Personal Intern Experience Assessment

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1. Introduction

I am Agota Fuzi currently enrolling my studies in International Business and Economics at Corvinus University of Budapest. On my 4th year I am finishing up my degree and had the chance to take part in an internship program in The Netherlands.

The company I was hired by is based in Almere, The Netherlands and has a Dutch legal form which is considered as a limited liability private company. My position was stated as a Sales and Marketing Intern within the company.

2. Company introduction

Sun Enterprises B.V. is a leading manufacturer and supplier of leather and jewellery components for Europe and the USA. The company’s main attention is at all kinds of magnetic locks, beads, silk, leather goods and leather cords. The company is focusing on designers as customers as for it is a B2B company. It has been started and remained as a family business.

The form of the company is a legal form in The Netherlands which involves a legal person. In Dutch it is called Besloten Vennootschap that basically means limited liability private company.

The company is located in Almere, in The Netherlands. They are producing the items in India and shipping it from there, also buying products from China. The firm also has an office in Los Angeles, in the U.S.

The company exports and distributes to 55 countries in the World. Furthermore, top-designers from both Europe and USA use their leathers for accessories due to the high quality and softness of the leather.

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2 https://www.expatax.nl/legalforms
3 https://www.sunenterprises.eu/
"One of the main strengths of the company is that it keeps a close relationship with its clients, which allows for customization of products based on the specific needs, and for high quality of service." 

The customers can be outlined by categories: leading jewellery designers, artisans, jewellery makers, goldsmiths, wholesalers and hobby store owners. The buyers are very diverse regarding the amount they are purchasing from the company. Customers are being considered as high potential customers when they are buying products in an amount of 200 000 Euros annually. 

As for attracting customers the firm is often taking part at fairs all over in Europe. At fairs customers can easily approach the company and experience the products by themselves. Fairs require a big investment for the company but it is made in a sense that it pays off in a long term.

Regarding the numbers, the company has around 2000 active customers and their annual turnover of the company is between 71 000 000- 125 000 000 Euros globally.

3. Personal expectations

When deciding about doing your internship abroad you may have diverse feelings about it. In one hand it gives an exciting sense to it but on the other hand it can seem tough or difficult to achieve.

In my case it was more a bit brave thing to have a go at it since I have only been in The Netherlands once before. Frankly saying I did not know how exactly the culture manifests or how the people behave regarding their personality. That kind of doubtfullness covers the everdayday life but also the behaviour in the business culture.

When talking about choosing the right place I may pin down that I had plans with Germany as well. That is a more common culture to know hence more common language to speak and I saw no difficulties on that part.

I firmly believe that in each part of carrier or life we need difficult situations to be in so that

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4 [https://www.linkedin.com/company/5006648/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/5006648/)

5 Based on the interviewal session in the company on 28th November 2017.

6 Based on the interviewal session in the company on 28th November 2017.
we can gain experience from them and also learn from them. This gave me the reason to choose Amsterdam in The Netherlands.

Knowing that the company spirit I chase is more international than a Dutch one the factor of difficultness got enlightened. My expectation was to take part and to professionally grow in an international minded company. I was hired as a Sales and Marketing Intern to a fashion company called Sun Enterprises B. V.

I was really enthusiastic about the position, since I have a hobby connected to marketing and the sales department is the area where I would love to continue my carrier path in.

I was expecting a dynamic sales activity where I am communicating with clients and also a more calm part was imagined by me by leading the online marketing tasks of the company. My expectations were beyond the business sphere, maybe because I am a person who appreciates and values different kinds of cultures, hence I was keen to discover the city and surroundings.

Most probably because of my studies I see opportunities and situations from an entrepreneurial perspective. I was expected to discover business and start-up ideas in a differently working economy. This expectation was created by myself.

4. Professional experiences in Sales and Marketing Department

As a Sales and Marketing Team member of the company I have experienced far more than I thought I could during 12 weeks. After a bit of thinking I decided to divide my experiences into parts because my tasks were also very diverse in a way and I would like to detail them one by one. The paragraphs are about my perceptions and all what I have learned during that time. The parts are the followings: The Communication Part, The Practical Part, The Idealistic-Realistic Part and the Managerial Part.
a) The Communication Part- How to interact with customers

The first and most important thing what I have learned was the way you communicate and behave with customers. I had several channels to get in touch with them. Firstly the most commonly used way was e-mails but we also had the chance to meet them in person or in case we could also call them through phone.

My personal favourite was meeting our well-known customers in person since it gives you a way to satisfy their needs perfectly. I am using the word perfectly because based on the experience you most probably knew what kind of products they are using to create their own items.

Furthermore the e-mails and phone calls: I was enjoying the situation where I was in because I both had to use the language English and German (several times also Hungarian). The diversity is due to the fact that our company is distributing products to 55 countries and that our customers are located in the most diverse places in the World.

Although I do not speak French or Spanish, I also had the chance to get into my French and Spanish colleagues’ world and get to know quite a few words in their languages.

Putting the highlight back to the e-mails, I am now convinced that a great e-mail strategy can ensure the engagement of the customers. I would say a consistent and not changing system where the customer is also informed about the dynamic part (the more actively changing social media sites and topicalities), could be the best option.

The idea calling the customers through phone is an appropriate way to make the customer feel closer to the brand. You may also will be able to clarify things more easily and avoid misunderstandings. These factors are highly important when time matters and your goal is to make the customer satisfied.

b) The Practical Part-How to pick up profession

By the Practical Part of my internship I have learned the most. As for the sales part I always had to make important decisions on my own. For instance in case of not having exactly what the customer needs I had to propose alternatives to them. The responsibility is
on you because you always have to feel their personality: are they flexible? Are they willing to accept those items? Will they get mad if you propose them? You are someone who is a part of the brand, hence you are an ambassador of it.

The sales part in a way required more dynamics and being in the moment skills. Besides that I also had the opportunity to lead the social media department of the company. I felt honoured and proud to accomplish an activity like that.

Social media covered Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and mostly the News letter. My task was to build a consistent strategy on each site that is perfectly in harmony with our brand image. I also had to take into consideration that the company works in the B2B sector. The strategy that I have shaped remained until I have finished with my internship and at that time I was told to teach the tools to one of the new interns within the company.

My activity mainly started with editing pictures in the program Adobe Photoshop and Picasa. When I considered the images as appropriate to communicate it to our customers I published them on a daily basis to our accounts. The amount of posts per day were decided by me and was considered as the dynamics of the different platforms.

Publishing the right content can always bring the sense to the post. It is not only important to choose the picture wisely, you also have to be aware that you are providing enough information but not too much. In each post you may be persuasive and also not pushy in a way, yet you should always put contact details into it.

The right content enlarges customer engagement and helps with being consistent when it comes to Google Adverts in Search Engine Optimisation. The more harmonious your activity is the more chance you gain to be on the top of the searching list.

Creating content by myself was challenging but honestly the most enjoyable thing. Regarding the diversity of different platforms I always had to adapt to them: on Facebook besides publishing I often created „Open house” events to encourage our customers to visit our office.

With the tools of Facebook and Instagram you can build a pretty strong customer relationship network online. Customers like to be informed about the new collections and styles of the company. They tend to feel more secure or more engaged when they know details, improvements or milestones of the company.
So here is the rule what I have shaped for my strategy: the more personal and honest the company is, the more engaged and loyal the customers will be.

It is also learnt by me that they are relying on the company site that much that you should always be there to satisfy their needs or to answer their questions.

I am now highly skilled in using promotions and scheduled posts both in Instagram and Facebook. The sense of scheduled posts for companies is that employees do not work during the weekends so that the peaktime of using social media would not have been capitalized. With this tool even without working on that exact time you can still schedule your content to be posted.

Doing good at the part of the visual merchandising of the company lead to that I was responsible for creating DIY videos. The Do It Yourself videos were very practical for our customers since they got a lot of inspirations through it. I was coordinating the spoken text and also the actually trending elements that were to be shown in these videos.

Although I had a special role in the company I also took part in the logistic actions as well. The main activity of the company is receiving and processing orders, creating packages and making it possible that the products can be sent to the customer. For our delivery our company has used the services of DPD and FedEx. I am now comfortable with using the system of both companies when creating labels for shipments.

As for helping the packages to be ready I was also responsible for creating invoices. This activity helped me a lot to understand how the practical part of a business works. In addition, when a customer was happened to come to our office some of us were also expected to make the invoices for them.

c) The Idealistic- Realistic Part- How to deal with uncertainty

What is ideal? How does an ideal firm work?

I have this concept that in the area business what was planned will never exactly happen in the same way. So that is what I have experienced during my internship as well.

When setting up a company and building it you will always come across to this phenomena. Whereas it seems to be unsafe or dangerous, it is the other way around. Without difficulties
you can never improve your firm and you can never get use to the fact that you have to be flexible. The entrepreneurship as a process requires you to be more comfortable with uncertainty and adapting to the new waves.

I could be able to approach this idea from many ways: a stable posture can be overbalanced by many factors. A new way of legislation, global or cultural changes or also in a tinier scale: new collegaues.

Maintaining the company atmosphere and making the employees comfortable, also safe and challenged is something that you can only do with commitment and a lot of mindfullness. When being responsible for a mid-scale company or for a part of a business, you have two things to pay attention at. The performance and the human rescourse of the company itself. The uncertainty will come from both sides and you should adapt to them.

My core message to this part is that being unsafe in business has its upsizes and downsizes but you should make a notice of it that it is always part of the game.

d) The Managerial Part – How to lead a business

The Managerial Part was mainly phased by the time when I was getting to know my supervisor and his values. This section is also connected in a way to the previous one because you can never perfectly divide the term leading a business and being a manager.

An important point to bear in mind is that our company sphere was very much international and it required a lot of tolerance. I had collegaues from basically all over the world and as they say, the coin always has two sides.

From a view of perspective it was pleasant to get to know a lot of ways of behaviour from different countries, but from the other hand it could have been tough to adapt to it. In my case there were no difficulties getting along with each other but from a manager’s view it could have been way challenging.

Besides the hard skills that employees picked up during studies and experiences, you as a manager should pay attention at the soft skills as well. When working with an international team you may set a research on how different cultures interpret things. There might be
cultures where you take words or actions offensive or inappropriate, even though in others it may seem normal.

An additional thing could be to provide cultural behaviour trainings for the employees so that they can get to know the culture of the company.

The firm where I had done my internship is based in The Netherlands but the managers were from outside Europe, from India. I had no difficulties in understanding, yet it could have been slightly easier for each sides, if there had been a cultural enlightenment. I do believe this is a general thing and this phenomena exist everywhere between all cultures.

I am of the opinion that managers should find the balance between trusting their team and relying on them one hundred percent. I have experienced during my internship that a great leader can do the tiniest little things in a business even if they could ask someone else to do it. I think professionalism can be seen that way.

5. Things to know about The Netherlands

As in general my stay in The Netherlands was greater than my already positive expectations. I may divide my experiences with the country as well.

a) Cultural communication and behaviour

The Dutch culture is being considered as one of the most honest and respectful cultures in Europe. In general people respect and accept each other the way they are. You may see no fights and violence when it comes to misunderstandings. Dutch people prefer to keep it quiet and calm. Most of them can be told to be modest but very motivated and ambitious at the same time. They in general value being honest and fair but also very playful. Their favourite word „being down to earth” applies to most of them as well.

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It should be also noted that they do not appreciate being out of the line or being extraordinary. They famous quote as „Be normal, that is crazy enough” speaks for itself. Seeking for success and new challenges exist with being very modest in this culture.

The reason why I am brave enough to generalize is that surprisingly Dutch people tend to act alike. They do admit themselves as well.

b) High gender equality

For me the cultural shock was basically manifesting in this section. As you go more North in Europe you experience the growing gender equality as a phenomena. Before seeing it by myself I did think that was something really easy to adapt to.

Despite of this when I have first experienced it, I was more than surprised. I am not talking about enormous differences, yet they are big enough to completely change your mindset. Treating everyone equally and accepting everyone are all part of the Dutch culture.

Even though it was experienced as a cultural shock by me, I still find this a better way to live life and improve.

c) Attitude

As a consequence of acceptance Dutch people are in general self-confident and happy. They are also brought up in a way that you are responsible for yourself and that leads to the mindset of being very individualist.

I have found the individualist approach as the biggest incentive to the growing economy in the country. The fact that each person is responsible for themselves encourages young adults or even children to manifest their dreams and set up their own businesses. I have met people

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10 [https://techcrunch.com/2015/07/05/the-netherlands-a-look-at-the-worlds-high-tech-startup-capital/](https://techcrunch.com/2015/07/05/the-netherlands-a-look-at-the-worlds-high-tech-startup-capital/), 07/05 2015.
around my age already owning companies and being committed to them one hundred percent. I am glad to experience and to learn from this impressive enthusiasm.

5: Summary

In brief I feel more than honoured to took part in an internship program in The Netherlands. I have very much improved my practical skills and also my soft skills. I am now more aware how to set up and lead a business especially when it comes to international sphere or international investments.

Moreover I was also able to strengthen my language skills in English, in German and also in Dutch.

I feel very lucky to get into a sight of the Dutch culture and how a country can be lead differently. Furthermore I am also enthusiastic about the fact that I was able to build a social network in Amsterdam which is going to help me being successful in the future.