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Exploring new territories, literally and figuratively



My internship with a start-up in South Africa offered many life lessons and immense cultural exposure

I interned with a company in South Africa virtually this summer facilitated by my college. Besides just working, connecting with people across borders, and understanding their culture and demographics, exposed me to absorb many new learnings. The internship allowed me to hone my social skills and improve professionally. Understanding another culture and the nature of their market opened up a new horizon for me. I applied my classroom-learnings and implemented concepts like SWOT analysis, golden circle, and competitive analysis in real-life business scenarios. Scheduling virtual meetings across time zones on different platforms and delivering presentations online on a specified date was a great lesson in time management acquired during this stint.

Since it was an internship in business strategy, a unique theory that I newly learned was 'empathy mapping.' In order to understand user behaviour of potential customers/clients, we had created a questionnaire that focused on three important elements of this theory:

1. Establish focus and goals
2. Capture the outside world
3. Explore inside the mind

In simple terms, the theory taught us to say, think, feel and act with empathy. These practices can be used not only in business strategies but in our everyday lives too. This experience has helped me work remotely with finesse, and build the right skillset to do so in the future as well if required of me.

Further, the most important takeaway from this internship is how to manage pressure in complex situations. Keeping calm, having patience and getting things done before deadline remain just as important while interning from home. Learning must never stop, despite hurdles, is something this pandemic and my virtual internship taught me. It has been rightly said that a crisis situation is an opportunity to learn from. Even though the classroom experience may be your preferred choice over online classes, one must not stop, even during such nebulous times. After all, an inquisitive mind never fails to find ways to improve, even when the going gets tough.

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