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Jacob Phillips - Alumni Interview Write-Up

For my alumni interview, I interviewed Wall Street Trek participant, Jacob Phillips, who graduated from Case Western Reserve University in 2019 after studying economics and computer science. Currently, Jacob works as a crypto researcher at Polychain capital which is one of the leading funds in the crypto investing and research industry. In our interview, we spoke about how the Wall Street Trek affected his career search as well as his path to his current position.

Jacob's original plan at the start of his college career is similar to mine because we both are intrigued by investing and hedge funds. He realized he needed to begin networking and this motivated him to apply to the Wall Street Trek. As a member of the first trek, Jacob said it was a great way to meet Case's alumni and other high-performing finance students. In addition, the trek gives meaningful feedback on interview prep and networking skills that provides the opportunity to compete with students from other target schools. To further his connections from the Trek, Jacob went to New York and set up coffee chats with alumni. Jacob stressed that once you make a connection, it is crucial to cultivate and maintain that relationship over time. You may never know when someone can provide a meaningful connection that can help you secure a job.

After speaking with industry professionals and older students, Jacob determined that the best way to get to the buy-side was through investment banking. As a result, during his sophomore summer, he held a banking internship at KeyBanc Capital markets in the debt capital markets group. As a junior, he worked with Rothschild in the equity & debt advisory group. Although Jacob thought that these banking internships were great experiences that taught him financial skills, he did not enjoy the work of an investment banker. In search of a position that was more interesting and required critical thinking for investing, Jacob pivoted into cryptocurrency. Crypto was appealing because as a younger member he was able to contribute to large decisions. In the last few minutes of the call, I asked how undergraduates can get involved in crypto. This is a nascent industry that I am interested in as well and it was great to learn about the opportunities that exist in this space. I learned that since the industry is small, the firms are willing to take undergraduates for a wide variety of roles. Since the positions do not have defined responsibilities, they are looking for interns that can add any kind of value to the firm.

A key piece of advice from Jacob was "if you can do the job before you are hired, you can get the job". This was important to me because we were discussing fully immersing ourselves in a specific area of interest and relentlessly pursuing opportunities that align with that interest. My conversation with Jacob was very beneficial as it helped me realize how a career in

financial services can be used to pivot into other industries. I plan to stay in touch with Jacob as I progress through Case and develop a better understanding of my future career.