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# An Intern Discovers the World of Business and the Strength of a Global Perspective

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*Elizabeth Oh, 15, is a student at the Singapore American School. She recently contacted Knowledge@Wharton High School in hopes of sharing insights from her business internship during winter break. Here, Oh writes about her experiences gaining important workplace skills, including independence, responsibility and collaboration.*

As a high school sophomore at Singapore American School in Singapore, I have always experienced the comfort that most students feel in an academic setting surrounded by friends. It is my comfort zone. But on the first day of my recent winter internship at Holmusk, a health technology startup, I felt like I was in a new world – and equal parts intimidated and excited for the weeks ahead.

Holmusk is a data science and digital health company headquartered in Singapore with offices in London and New York City. It is devoted to addressing mental health and chronic diseases through real-world, evidence-based data platforms. Through the harnessing of this data, the company is able to tackle a variety of illnesses, including mental health and chronic metabolic diseases. As a STEM kid, I was especially intrigued by the data-analytics projects based on chronic metabolic illnesses, including diabetes, kidney disease and cardiovascular disease.

Over my winter break, I was able to get in touch with the CEO of Holmusk, Nawal Roy, through a teacher recommendation. My teacher had known Nawal personally and kindly suggested me to him as a possible intern. With the exchange of a few emails, I was able to land a spot as an intern with his company for the remainder of my winter break.

People talk all the time about the value of internships, and now I see why. I took so much away from my few weeks interning for Holmusk. When I discovered the KWHS student essay opportunity, I wanted to share those lessons with other teenagers around the world – some who may be looking for internships or others who aren't sure if they should take the time and energy to pursue one.

“I want to learn more about people from different countries and cultures, which is crucial to being part of corporations that have offices around the globe.” — Elizabeth Oh

Here are four ways that it proved to be the right decision for me:

**A new degree of autonomy and responsibility.** From the very first day of my internship, I was shocked by the difference in the Holmusk environment compared to what I was used to at school. Interning at Holmusk showed me a completely different idea of freedom. I had to work, motivate and challenge myself during the nine hours in the office, mindful of the collective team goal to advance the company's mission of managing patients' chronic diseases. I didn't have a teacher to tell me to stay on task, nor did I have grades to encourage me to produce the best work possible. I realized that I was the only one responsible for finishing my work with excellence. I really appreciated this new freedom and trust that I was given, so I made a conscious effort not to take advantage of it. I did so by setting goals to accomplish each day that would keep me accountable for my work. For example, my first goal of the day was to arrive at the office 10 minutes before I was expected. This allowed me to settle in and plan the project work that needed to be completed each day.

**Embracing opportunities to learn.** For the first few days of my internship, I worked on a report compiling companies

in China that are focused on mental health. I was given simple instructions and a supplementary document. Initially, I felt overwhelmed. But after sharing a draft and receiving feedback from CEO Nawal, I had a much clearer idea of what I was expected to do. I also relied on past project reports. This helped a lot. It not only gave me a rough idea of what I was expected to do, but also inspired new research ideas. I was especially intrigued by the telemedicine companies (which use electronic communications and software to provide clinical services to patients without an in-person visit), and had the chance to explore that interest by spending extra time doing additional research. Aside from finding basic background information (like the year the companies were founded, number of employees, annual revenues, and so on), I also went into more detail about how the companies had progressed over the years and their future plans. This, along with the opportunity to learn about real companies, was a really valuable part of my Holmusk experience.

**Commitment to collaboration.** Once I was settled in at the office, I had the chance to cooperate with fellow intern Daniel on a new project regarding Electronic Health Records (EHR) and Electronic Medical Records (EMR) companies in the United States. These companies work to collect patient data that can then be easily accessed by doctors and patients. This allows for a sharing of health care data across various health care settings, making patient treatment more efficient. The EHR/EMR companies that I researched were also potential partners for Holmusk.

Although Daniel and I were given a task similar to my previous project, I learned something entirely different through our collaboration. The execution process was very different from the previous report about China. This was Daniel's first time working on researching and collecting information for Holmusk. Through my explanation of this project, we were both able to gain a better sense of the work and the ways in which we could branch out to further expand our learning. This process allowed us to eventually arrive at a method that not only satisfied his approach for efficiency, but also my interest in further exploring each company outside of the specific research parameters. And our report was stronger for it. In fact, out of all the experiences that I have gained at my internship, I am especially grateful for being exposed to such a valuable partnership, as it opened my eyes to the importance of collaboration and the successful impact that it can have.

**So THIS is leadership.** After getting in touch with Nawal Roy, I was especially excited to learn that he was an alumnus of Singapore American School. On my first day, I had time to sit down and chat with him. I learned what steps he had taken to lead Holmusk. Honestly, I previously thought that anyone with a CEO title must be too busy to sit down for a casual chat with a high school intern, but in fact he emphasized fostering communication and a culture of learning from each other, whether they were senior executives or interns like me.

I also discovered that Nawal had worked in companies all across the world before starting a company in Singapore. The skills and knowledge he had gained through the global experience had given him an upper hand in creating such a strong company. Learning this inspired me to take greater steps outside of my comfort zone and outside of my home country to gain insight about the world. Most importantly, I want to learn more about people from different countries and cultures, which is crucial to being part of corporations that have offices around the globe.

My Holmusk internship allowed me to gain a much more realistic understanding of career options in health care technology and data analytics, areas that I hope to pursue in college. I also realized that it's okay to feel out of place sometimes. You just keep pushing ahead, asking questions, and doing the work and you will soon enough regain your footing – and learn so much along the way.