Copy and Paste

School teaches many important things, but the information cannot be copied and pasted into real life. For this reason life experiences become more meaningful to truly learn a lesson. While I have enjoyed class and learned quite a lot, my experiences during my internship will stay with me much longer. I believe my classes are helping prepare me, but working in the field has been an invaluable tool in developing knowledge of the lodging industry as well as my professional career in hospitality.

The Professional Prep class taught me how to prepare and dress for an interview as well as giving me the skills to write my resume and cover letter. It is through my professor in Front Office Procedures that I learned about the internship opportunity- as this shows, networking proved to be an important lesson as well. Both of these helped me before the interview, but neither guaranteed me the position with Grand America. My class did not tell me exactly what to say to get the job, and it was not until I applied my professors’ advices that they actually became useful. It was a combination of the education I received in class and personal experience with interviews and past history that secured a position as an intern.

Once I was hired as a reservations agent, the new experiences began to expand my education even further. My first day I learned that not all management is the same. Great attention was given to my training, and I did not take a single call for the first two weeks. Because of my front office class, I felt more comfortable with concepts than I would have if it was my first introduction to them. School does not prepare for transitions. I left a job where I was one of the senior staff members. I was a shift supervisor without the title; other employees constantly asked me questions to which I almost always knew the answer, and my opinion actually mattered. I left this to become the newest team member in an industry I had never worked in, where I knew next to nothing about how to do anything. It has been much more frustrating to accept my new role than I had anticipated. I love learning new things, but I am anxious to know everything.

Books do not teach people skills. They may teach about them, but the only true way to develop the skills is through practice. I cannot read how to deal with awkward pauses or how to salvage a conversation rapidly going downhill; that is something that must come with time. As I take more phone calls my customer service improves. I am learning to detect people that want an efficient, no-frills call and those who want a personal conversation discussing every service and amenity offered. Talking about people in class is not the same as getting to know them, and I have a very long way to go. I look up to my coworkers who can accurately assess a situation and perfectly execute what an individual wants.

There have been several unexpected consequences to my internship. I have been complimented more than once on my uniform, and generally just noticed more when I wear my suit. I feel more confident because I look and feel professional. I am proud of what I do and am actually happy at work. I have also found a few things I do that were not in the original job description. This includes educating callers about third party bookings, googling maps and learning geography, being a weather forecaster, planning vacations, and making personal recommendations. A benefit I really did not expect was having great coworkers. School has taught me that life is a mixed bag of people, and that we must work with people whether we like them or not; work gives us the opportunity to practice that philosophy. In this case I am lucky to get along with everyone- there are just some people I know better than others.

I was fortunate to have this opportunity to develop professional skills during an internship in my career field. I am able to personally connect things I have learned in class because I actually see and experience it. My lessons have become much more meaningful and I think they will stay with me longer. I get to actually experience what good management is like, and use the steps of resolving a guest complaint instead of just writing them down in my notes. I have enjoyed most of my classes in the PRT department because most are relevant and have professors with real world experience. I believe true education is built from lessons taught in and out of the classroom and is constantly expanding. I hope to be proud of my education one day.