

## **Briefing**

For my first co-op term I worked as a web developer at FGF Brands, an innovation company that bakes. Their mission is to expose people to great eating experiences. FGF Brands is passionate about food and offers high-quality products at an affordable price. Some of their main products include sweet goods such as muffins and loaves as well as flat breads such as naan and pizza crusts. FGF Brands is also one of the largest suppliers of naan to Costco in the United States as well as the largest supplier of baked goods to Starbucks Canada - these include their croissants and danishes. As a web developer, I was apart of the software development team. It was nerve-racking to begin my first co-op term at such a large company but the members were extremely friendly and helpful as well as the open-work environment made it easier to make friends and truly feel at home. My primary responsibilities included using HTML, CSS, and JavaScript to develop web applications for different teams within the company whether it be for tracking sales or finding a solution to accessing data more efficiently. This company constantly looks for ways to refine and improve their products. My team looks for opportunities and ways to optimize and simplify the lives of all the other teams. This spans from creating small one-page websites to display statistics and data to developing large multi-layered applications that utilizes the web's most popular and trendy frameworks and libraries. This company is not just a bakery - they strive to hire fresh innovative thinkers, spot opportunities to build a competitive advantage for their customers, continuously seek new ways to create great eating experiences, and lastly, make food real again meaning all natural and no artificials.

## **Insights (C & D)**

Throughout the four months, I learned a lot - not just in my understanding of different programming languages and technology as a whole, but my strengths and weaknesses. Reflecting back to the beginning of the work term, I can recognize that my responsibility skills were lacking. On the other hand, my perseverance skills were very strong. In my opinion, these two skills are extremely valuable, if not necessary, to succeeding in a professional setting. At the end of the term, I have been able to become a reliable and responsible member of the team making sure to always make deadlines and never leaving things to the last minute. As well, I have further developed and strengthened my perseverance skills. The most important thing I learned at FGF Brands was that as long as you are willing and eager to learn you will succeed. The first prompt I chose to answer was to describe one way that this co-op work term contributed to my personal growth. In order to provide context, I will describe how I was in my school term and the early stages of the co-op term. Back in my 2A academic term, I constantly struggled to hand in assignments on time, let alone complete them. This was always due to procrastination and leaving things to the last minute. Rather than utilize the free time I had to work on my assignments in small chunks I would leave it to be completed in one long session. This often resulted in burning out and feeling a sense of hopelessness. Despite this, I still managed to complete the 2A term with pretty decent grades as well as maintain a great social life and have enough time to go to the gym several times a week. One specific event that stood out to me and I will use to remind myself of a time when I struggled to stay ahead of things was when I stayed up late completing an assignment I left to the last minute resulting in almost sleeping in for my

exam the following day. Thankfully, I had a reliable roommate that woke me up and saved me from a situation that could have left a large dent in my GPA. In the beginning of the co-op term, I struggled to remember to clock out before I left to go home. This made it difficult for the company to properly manage my pay and weekly hours. Overall, it was a stressful situation for both parties despite the simple solution. At this point, I recognized that this sort of behaviour was not tolerable in a professional setting as well as just overall. From an academic standpoint, it constantly leaves me stressed and makes it even more difficult to succeed and acquire high grades. For the upcoming 2B academic term, I plan to schedule out my day using Google Calendar as well as make use of alarms and reminders on my cellular device. From when I begin my day by waking up, brushing my teeth, eating breakfast to heading to the gym, showering, and making dinner, I will plan it out on Google Calendar so that I can properly manage my time and be more responsible for assignments and making deadlines. From a personal growth standpoint, I believe this illustrates immaturity and failure to be reliable not just in school but as a person. Everyday I strive to fix this issue by simply being more aware and really making use of Google Calendar. It helps me be more on time when meeting friends, it reminds me of dentist appointments, the possibilities of such a simple yet powerful application are endless. This co-op work term was invaluable to my personal growth as it allowed me to recognize a vital weakness I had that was never addressed or worked on. By having to always arrive on time and experience what it is like to work a full-time job many positive changes have been made to my life. One monumental change I made was fixing my sleep schedule. Academically, this will benefit my grades, leave me with much more free time, and reduce the overall stress. Personally, this makes

the lives of my peers easier as well as simply helps me wake up feeling bright and productive rather than groggy and tired all the time. In the future, I plan to continue to find new ways to increase my productivity and further develop my responsibility skills as they have already begun to make my days much more enjoyable. The second prompt I chose to answer was to describe a situation that occurred during the work term where lack of knowledge led to a problem. Once again, I will utilize the DEAL model and begin by providing context. At school, I study Kinesiology which is the study of human and non-human body movement. In other words, the co-op position I acquired is in no relation to my field of study. I found an interest in programming, specifically web development, in the summer following my first year. As a result, I decided to pursue this passion by applying for co-op jobs related to this and I managed to obtain a job at FGF Brands as an “innovation driven web developer”. The first couple weeks were difficult for me as I struggled to keep up with the new terminology and concepts that the usual computer science or engineering student would learn from class. One specific event I recall is when one of my tasks was to utilize Bootstrap, a HTML, CSS, and JavaScript library, to create a simple weather app. At this point in time, I had no idea what this word even meant and how I would begin to create an app that displays weather. My lack of knowledge in the field led to a problem that could only be solved by studying and learning the library as well as the languages that came along with it. Luckily, the past summer I had already studied HTML and CSS. For the following weeks at work, I took the time to read documentation on the library and learn as much of JavaScript as I could. At times it was frustrating but by the end of the process I was able to complete the task due to perseverance and hard work. Perseverance is a key skill that draws the

line between someone who is “good” at something and someone who is “great” at something.

Without perseverance, one will often give up before trying and will not set time and effort aside into attempting the task. Examining this situation from the perspective of academic learning, I am astounded by the amount of knowledge I have acquired in a field that was so foreign to me at the beginning of the co-op term. I have learned a significant amount at FGF Brands and I am confident that the languages, frameworks, libraries, and even small tips will prove to be useful in my future co-op terms. What is more important to take away from this experience is my personal growth. It is evident now that perseverance can make all the difference when trying something new. In this case, it was programming, however it can be applied to just about anything from playing an instrument to lifting a new personal record at the gym. This experience also taught me to not bite off more than I can chew, this means to recognize what you can and cannot do. For me, I had a strong understanding of two of the three programming languages required for the job and believed that with my perseverance skills I could learn the third. This proved to be rewarding as I am completing the co-op term with a much stronger understanding of programming concepts and front-end languages. In the future, I would have taken the time before the co-op term started to develop a basic understanding of the skill that I was missing as this could have been potentially stressful and an annoyance to my fellow team members. To reiterate, I believe that through this co-op work term I have developed my responsibility skills and strengthened my perseverance skills.

## **Looking Ahead**

Reflecting back to the whole first co-op term experience I have learned a significant amount about my professional development and how closely tied it is to my personal growth as well. Key traits that I work on in my professional career transfer over to my personal life and allow me to succeed in whatever it is that I want to do. Knowing what I know now, the ideal work term would be at technology start-up company with an open-office environment with relation to fitness or sports. I plan to continue in pursuing my passion for programming by applying and working for different tech companies. I learned that large companies often provide less tasks for co-op students and I would like to take on a bigger role. A technology start-up would be small meaning that co-op students would be given more responsibilities and play a larger role in large-scale projects. This will further develop my responsibility skills and contribute to my personal growth. From the past success this co-op term in an open-office environment, it is definitely something I hope to experience again. An open-office environment allows me to feel comfortable and develop strong relationships with my coworkers leaving no fear of asking questions no matter the simplicity. With a small team, members would also usually be busy with their own work, this means that I must persevere and try to figure things out on my own before I ask others for help. Lastly, as a kinesiology student, I have studied human anatomy, nutrition, biomechanics, exercise prescription, and other related courses. This means that I would flourish in a company that is developing something related to fitness and sports. It is also a strong interest of mine and I would be able to provide more knowledge on many aspects in comparison to a computer science or engineering student who only knows the programming

Patrick Du  
20721626  
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languages. All in all, this co-op term has been a large success to my overall growth and an exciting first experience!