Information Systems Audit Internship

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Learning Report

Abstract—This report enlightens the obstacles, experience and lessons learned from accomplishing an internship in information systems audit at Caixa Geral de Depósitos (CGD) as an internal auditor. The first stage of the internship focused on introducing me to the Company and the concepts of audit, before the real work started. This preliminary phase definitely put my autodidactism skills to the test, as it involved a lot of searching and reading. In the second stage I developed a project, together with my mentor, about information security of CGD's multifunctional printers. Throughout this whole project I found myself out of my comfort zone several times. This allowed to develop my criticism, autonomy, self-initiative, resourcefulness, organization, communication, but most important of all, it allowed me to reinvent myself and change many aspects in my own personality. In the overall, this internship has been a gratifying experience that has deeply contributed to my personal and professional growth.

Index Terms—CGD, audit, multifunctional printer, information, security, autonomy, autodidactism, self-initiative, criticism, resourcefulness, organization, perseverance, professionalism

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1 INTRODUCTION

FOR five months, since August 3rd 2014, I have faced innumerous challenges that put me out of my comfort zone from the very beginning of this internship at CGD. These challenges allowed me to develop a series of soft-skills but that is actually not the bulk of this report.

It is easy to say that learning something new improves a variable number of soft-skills such as, "I'm more creative", "I'm more communicative", "I'm more autonomous", and so on. But how often can we say that accomplishing a project about security information of multifunctional printers changed the whole way of how we see ourselves and the world?

This project was developed together with my internship mentor, who taught the ways of the auditor, gave me the tools to defy myself and guided me through this process.

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The next sections of this report will explain how the adversities faced during this project became achievements.

2 SOFT-SKILLS

As an overview of the benefits of enduring in this internship, the skills I consider to have improved are:

- Autonomy
- Autodidactism
- Self-initiative
- Criticism
- Resourcefulness/Creativity
- Organization/Planning
- Communication
- Perseverance
- Team work
- Professionalism

The following subsections tell the story of how these skills were achieved/improved.

2.1 Autonomy, Autodidactism and Self-Initiative

When I first set foot on that interview room I did not know what audit even meant. The

(1.0) Excelent	LEARNING					DOCUMENT						
(0.8) Very Good	CONTEXT x2	SKILLS x1	REFLECT x4	S+C x1	SCORE	Structure x0.25	Ortogr. x0.25	Gramm. x0,.25	Format x0.25	Title x0.5	Filename x0.5	SCORE
(0.6) Good												
(0.4) Fair	1.6	0.8	3.6	0.8	6.8	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.2	0.5	0.5	1.95
(0.2) Weak												

first two months of internship were all about discovering what audit was and how to execute it. I literally spent eight weeks searching and studying and studying and searching the theme "Audit". Every conversation I heard in meetings or in the halls had an acronym I did not know about. Thus I had to be attentive, perspicacious, to absorb all the information I could and investigate without having to be told.

After starting the project there were a few times where we, the audit team, had no option but to wait for the auditee to have an opportunity to give us the information needed for the audit. During this time I learned I could not sit and wait, just to warm up my chair. I had to make use of that time to be a step ahead, to learn and know more about the Company, because one cannot audit an organization as huge as CGD without being familiar with it.

This was my first lesson, look for things to do without waiting for a new task from above – self-initiative – and do my homework – autodidactism/autonomy.

2.2 Criticism

After completing the introductory stage of audit and absorbing a million concepts, the second lesson I learned was to observe and criticize everything. Never take anything for granted and think out of the box.

This is an extremely important skill in auditing a system, during its risk analysis. My mentor always tried to test me in each of these skills. He would tell me to investigate all I could about printers and think of ways to work around a fact that may seem irrefutable or a component that may seem indestructible.

Practice definitely is a determinant factor to improve the ability to criticize the world around us.

2.3 Resourcefulness, Organization and Communication

In a more advanced stage of the project, I was finally truly pushed out of my comfort zone. Instead of being told to "Do this" I was told to "Find a way to get this done". I panicked. For a few moments I felt disarmed – a 20 year-old boy confronting a 138 year-old Company.

Before moving an inch I revisited every single fact we had discovered at that point of the project. I had to organize myself, structure all the things we had done so far in my head, clarify any remaining doubt so I would not look like a fool in front of the auditee.

In the end, despite all my fears, I accomplished the task. I managed to contact the auditee myself to obtain information for our audit project. I learned resourcefulness was a very important competence, seeing as the auditee is the one that supposedly knows more about the subject. Thus, the auditor must resort to any means necessary to apprehend the information he needs.

2.4 Perseverance, Team Work and Professionalism

During these five months at CGD I have failed countless times. I felt a rollercoaster of emotions over my failures: discontentment, revolt, frustration, indifference, but never gave up. With time and experience I eventually changed my mindset and dressed the skin of an auditor. In the beginning I looked at work as being something operational, something that had to be done, well and fast. But auditing is more than "getting things done", it requires deep thinking and analyzing, it requires time, and debating the subject for hours if needed. I learned what 'team' meant and that if I gave voice to my thoughts maybe my team members would help mature those thoughts and turn them into a great solution.

By the end of the project it all started to feel natural, the bureaucracies, the team's dynamics, etc. I knew what I had to do without being told, and I also knew that before I did I simply had to share my thoughts with the team.

3 CONCLUSION

Working at CGD has been a gratifying experience. I would dare to say that in five months I have learned more than in three years of college. Not only did I get to understand the complexity of a huge Company as I developed the concern of being someone that may contribute to dwindle that complexity.

With this internship I have overcame most of my insecurities and grown into a more independent and self-aware person. I learned to look at things from diverse perspectives rather than sticking up to one, to question things especially when one is not so familiar with the subject, to be bold and inventive without being afraid of rejection, to adapt in unknown environments.

To conclude, I believe I achieved the goals I had established for this internship. Or at least I am sure to be on the right track. Whether I remain at CGD when the internship contract comes to term in February 3rd or not, I am certain I will already be taking some advantage to my next endeavor.

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Diogo Costa graduated at Instituto Superior Técnico (IST) in Computers Engineering, 2014. Currently accomplishing a Masters' Degree in Intelligent Systems and Software Engineering. Working at CGD in an interniship in Information Systems Internal Audit.