

UKIBC Scholarship Board Report 2009 Programme

UKIBC Scholarship Programme Summer 2009

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Company Placement	<p>Company Advaia Diversity Solutions</p> <p>Company Business The core competency of the business is in cross border cultural consultancy and training, with a direct focus on companies from the west doing business in India and vice versa.</p> <p>Work Placement Role & Responsibilities The official job title given to me was that of Business Development. With this as my given function, I was deployed all over the business, gaining direct exposure to all aspects of the company. This included working in product development, website design, marketing, administration and taking part in many knowledge management exercises. The holistic company involvement enabled me to quickly understand the Advaia ethos, thinking and service offerings.</p> <p>One of the main responsibilities I had during my scholarship was in the area of product development, where I was required to generate new product ideas as well as developing content outlines for each product. I was also heavily involved in the production of a 20 minute film, where, as part of a small team, I was required to be involved in the scripting, editing and story boarding of the project.</p> <p>Having been offered and accepting a four month extension, taking my total stay in India to six months, I am now moving into two areas of the business, both within the area of Business Development. This includes the implementation of various marketing projects, forming business relations with UK based business and attending various networking events to promote the company and its offerings.</p> <p>What contributions / impact to the business did you make?</p> <p>With Advaia using a Western approach to business (due to it being a German influenced business), I at first questioned what contributions I could make towards a business that generally operated like that of a business from the UK. However, this soon changed, and I was able to make both low level and high level impacts on the business.</p> <p>In terms of low-level impacts, I was able to use my English language skills to write and correct company literature and also offer improvements and insights into how current company literature could be amended to be more attractive to the UK market.</p> <p>As for the high-level impacts, I was heavily involved in the making of the company teaser trailer, which will predominately be used in the UK, offering my insights into how it would be received in the UK, as well as offering my own personal suggestions and experiences in regards to the culture shocks that I first experienced when arriving in India. I felt it was important that I was involved in this project as I was able to offer fresh and new ideas that I, as a British person felt needed to be</p>
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addressed, as the experiences I had as a Western person in India would generally be the same as those of any other Westerner.

Being one of only two British people within the business, I was able to offer my insight into how Advai should position itself within the UK market in order to develop a strong brand and sales. I was also able to gain clarity on the company's service offering portfolio in the UK market, and suggest improvements and changes that I felt would be beneficial when entering the UK.

Working in India- Observations

In terms of my personal working experience, I feel that for the most part, I did not suffer any huge challenges or obstacles, as I was working for a Western company. So, in terms of questioning management decisions, time keeping and communicating messages, I faced no problems, as my office resembled that of any other UK office.

The one observation and challenge that I did suffer from was my manager's use of the German language when addressing his German colleagues, which I found difficult, as I had no real understanding of what was being discussed. This however was easily resolved when I asked my manager to speak in English.

In terms of working responsibilities, I found a few aspects fairly challenging as I was asked to participate in things that I had never done before, such as working on web designs, editing video materials and working with an Apple Mac, which at the time, were completely alien to me. However, I was given the correct training and support, so these issues were easily overcome.

In terms of the Indian people, I did make many observations into challenges that any visitor from the West would experience when dealing with locals. This ranged from communication issues, the challenge for Indian people to express a "no", and their general difference in time management. I was partly able to overcome these issues as I am of Indian origin, and also fluent in the Punjabi language. In regards to communication issues, I was able to use these skills to my advantage. In terms of overcoming the Indian time issues and their challenge to say no, I was fortunate to work for a culture consultancy company, who were able to advise me on many different approaches and techniques to use. I was also able to draw upon the observations made when watching my manager deal with his own personal staff.

Impressions of India

As a place to live & work

As a place to live, I found India very interesting and enjoyable, and this played a part in me accepting the four month extension offered to me. Personally I have found India to be a pleasant experience as it is an exciting country to be in, with the contrast and growth that it is currently experiencing adding to this.

In terms of culture, I found that there are many important factors that must be recognised by any Westerner when visiting India to do business. The importance of relationship building cannot be underestimated, and during this scholarship programme, I have been able to see first hand how Indians go about their business. For example, their ability to juggle many projects at one time, doing things on the last minute and generally not having a systematic approach to things, unlike the West. However, I do feel there are many factors that are stopping India from growing to its full potential. The fact that Indians appreciate micro-management, that they are differently empowered and given small job functions is one, as management wastes a lot of time and energy in directing their staff. The hierarchy approach used by many Indian businesses also adds to this.

Another factor I feel stopping India from progressing is an over bureaucratic approach, which again

	<p>slows the whole process down of doing anything. If you are fortunate enough to know the right people, then this is easily remedied, however, if you are unfortunate enough not to be in the position, then a simple procedure such as purchasing a mobile phone can turn into a week process.</p> <p>The biggest factor, however, is the lack of infrastructure. From my personal observations I feel the frequent power cuts and lack of transportation links hinder the growth of India significantly. Although advances are being made in terms of transportation links, which is partly due to the upcoming Commonwealth Games, it will be interesting to see if India continues in the same vein once the games have ended. It is also astonishing to me that a country with over 300 days worth of sunlight does not look towards using renewable energies, such as solar power in an attempt to bridge the shortages in electricity. The class system in India also may play a factor in the progression of India, as opportunities are limited to each individual dependent on what class or religion they are.</p>
<p>UKIBC Scholarship</p>	<p>What has been the value of the Scholarship to you?</p> <p>I feel that the scholarship has been of great value to me. In terms of work experience I was able to learn and develop new areas, as well as working in business areas that I had never previously experienced or considered as areas of employment. From an international perspective, the scholarship programme has reinforced my view of India being a country of opportunity and future employment. The scholarship has also allowed me to see how India conducts its business, providing me with some invaluable experiences and a different outlook on how to conduct business with the east. I feel that Indian companies would also benefit from participating in the Scholarship programme as it can help them to understand a western approach to business, which may aid them in the future and also provide them with different perspective in conducting business, especially with the Western world.</p> <p>What would be the value of the Scholarship be for others?</p> <p>The Scholarship programme would be hugely beneficial to any UK student who has aspirations of working in India. The Scholarship can provide them the opportunity to experience working in India, giving them the direct exposure to India as a country and as a growing economy. The scholarship programme will also give any future participant an idea of what would be expected from them if they are looking to forge a successful career in India.</p>
<p>Improvements</p>	<p>How can the programme be improved / changed for next year?</p> <p>I feel that there are two main points that should be considered for next years programme in order to improve the overall running of the scholarship. The first would be the timing of the recruitment process. With the programme being aimed towards final year students, I personally felt that having a recruitment process that started from 14th April was far to close to my exam period, and the added stress was not necessary. The second improvement I would suggest would be that the future scholars are given a proper business cultural training as opposed to the social training that we received. This suggestion is based on this scholarship programme's aim to expose UK graduates to Indian business. I personally found the cultural training we received before coming to India to be outdated and not relevant to cope with the current situation in India. It did not provide me with any insights that were relevant for my easy integration here or in order to successfully cope with an international business environment. Due to the fact that I learned while working for Advai, how different the quality of such cross-cultural programs can be, I realised the opportunities we, as Scholars missed, by not having had a training programme that was aimed to quickly integrate us and prepare us for our assignments in India. I would also recommend that future cultural trainings to be conducted over a period of 2 days and soon after arrival in India.</p>