



Intern News Report: A Look Inside Commercial Service Japan

Special Edition

August 31st, 2017

Editor: Riko Kanaida, Hiromi Miyawaki, Shiori Ono

As Intern Newsletter Editors, we had the great opportunity to interview alumni interns from the Commercial Service Tokyo about their post-internship experiences. Below, we will share their stories of how their internship influenced their goals and professional careers, as well as advice for future interns.

Comments from the editors

Riko Kanaida - 2017 Summer Cycle, University of Chicago, Linguistics Major

“Since I am about to enter my third year of college, and it is time to start think about my path after graduation, this opportunity to interview “sempai” interns was very inspiring. It was eye-opening to see how people of various backgrounds reached their career, and how their experience interning at the Commercial Service plays a role in their professional life.”

Hiromi Miyawaki - 2017 Summer Cycle, University of California Los Angeles, Business Economics Major

“It was a great honor to be able to interview the “sempai” interns and hear how their experiences as Commercial Service interns influenced them and their future goals. Many of the “sempai” interns came into the internship with various backgrounds, and it was interesting and inspiring to hear the different career paths they took after their internship.”

Shiori Ono – 2017 Winter and Spring Cycle, Hosei University, Sociology Major

“Since I will soon start job hunting, it was a great opportunity to interview and know how “sempai” interns at Commercial Service chose and entered various types of career paths after their graduation. Also, I was inspired and motivated by how all “sempai” interns actively keep challenging to achieve their goals.”

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Intern Alumni News Report: Life After Mission Japan

Special Edition

FCS Intern: Daniel Longo

August 31st, 2017

By Riko Kanaida & Hiromi Miyawaki

Daniel Longo interned for the Foreign Commercial Service during the 2015 Summer Cycle while pursuing a Master's degree in International Relations at the Fletcher School of Tufts University. He is now working as a Political Advisor at the Consulate General of Japan in Boston.

In what ways do the experiences/lessons from the internship play a part in your career?

One of the most important lessons I learned was that professional relationships mean everything. Whether at business promotion events for U.S. companies, meetings with JETRO, or in the office daily, I tried to cultivate strong, positive working relations with my colleagues and counterparts. I always strive to build solid relations with whom I come in contact because those connections - large and small - mean so much, often in ways we cannot immediately appreciate.

How did you find your current job?

Currently, I work as a Political Advisor at the Consulate General of Japan in Boston. I applied through an announcement that a JET Program friend forwarded to me.

I must have gone through seven or eight interviews over several months in pier to getting my current job. Some offers I turned down because I did not feel like those jobs were the right fit. In other instances, I did not pass the interview rounds. Overall, I am glad to have had so much real-world experience interviewing because it boosted my confidence tremendously, simply through the sheer number of times I was able to "practice." I learned from my mistakes and applied those lessons to each subsequent interview, and I noticed improvement. I eventually stopped viewing interviews as interviews and started seeing them more as opportunities to meet people and share my interest in their work.

What advice would you give to current job searchers?

Staying motivated is perhaps the most important and challenging aspect of job searching. You really must believe in yourself, even when events do not turn out in your favor. I think that for every job opportunity you do not get, another, better one is out there waiting for you. Life does not always fall into place the way we think it will (or should), so you must be prepared for anything.

What do you enjoy about your current job?

In my current role, I really feel like I am making a difference and enhancing U.S.-Japan relations. Part of what I do involves public diplomacy, including educating New Englanders about Japanese culture and events. Talking to and learning from others about Japan is very inspiring and motivates me to do the best work I can. I feel very fortunate to work with such dedicated individuals who all come together as a team to deliver high-quality research and analysis on a range of issues. Every day is different, and that itself is a blessing.

What are your future goals or dreams?

I would like to continue contributing to U.S.-Japan relations, since that is where my passion lies. As I studied international trade at Tufts, I hope to apply my critical thinking skills in ways that benefit Japan's relations with not only the United States but its neighbors too.



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FCS Intern: Phoebe Wong

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By Riko Kanaida & Hiromi Miyawaki

Phoebe Wong interned for the Foreign Commercial Service during the 2016 Summer Cycle, while majoring in Political Science and International Relations at University of California, Berkeley. She is now working at Google Headquarters in Mountain View.

In what ways do the experiences/lessons from the internship play a part in your career?

I would say what stood out to me from my internship at the Embassy was when I took it upon myself to make improvements to certain existing workflows (of course with managerial approval). Whether it's making templates for future interns or just cleaning up spreadsheets to better convey information and trends, willingness to increase efficiency is truly something valuable I picked up during my time at the Embassy and is a highly-desired quality at many workplaces.

How did you find your current job?

I very randomly but fortunately just stumbled upon this job listing on Google's career site. While I loved my time in Tokyo and Japan as a whole, I wanted to stay in the U.S. primarily to stay close to my family. Different industries have very different hiring practice but my three pieces of general advice is to start early, be mentally prepared, and do your research. It's way easier to look for a job when you are employed (even if it's intern work) or in school. It is also very competitive these days, so be mentally prepared that many of the job listings out there that you may well be fully qualified for could still turn you down. Lastly, really do your research about each company/organization you apply to; see what it is that they do, what they value, and ask thought-provoking questions about their work. Showing that you are passionate about their work will make you stand out from the crowd.

What do you enjoy about your current job?

I'm really loving my current job because I get to work on Japanese matter every day in a relaxed but innovative tech environment, and I get the chance to deal with some of the most relevant internet-related legal issues today, such as privacy and cyberbullying.

What are your future goals or dreams?

To be quite honest, I was not even aware of the position I'm at right now and the kind of interesting work my team does until I applied. This has really taught me to broaden my horizon and not limit myself to a fixed career path. So, this might sound very broad, but I would just like to continue working on projects that allow me to apply my language skills and cultural understandings in creative ways.



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FCS Intern: Gen Shiraishi

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By Riko Kanaida & Hiromi Miyawaki

Gen Shiraishi interned for the Foreign Commercial Service during the 2014 Summer Cycle while he was a second year at Georgetown University, studying International Political Economy. He will start his position as an Associate Consultant at Bain and Company from October 2017.



In what ways do the experiences/lessons from the internship play a part in your career?

Interning with the Commercial Service was a unique experience for me because it was my first completely bilingual work environment. During my time at the embassy, I learned a lot about the difficulties of a multi-lingual work environment, even beyond simple communication challenges. I experienced firsthand the subtle cultural differences in work ethic and expectations. My internship helped me learn how to navigate such work environments, which significantly carries over to my career.

How do you find your current job?

I decided to pursue consulting through the Boston Career Forum. I applied to my specific position at Bain and Company through Georgetown University's career center.

Why did you choose to work in the U.S.?

Since I had competing offers in both countries, this was a key question in my own job search process. The main reason was that I would be able to practice consulting at a higher, more challenging level in the U.S. as it is a more mature market for my field. In the States, projects are more focused in shorter timeframes, companies are eager to give new hires meaningful roles on projects, work life balance is better, compensation is higher, and exit opportunities are more diverse. Personal preferences, such as my strong preference to live in Washington, DC to stay connected to the public sector, also played a significant role.

What advice would you give to current job searchers?

My most important piece of advice is to not be afraid of reaching out to people and seeking opportunities. You can bring a lot more meaning and passion to the job searching process if you actively reach out to people and seek opportunities to learn about something you might be interested in. You want to have focus in terms of what kind of roles you want out of your job search, as early as possible so you can specialize in honing the skills that matter the most to that role.

What are your future goals or dreams?

My goal is to make a positive impact on the global economy and alleviate our chronic economic issues, such as poverty, through optimal trade and investment policies. I want to help implement policies that have wide ranging positive impact on the global economy. This could be through a position in the department of commerce or at an international organization like the World Bank.

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FCS Intern: Juri Watanabe

August 31st, 2017

By Riko Kanaida & Hiromi Miyawaki

Juri Watanabe interned for the Foreign Commercial Service during the 2016 Summer Cycle while majoring in International Development Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Ms. Watanabe was the first Japanese delegate to win the Miss Asia USA pageant in November 2016. As Intern Newsletter Editors, we had the opportunity to hear her experiences at the pageant and how it influenced her.

Ms. Watanabe was born in Tokyo, Japan, but moved to Dalian, China when she was 3 years old. There, she attended a local private school for 4 years, after which she returned to Japan to attend the Yokohama International School (YIS). She states, “While I was going to an international school, I always dreamt of going to a university in the States. So, my family decided to move to California when I was in 7th grade so that I could get used to the American education system before I pursued a college degree.”

However, the transition from living in Japan to the United States was not easy. “It was difficult at first since I missed Japan a lot. Perhaps it was the new environment, but I found education in the United States to be more difficult.” As she got used to her new school, she says, “I grew to love the U.S. more and more. Despite the challenges, I never regretted the decision to move to LA. I think if I hadn’t moved to the U.S. then (or choose the school that I did), I wouldn’t have been able to do half the things I have accomplished/experienced.”

Having always been a bit of a tomboy, she had never participated in anything like this before. “My mom was the one who suggested I should participate in a pageant because she wanted me to become more confident. It was extremely difficult at first (and I was terrible at it), especially because I was intimidated by the girls around me who were veterans in pageantry.”

Preparing for the pageant included fitness training, walking training in heels, make-up/ hair sessions, photoshoots, and rehearsals with other participants. She spent at least 20 hours per week on pageant training, while balancing with her school work and part time job. Despite the challenge, she states “Through the process, I began to feel more beautiful and healthy so I naturally began to enjoy the process more.” Her efforts bloomed, as she became the first Japanese delegate to win the Miss Asia USA pageant. “I honestly couldn’t believe it at all... It felt amazing to win, especially representing Japan, a country that I am so so proud of.”

She states that her internship experience with the Foreign Commercial Service impacted her to become more willing to take chances and pursue her goals. “Fellow interns, mentor, staffs, diplomats, everyone I have encountered during my time at the internship have achieve so many great things by taking chances and not being afraid of failure... Their experiences and insights truly motivated me to go beyond my comfort zone.”

Finally, Ms. Watanabe told us about her future goals and dreams: “My ultimate goal is to work in the United Nations... I want to be able to provide children and women in remote areas better access to educations.” She states that she is looking to work in both the private and public sectors, and then entering graduate school, but she says that she wants to keep her options open.

Ms. Juri Watanabe will also be competing in Miss Universe Japan-Tokyo in November, 2017.



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