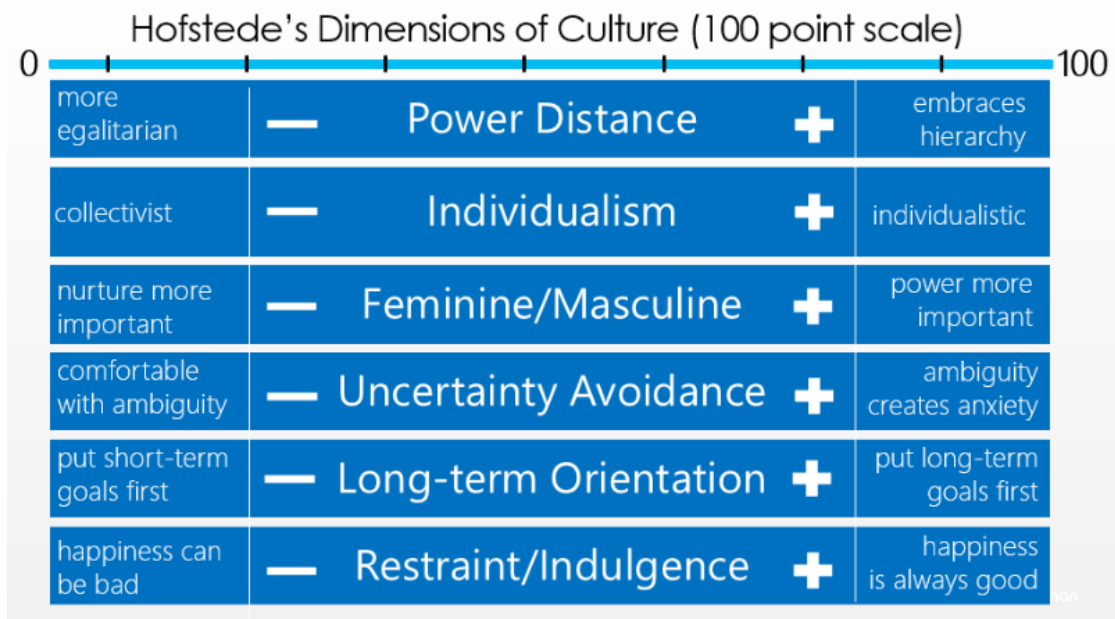


(globalmba-oa-le2.wikispaces.com)

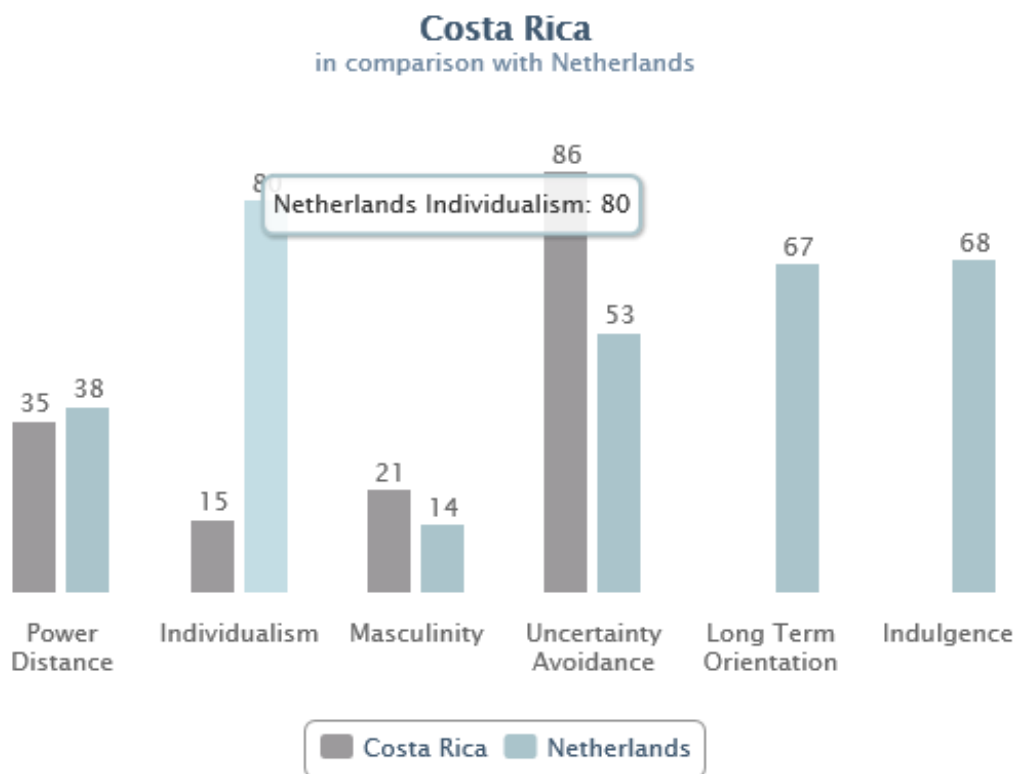
Artefacts	Things are being arranged last minute
Values	Timing of actions is not that important
Basic assumptions	When things happen is less important than that things happen Things will turn out to be ok in the end, we take care of each other

Hofstede is very popular amongst students but is less useful than the iceberg model. However, the analysis can be complemented. Costa Rica scores much lower on the individuality index than the Netherlands.

‘Costa Rica, with a score of 15 is like all the other Latin American countries, a collectivistic society. In collectivistic countries, trust, loyalty, personal relations and networking is essential. Family, and especially the mother, is very sacred in Costa Rica. To get straight to the point is regarded as rude and no hard selling is being done. Helping somebody out of a difficult situation will never be forgotten. As relationships matter very much, a lot of time is spent on building up trust.’ (geert-hofstede.com, 2017).



(Foster/ linked-in, 2017)



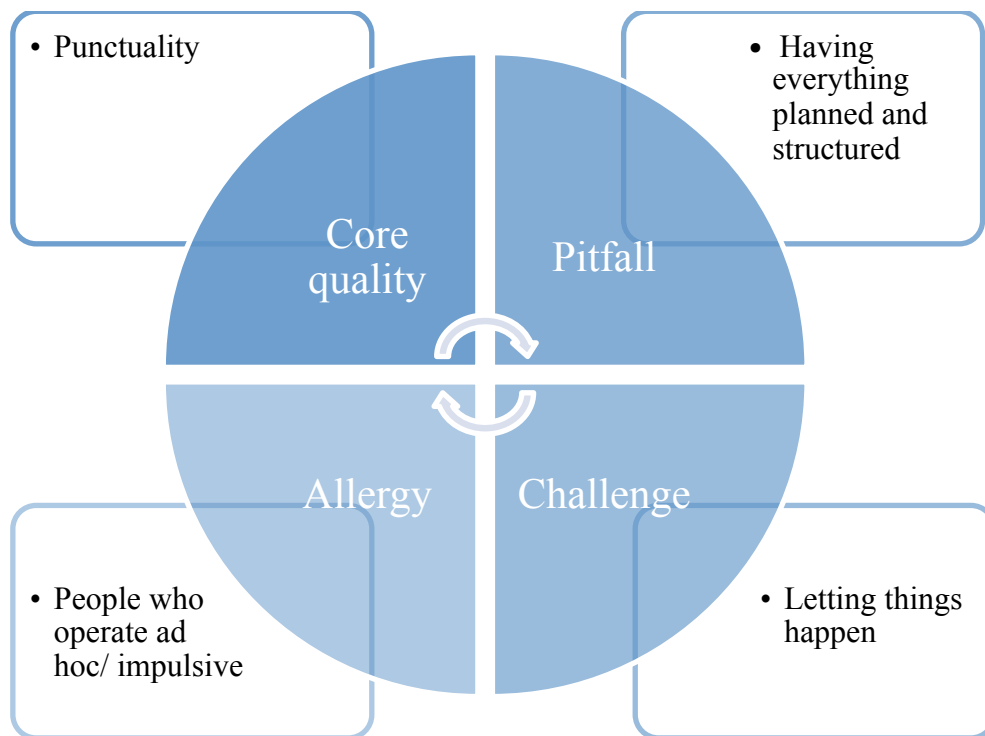
(geert-hofstede.com/costa-rica.html, 2017)

A recommendation to Zoe would be to invest time in building up trust and relationships. An additional course in Spanish would be helpful as well. At the same time she would get to know local people, maybe even of her own age. The efforts she puts in will be appreciated both in the office and in her host family.

Question 3:

The core quadrants are a useful tool to gain insight in your own behavior and explain why you have certain reactions. If Zoe knew that one of her challenges was to let things happen rather than to plan and structure everything beforehand, she might have experienced the situation that her host-family wasn't expecting her as an interesting case rather than as a negative experience.

Example 1 for Zoe:



Case study #3:

CRISIS SITUATION

Author: Ulla Kangasniemi, University of Applied Sciences Lapland

1. Introduction

This case study discusses a situation where a student has made an internship contract with a company and he cannot follow it because of some unexpected incidents. It is important that there is a clear process planned from the viewpoint of such situations so that the student knows what to do if something goes wrong.

2. Case Presentation

Matt had almost finished his third study year at Lapland University of Applied Sciences and he was eager to start planning his internship period outside Finland during the summer. He had completed his basic internship period in Finland already and thought that this was actually his last chance to get some international, multicultural experience before graduating and entering the working life. Matt thought that Great Britain could be the best option for him so that he could develop his English skills at the same time.

Matt contacted the International Training Coordinator of the university and received information on specific documents required before being able to start the internship. The coordinator also mentioned that there was a specific development project included in the internship tasks, covering contents the employer would decide from the perspective of the needs of the company. Because Matt wanted to find a place in Great Britain, the fastest way was to find contact information of potential places in the CRM (Customer Relationship Management) database of the university. Together with the coordinator he found a company, FinTourism, located outside London where three other students had completed their internship before him. FinTourism was originally a Finnish company selling trips to Finland and promoting Finland as a tourist destination. Matt decided to send an email to the company in question and make some enquiries about a possible internship opening. He attached his CV and a ready-made description of the requirements.

After a week Matt received a reply from FinTourism including an offer for an internship. He started to negotiate his duties and together with Susan, the employer's representative, they agreed on some online marketing duties. Other duties could then be agreed on while Matt was there. Matt also mentioned that he also had to work on a specific development project to meet the university's requirements correctly.

During the next few weeks Matt made preparations for the internship; filled in the university's Internship Workbook where he described his skills and knowledge, set his personal objectives for the time abroad and described the tasks he would complete in FinTourism. After the approval of the Internship Workbook, he filled in the contract and got signatures from all three parties involved. In addition, he made other preparations; bought the flight tickets and rented his flat for the period of his stay.

Then the day came when Matt arrived in a small city in the southern part of Great Britain. FinTourism had arranged a cosy apartment for him and he went first to the company premises to get his keys, as agreed. He left his luggage in the apartment and went to FinTourism to meet Susan who was supposed to be his mentor during the internship. However, Susan had gone to a conference in Berlin and she would be back in a week. There were five employees in FinTourism and they tried to arrange Matt something to do without proper knowledge what had actually been agreed on between Matt and Susan. Matt started his work by gathering information based on a feedback survey to a group of people who had visited Lapland a couple of weeks before. He also made coffee and arranged the filing cabinets of the company.

Matt met Susan after a week and started to ask about the online marketing duties. Susan gave him instructions how to start developing their website and widen their use of social media channels. Matt worked on the channel survey for three and a half weeks. Then, all of a sudden, the employees of the company got bad news from the director: the owners of the company had decided to close down the whole company because of some financial problems. Matt was really disappointed; he still had about 170 hours left to complete the internship. The employees panicked and everything was chaotic. Matt tried to continue with duties connected to the closing down of the company but was really nervous of the missing hours, not to mention the development project. He felt that the internship had gone for nothing and that he had not actually had a chance to complete such tasks and duties he had been promised. Matt was also worried if he could even receive a proper testimonial from the employer. Eventually, he got almost the whole amount of his working hours completed but not all of the tasks had met the objectives set prior to the internship. The good thing was that he was able to agree with his training coordinator that one of his social media tasks would be regarded as the development project. In addition, he received all the documents, including the testimonial, when finishing his internship period.

3. Questions

Question 1: How could Matt have been better prepared for an unexpected situation like the company being closed down?

Question 2: What can be done if a student faces problems during the internship period? Think of a crisis management process.

4. Possible Solutions

Question 1:

The training has to be planned carefully in advance so that all the tasks and duties have been agreed on between all three parties. Students have to realize that changes may occur; sometimes the tasks may be different from the ones in the planning phase; people in charge might have been changed or the situation in the training place requires instant changes and adaptation. It is important that students are in close contact with the training company many times before starting the training period. They should e.g. do some market research about the company in advance and learn the basic facts about it and its operations.

In order to avoid unexpected and difficult situations, students should be better prepared for them prior to their departure. These kinds of cases of normal working life should be discussed already during studies and when preparing students for training periods. A specific process description on unexpected changes and situations should be included in the training materials where also all contact details and instructions are easily available.

Question 2: There has to be a representative in the educational institution that is available all the time during the internship and can be contacted if anything happens. Students may get sick or something can happen in their personal lives, which may cause them to return back home. If duties and responsibilities do not meet the requirements and are therefore not according to the contract, it requires actions by the internship coordinator. It is also important that in situations like these, students and the coordinator should do everything to avoid the situation to leave the internship place. A specific model for crisis management should be therefore created and followed.

Case study #4:

GERMAN ALPINE CULTURE

Authors: Satu Pekalla, University of Lapland and
Paivi Kontiokoski, Lapland Tourism College

Abstract

In the increasingly global world, skills in cultural and social competence are highly required for professionals in the service sector. Actually an internship and especially an international one has a significant role in developing key personal, professional, cultural and social competency characteristics of the students. After graduating students might have unrealistic expectations of working life. An internship is a good way to break these unrealistic expectations and gain understanding of working life and generic employability skills. Internships on the one hand play an important role in the student life while choosing the future career path, on the other hand, an internship also helps organizations to become acquainted with future professionals.

This paper is based on written reports and the sets of conversations with the interns of the tourism research studies at the University of Lapland and Lapland Tourism College and relates the challenges of completing an international internship in the placement organization and performing the daily tasks in the working community.

Keywords: International internship, organization, challenges, tasks

1. Introduction

This case study serves to reinforce the experiences gained during your internship and to build a link between practical knowledge and academic expertise. The elaboration of outcomes for this case study is inductive with little involvement of the lecturer (bottom-up). Your task is to read through this case study, to develop possible solutions to the challenges stated in the case study using gained experience and desk research, to present your outcomes to fellow students and finally to give feedback on each others outcomes. You can work in teams (maximum three students) or on your own.

2. Case presentation

Students (Maya from University of Lapland and Joseph from Lapland Tourism College) found the internship placement through the announcements arrived in the institutions' recruitment service. The students submitted a job application in a German company (hotel?) after which they were interviewed via Skype. Before the internship period started, employment contracts were drawn up.

Both interns came into the placement with their own expectations and needs. Students expected internship to be intellectually stimulating and beneficial for building the skills needed for future employment. Students also expected from the internship to have the experience of “learning by doing” in a real business situation and to gain a competitive edge in the marketplace for the new job. Working tasks including daily routines and particular tasks were agreed beforehand with the employer. Despite their young age, both interns had prior working experience and they had the courage to tell their own opinions. Unfortunately the initiatives given by the interns were not always accepted as needed; as a result the interns felt some disappointment.

The daily tasks of the interns were agreed to include: marketing activities, customer services and developing activities related to the website and online services.

3. Questions

Question 1:

The attitudes of the German colleagues to the interns were sometimes negative and/or dismissive. This was different from what the students had previously experienced and thus the interns lost faith in their own abilities and felt depressed. *What could Maya and Joseph do about this situation?*

Question 2:

Some moments when the interns realized to have an unrealistic picture of certain issues and the business environment emerged; in the job assignments the marketing tasks were mentioned and the interns understood these as direct activities towards customers. Instead, the reality was another; monotonous office tasks like copying and answering the phone. *How can Maya and Joseph contribute to clarify their tasks and avoid a situation like this for future Finnish interns?*

Question 3:

Maya and Joseph both speak English and German fluently as a result of studying the languages for 5 years. On the pre-departure process/training the language skills were considered to be good and thus ensure the interns' dealing with the customer service situation. The majority of the guests of the hotel were domestic and the remaining came from German speaking countries. The customer's expectations of the language skills of the staff were really high, and quite soon after the beginning of the internship the students found it difficult to manage in service situations. There were also some significant differences in service culture, e.g. when to address formally. *How should the students be prepared for an internship in a German hotel? What are the cultural specialties?*

4. Possible solutions

Question 1:

Due to differences in culture, ways of working, expectations and motives internships are not always easy to execute. As its best an internship allows learners to quickly contextualize the study content within the socio-cultural and functional environment. The behavior of individuals in the working place can be related to the culture of the organization and hence will not be generalized. Equally, the openness and behavior of the working community can play a decisive role in the student's total experience. As Billet (2009) states there must be a total willingness to share knowledge and provide guidance by the staff of the organization. Not appropriate attitudes need not to be tolerated. Always inform your supervisor about it. His/her task is to intervene.

The “right” people in terms of their ability, attitude and personality should be engaged in internship process, in the organization and academy. Appreciation, understanding and commitment towards interns are essential to enhance the interns’ ability familiarize themselves during the internship and orientate themselves in the working life after the study.

Question 2:

The marriage between university and working life should be developed, as it would benefit the internship process. The closer cooperation between the partners will improve the organizations’ understanding of internship and its content and thus similar misunderstandings could be avoided. To some extent personal directness and straightforwardness could help to avoid misunderstandings as well.

Question 3:

It is crucial that the students become familiar with the culture and customs of international internship destinations beforehand. But how to understand beforehand what kind of the language skills are needed in customer services? Good language skills do not always guarantee perfect communication; the intern may have personal traits like shyness which complicates the communication. The difficult dialect spoken by the client can avoid understanding as well. Attention should be paid to the teaching of non-English language in the educational institutions. The content of the language teaching and, in particular, its functionality in the working context should be measured.

Easier working tasks could be given initially to interns. However, if the tasks are in customer service, it would be good if there are also experienced employees working in support of the interns.

References

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