MIS Internship Reviews

Summer 2011

Baylor University MIS Department

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Allstate Insurance Company
Grace Dadebo

I had the wonderful opportunity to work at Allstate Insurance Company as a business analyst intern. It was a rewarding experience filled with many opportunities to gain new skills that will be valuable as I prepare to start my career. I worked in the Allstate Technology Operations (ATO) section, which supports the other areas of Allstate. I worked with the Information Services Group department of ATO, which supports all the data warehouses for Allstate.

During the internship, I was given the task of identify and creating processes that would allow the Information Services Group improve the way teams complete their projects. I used Microsoft Visio in order to create a final process flow diagram. I had already learned how to use this tool in my Systems Analysis and Design class, so I was able to show my boss I excelled in a tool that the company already used.

Allstate Headquarters in Northbrook, IL

The task allowed me to meet many workers in the department and ask them questions about their role and what they did to complete their part of the process. This required me to communicate efficiently and effectively by asking questions that would get me the answers I needed. I was able to improve my communication skills for this part of the project. Business analysts are the ones who talk to the clients to figure out the best possible solutions to meet their needs. As a business analyst in the technology department, our clients were other areas of Allstate who needed to use technology to improve their processes. Business analysts ask questions in order to get the business requirements for their processes. They have to think outside the box and make sure that they are communicating effectively with the clients, systems analysts, application developers and any other person working on the project. The Systems Analysis and Design class allowed me to have practice beforehand by working on a mock project for a mock company. MIS 3305 was also another class that taught me something I was able to use during the internship by how important communication is during a project and what the systems development life cycle is.

Another project I completed was to create reports about the table usage in the Allstate Data Warehouse. In order to create the reports, I needed to use BusinessObjects. I was not familiar with the tool before I got to Allstate, so I made sure I asked plenty of questions in order to understand what the

In order to promote fitness, Allstate put several bicycles in front of the buildings. People could ride bikes in order to get to a meeting in a different building instead of driving or taking the shuttle.

In my office cubicle

tool was supposed to do and how it would create reports. Even though I like to figure things out on my own, I soon realized I was working with a deadline and it was important to make sure I knew what I was doing at all times. This tool is something that many people in the technology department use, so it was easy to ask questions and get help. The reports take data in the raw and standard layers and turn it into information in the presentation layer. Understanding the difference

between the raw, standard, and presentation layers was something I also learned in the Systems Analysis and Design class. I was glad to understand what several Allstate employees were talking about and didn't have to ask.

I hope to have a career where I work with people in order to help them get to where they need to go. During my internship, I learned a business analyst does just that. I enjoy working with technology and seeing how it can be used to make processes simpler. The internship helped me realize that there are several jobs that would also allow me to work with people and technology in order to meet business needs. I want to work with a company that has good values and has a culture that makes their employees comfortable. I have enjoyed my summer working as a business analyst intern at Allstate. I was able to use things I learned in college and leave with some new knowledge and experiences as well.

Anadarko

Piyanka Patel

Working at Anadarko Petroleum in the Woodlands this summer was a wonderful experience both personally and professionally. The skills and knowledge that I learned in my classes here at Baylor helped me adapt to the working environment very well. Having to work within groups and communicate with different people to accomplish projects and tasks was the most beneficial skill I learned in the classroom that I could easily apply to the work force.

While I was working at Anadarko, I also gained more technical skills than I have in any class. Not to say that classes don't teach the material well but the working world is much faster paced. I received some training but most of my training was self-taught and I had to learn through trial and error. One of the best experiences I had this summer was the opportunity to learn some applications of SAP. I became proficient in these applications and eventually taught classes to other employees and provided customer support to users who were having problems. This was a mutually benefiting learning experience for me to get a better understanding of the application as well as helping others learn the application. I had not considered an MIS major until the end of my sophomore year of college. I thought I wanted to major in accounting but soon realized it wasn't for me.

As I learned of all the different opportunities one can have in an IS major, I knew it was the right major for me. Although all MIS majors take the same classes in school, there are so many different areas of IS that one is bound to become interested in at least one. After taking the Systems Analysis and Design course at Baylor, I knew that was the type of work I was interested in. I expressed my interest to Anadarko during my interview and luckily was assigned more analysis and design and project management work. The internship at Anadarko this summer gave me great experience for my career goals of becoming a Systems Analyst and Project Manager. I enjoyed every moment of it and know that I learned more in those three months than I could have ever imagined.

Certified Thermoplastics
Robert Hedges

When I started my internship at Certified Thermoplastics I had no idea what to expect. My first week was largely spent getting accustomed to the work environment and learning to use the software I would be working with throughout the summer. Starting an internship is a very unique experience. You feel like you don't know anything and that you aren't contributing in any significant way to the company. It's a terrible feeling at first, but eventually you learn the ropes and you become much more comfortable. I had the interesting opportunity of doing an internship at a small business and I know not many people have that option. I loved working in a small, more personal environment that had very open communication and a very informal attitude. I felt at home very quickly and really started focusing on my work instead of my environment.

Before my internship I was concerned that I wouldn't have the necessary knowledge and that I'd be lost and confused the whole summer but I was pleasantly surprised to find that I was extremely prepared for the work I was doing. I learned to program in Visual Basic the semester before my internship and I ended up working with a paired down version of it all summer . It was very easy for me to pick up and it allowed me to use the skills I acquired at Baylor. I did not have any formal training with Microsoft Access however and I was completely lost. I had a general idea of how it worked but I had a really hard time teaching myself the more advanced aspects. It ended up being a huge learning experience for me and I found it very rewarding. I feel like I really know the software now and I don't think I would be as comfortable with Access if I'd received formal training on it.

Once I became familiar with Microsoft Access the training I received in my Systems Analysis and Design class became very useful. Over the course of the summer I realized that I was truly enjoying the work I was doing and that I now know exactly what branch of MIS I want to specialize in. It became abundantly clear to me that I was meant to be a Systems Analyst. I know that I can work as a Data Administrator, Programmer or Database Administrator, and I know that Baylor prepared me to be all of them. I found that I really enjoy drawing diagrams, modeling the system and talking with the end users. I feel like I am really making people's lives easier and better by designing these new information systems.

This internship really helped me put the working world in perspective and it provided a great window for me to see into the world of small business. It made me want to be a Systems Analyst at an IT consulting firm. I feel ready to enter the job market and start my career. I really can't wait to get a full time job after graduation.
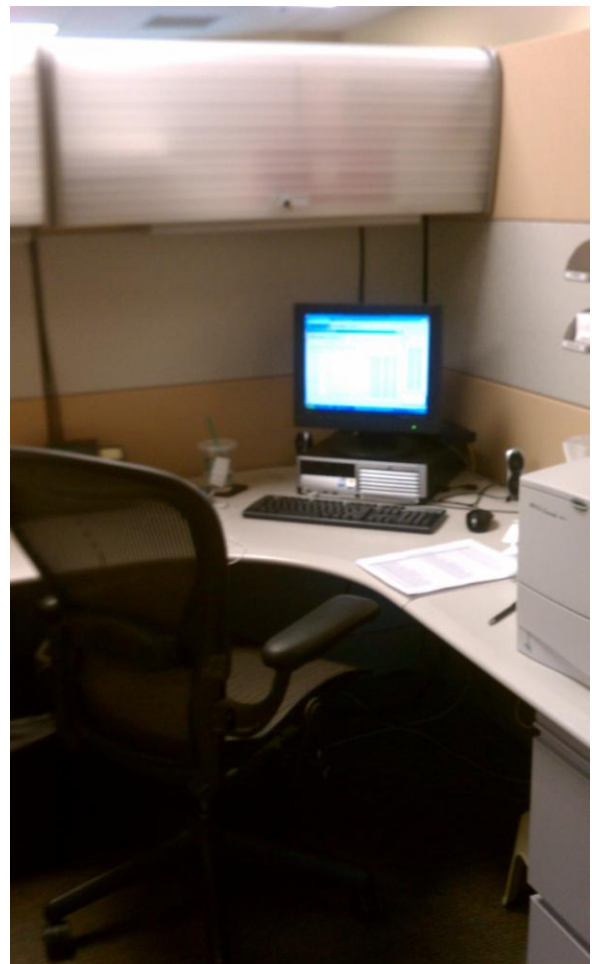
EMI Christian Music Group

Aaron Austin

My internship in the Accounting and Finance Department of EMI was a great experience for me where I got a chance to learn a lot about how a music company is run. I spent a lot of time working within the Lawson accounting system where I really got a better understanding of how data can be used in several different ways and a better understanding of how important databases are to large organization. A number of my classes at Baylor University prepared me for my internship and I now a greater appreciation for all the hard assignments that my professors required. I used something that I learned in one of my MIS classes every day while working in programs such as Microsoft Access and Excel. The concepts that I learned in the System Analysis and Design class really helped me out when it came to working in an accounting system such as Lawson. I was constantly thinking back to what my professors had said about making information useful to the end user while I was working on inputting data and organizing it into the system.

I wish to pursue a career in the music industry and Baylor University has definitely helped me with my goal of finding a job at a music related organization. All companies need to have some sort of Information Technology and I would love to be part of the IT department of a record company in a city such as Nashville or Los Angeles. My internship really showed me that there are several options for graduates with a Management Information Systems degree as well as showed me that I can achieve my goals if I am persistent and work hard. I hope to one day start my own production company and so until then I plan on learning about all sides of the music industry.

USAA
Henry Jordan

As I rode down to San Antonio last summer towards the location of my first internship, I began thinking of what the next few weeks were going to be like. To be honest, my initial thoughts weren't very exciting. I expected to wake up, go to work, work out, go home, and repeat. Also, I had heard horror stories of a few internships and I thought my days would consist of filing, alphabetizing, sorting or worse. As these thoughts raced through my head, I began to second guess my decision to leave home to work at a huge company. I thought, maybe I should have stayed home with family and friends and gone on vacation instead! However, now that my summer has ended, it is safe to say that my internship was far from what I expected, and I would not trade the experiences I had for anything.

During my stay at USAA, my duties consisted of much more meaningful tasks than simply filing or sorting. Instead, I worked closely with an existing team of USAA employees on real problems and tasks that were affecting the company. The team even had individual projects and assignments spread throughout my 10 week stay that were pre-assigned specifically to me! While this may have been a bit of overwhelming at first, I luckily had a great mentor and senior level manager who were always there encouraging me, and lending a helping hand if it was needed. However, this by no means made my stay easy. Since I was just about to enter my junior year in the fall, I had very limited technical knowledge from my previous courses, and being with USAA for only 10 weeks meant there was no time for formal training. Therefore I needed to learn a ton of information, and I needed to learn it fast! I learned 3 programming languages and how to script. I also learned how to manage and maintain massive databases. Aside from the technical skills, I developed better communication skills by creating and running my own meetings, writing hundreds of emails, and also problem solving with other members of my team. None of the skills I gained from my stay can be taught in a classroom, nor can they be read in a textbook. It takes real world experiences and being placed right in the middle of the action to truly comprehend what a job is like.

While it may sound like my Summer was all work and no play, I can tell you for certain this was not the case. With a program the recruits almost 100 interns, its no wonder I made so many friends. The college recruiting program made it very easy for all of us to interact with one another a few times a week so that we could all share our experiences, ask questions and learn from one another in a group setting. In addition to meeting other interns, I also got to meet a large number of top executives, including USAA's CIO, Greg Swartz. These leaders would come visit with us, at least once a week, to share with us their personal timelines, lessons
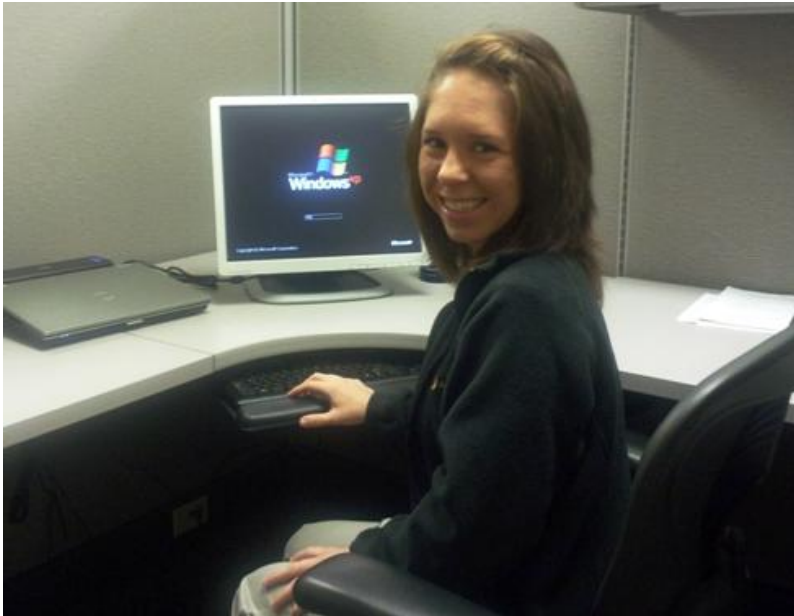
they had learned, and valuable tips on how to succeed. In addition to individual speakers, we also had the opportunity to hear from groups from various parts of the IT department. This allowed us to see other areas of work and specialization that differed from our individual departments. Lastly, USAA is not short on things to do once the clock hits 5:00. Floating the river, fiesta Texas and intramural volleyball teams are just a few of the activities I participated in! I guess you could say I basically still had a summer vacation!

Overall, my experience at USAA was an incredible experience on many levels. I developed and improved my technical and professional abilities by working on real problems with senior employees. I also had a ton of fun in a welcoming environment that thrives on success and hard work. I feel more confident in my abilities, and I know that I will be able to approach my education and my future careers with the skills needed to be successful.

Verizon Wireless
Nancy Rich

My name is Nancy Rich, and I have finished one year of the joint MBA/MSIS program at Baylor. In my MSIS degree, I am following the security track, and I would like to work in IT management after I graduate. I spent my summer internship in New Jersey, working for Verizon Wireless in the IT Client Account Management area. I worked with a team from organizations across the business and vendors to customize a project management system for the company. The existing project management process had different user groups using different project management systems, so cross-functional projects (which most projects are), would show up in different systems, storing the same information in different ways and making tracking projects and reporting across the enterprise very difficult. I specifically worked on the user training plan development, the enterprise-level governance rules for the prioritization of projects, and the organization of the common data elements for the new system.

One thing that I learned a lot about through this experience is the challenges (and benefits) associated with working with virtual teams. Stakeholders in the new system were dispersed throughout the country, and nearly every meeting I attended involved someone calling in from another location. I thought that overall, Verizon Wireless does a great job in managing how dispersed teams work and interact together; you'd never know that some people have rarely met in person. I know there are various ways to help build the team spirit that is so important to working together: having occasional in-person meetings, using telepresence technology, creating a solid group culture, etc. After this internship, though, I think those in-person meetings are probably the most important aspect to developing relationships. There really is no substitute for all the nonverbal communication that happens when you are in the same room with a person.

The project we were working on used an agile development methodology, which is something that I had never really done before, but I found that I really enjoy it. It was interesting to see how people reacted and adapted to the ever-changing landscape that is agile. Some people were very uncomfortable with not having a firm set of

requirements while the developers were already building, and others had a difficult time making a defined decision about something – they were fluidly going with the flow, but hard to pin down about details.

My summer internship at Verizon Wireless was an absolutely amazing experience. I cannot say enough good things about it, and I hope that future Baylor students, graduate or undergraduate, have the opportunity to apply and participate. I learned so much this summer, not just about how an IT organization works, but how a technology company works. VzW is trying to convert from being a telecommunications company to being a technology company, and that is very evident in how everyone's mindset is changing – it is not just something the executives say in speeches. I was very impressed with everyone that I worked with; they were all very helpful to the interns, very knowledgeable about their job functions, and very passionate about VzW.