

I don't think I'll ever forget how valuable my experience at *Tectonics* was. I learned a lot about my own ability to make uncomfortable, but important decisions when my back is against the wall. I was able to understand what it truly means to lead by example. I honed my ability to teach myself valuable skills. Most importantly though, I learned to employ all of these things in a high-functioning work environment. I didn't have a great deal of room for error, but I believe that pressure allowed me to truly gain confidence in my abilities. When I walked into my first meeting after only three days of work and pitched an idea, their laughs, smiles, and visibly impressed faces made me understand that I can bring value with me wherever I go.

In January of 2022 I spoke to Bob Skandalaris, a venture capitalist and former CEO of Quantum Ventures. I wanted to sit down with him so I could pick his brain about valuable internship opportunities, work experience, finding the right path, and how he got into his line of work. I found our conversation valuable and wrote down as much of the information he gave me as I could. This conversation allowed me to realize my interest in data science and analysis.

At the time I had been working for a computer peripherals company as a brand ambassador. I had an opportunity to obtain an internship through them in San Francisco, but I didn't plan on leaving the state and honestly wanted to look for other opportunities. I love tech, but I like being well-versed and pursuing new experiences. After getting set up with another internship in tech, I assumed I was locked in and didn't have to worry for the rest of the semester. Well, a couple weeks before this internship was about to start, I received an email from one of the company reps letting me know that their internship program had been terminated. I was frantic and in search of a way to find another meaningful internship. I was terrified knowing that I needed to have some experience before going into my senior year, especially considering I'd be applying for grad school at Notre Dame.

I was pressed for time and still wanted to make sure that the internship experience I'd be undertaking would be valuable and provide me with the opportunity to grow useful skills. It took me a little while to build up the courage, but I swallowed my anxiety and started to make phone calls. I decided to call on Bob, who I spoke with earlier in the year, to see if there was any room for me to grow my skill set at Quantum. I made it very clear that payment was not necessary, I just wanted experience. Well, after several emails and a handful of phone calls, I was offered a position that would not be like any standard internship. They wanted me to be very aware that this was a high-impact position that would require a great deal of work, but would provide me with the experience I was looking for. I knew this is exactly what I wanted and took it without hesitation.

This internship provided me with the organizational responsibility of being a data analyst. Now, the company I was working for, *Tectonics*, was still pretty new to the eCommerce scene and needed help organizing and building up their data sector. Realizing that there was almost nothing aside from the yearly sales for each division of the company and the products they're attributed to, I had a lot of work ahead of me. While I did assume the role of Data Analyst, I wore a lot of hats at Tectonics. I ran product development meetings, reported to the CEO of Tectonics and Quantum Ventures every Friday, provided status reports and pitched new ideas at our Monday objective meetings. This led me to be involved with PD work, marketing and SEO research, data collection and database creation/management, along with the month-long objective I was given by the CEO at Quantum.

Oftentimes when I take on a new position I don't think about how difficult or how much of a time-sink it is, I just treat it as my responsibility. When I first became aware of my responsibilities at *Tectonics*, I was excited. All of the anxiety went out the door as soon as I assumed my position. My overarching goal was to perform competitor and product research, create a database of all that information (including the notes I took along the way), and develop a sustainable tutorial that would be used to instruct future employees in the data sector on how to perform proper research and analysis on a daily basis. This included instruction

on how to use all of the software we had access to, what each data point meant, and I provided photos and short videos of each individual step.

During my first week, I worked under the guidance of one of the project managers who had me operating all of the machinery on the production floor. This was fast-paced, grueling, and excessively warm work. During this time, my mentor for the week, Zach, talked to me about his experience working at Tectonics, his time in the marines, and the type of leader that he was in the company. He led by example; taking on the manual tasks of the production floor that he was no longer required to do and showing that he wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty. To me, this was a prime example of a good leader at work.

As I neared the end of my internship at Tectonics, I had provided new and sustainable product ideas, created a functional Access database which would be uploaded to Azure, developed my original tutorial document to instruct future employees, and learned a great deal about my ability to adapt and teach myself new skills to complete my objectives. I felt a great deal of confidence knowing that I could accomplish such high-value tasks while having no prior professional experience in most of the realms I was working. In the future, I want to use the experience I had at *Tectonics* to remind myself how important it is to continue learning and to lead by example. The world will continue to change faster and faster as time goes on. We have to weather the storm and be a good example for all those around us.