

CON3023X Reflective Essay

My Third year in the construction industry was marked by a significant milestone, my continuous involvement with the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) as Tomorrow's Leader. Continuing from my previous year, I was able to expand my network, develop more leadership skills, and be able to organise events that bridged the gap between students and industry professionals. One of the key events I organised was the CIOB x ABES Open Day, held at one of Washirika 3 Oaks' (W3O) construction sites. This event offered UCT students the opportunity to engage directly with industry experts and observe a live construction site, giving them practical insights into the industry. The success of this event did more than just strengthen my organisational and leadership abilities, it led to an unexpected opportunity. Following the Open Day, I was offered an internship at W3O, which allowed me to immerse myself in both the business and practical aspects of the construction industry. Over the course of 192 hours, I gained valuable hands-on experience that complemented my academic knowledge and enhanced my understanding of project management and business development in the built environment.

My first week at Washirika 3 Oaks (W3O) introduced me to the company's operations and allowed me to ease into my responsibilities as an intern. On my first day, I was warmly welcomed by the team and shown my workspace. I attended a meeting with the director and the business development manager, which provided insight into the company's strategic goals and current projects. It was clear from the start that my role would involve both administrative tasks and learning about the broader business side of construction. One of my first official tasks included assisting with compiling documents for W3O'S head office in Gauteng. This included identifying clients for the company's civil division, an important responsibility that gave me early exposure to the intricacies of business development. During this task I had the opportunity to attend virtual meetings with the civils division where I was responsible for walking them through the document and suggesting innovative ways we could work with other companies. Through this task I quickly learned the importance of research, communication, and attention to detail, as my work directly impacted the company's ability to secure new clients and projects.

Throughout the week, I continued to participate in meetings and observe the team's interactions with clients. For example, I attended a meeting with a client in the energy sector, where I was able to listen in on discussions about potential expansion into this growing industry. It was during these moments that I began to appreciate how construction companies must adapt to new opportunities and markets, and the role business development plays in ensuring long term growth. As the week progressed, I was tasked with reaching out to various institutions to

connect with procurement personnel. This assignment required me to navigate professional communications, learning how to approach key stakeholders and initiate conversations that could lead to potential project opportunities. Although initially challenging, this experience taught me how crucial networking and relationship-building are within the construction industry. By the end of the week, I had not only learned how to identify potential clients but also how to establish meaningful connections that could benefit both parties.

Overall, my first week at W3O was an eye-opening experience that provided a solid foundation for the weeks to come. I quickly adopted to the fast-paced environment and began to appreciate the balance between business development and project execution in the construction industry. This early exposure helped me transition smoothly into more hands on tasks in the following weeks, where I would further explore both the administrative and on site aspects of my role.

My second week at W3O marked a significant shift from administrative tasks to more hands-on site experience. Early in the week, I was assigned to one of our projects in Kenilworth, where I worked closely with the construction manager, helping to lead small teams and ensuring the site remained organised. This role allowed me to take on more responsibility, as I was tasked with supervising the housekeeping team to maintain site cleanliness and safety. Later in the week, I visited another site in Constantia, where three high end residential buildings were being constructed simultaneously. This was my first experience witnessing the coordination required for multiple projects running in parallel. The on-site experience during this week was invaluable, offering me deeper insight into project management and how various elements of construction, from scheduling to team coordination, and how every detail contributes to the smooth running of a site. These lessons reinforced much of what I had learned in the classroom and gave me a practical understanding of construction management in action.

However, my commitments didn't end at W3O. After clocking out in the afternoon, I continued my responsibilities with the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) as a Tomorrow's Leader. During this week, I attended the CIOB Members Forum, a significant event that brought together professionals and leaders from across the globe. As part of my role, I helped organise an "Amazing Race" for the CIOB members, providing them with a mini tour of the V&A Waterfront. This event showcased my leadership and event planning skills, and it was rewarding to see professionals from various sectors engage in a fun yet informative activity. Balancing my work at W3O and my responsibilities with CIOB was challenging but deeply fulfilling. The Members Forum not only enhanced my networking opportunities but also gave me the chance to

demonstrate leadership in a less formal, yet highly interactive setting. This dual experience during week 2 sharpened my ability to manage time effectively and work in different capacities, whether on a construction site or in a leadership event.

By the third week and going forward, I began to shift back to a more business orientated role, working closely with the Business Development Manager. One of the key highlights was attending a high-level meeting in Stellenbosch with a potential client, a major developer in the Western Cape. This experience gave me invaluable insight into how a construction company presents itself to high-end clients, particularly when trying to secure large scale projects. During the meeting, discussions about cash flow statements, and interest rates revealed the close link between construction projects and financial strategy, and I was able to connect these real-world discussions to what I had learned in my coursework. Throughout the week, I continued on compiling key documents, including a comprehensive client list for our projects in Gauteng. This task helped me understand the importance of maintaining strong relationships with clients and keeping accurate records to ensure project continuity.

In addition to the administrative work, I made visits to our ongoing projects, including a site in Ravenscraig, where they were casting first floor slab of a major multi million project. Being able to switch between on site work and office-based tasks gave me a well rounded experience of how construction projects are managed from start to finish. I learned that whether I was on site or in the office, attention to detail and effective communication were key to ensuring smooth project operations.

My final week at W3O combined both fieldwork and office-based tasks, solidifying the diverse range of skills I had developed throughout my internship. Early in the week, I visited a site at 105 Hoppe Street in Gardens, where I had the opportunity to work with the quantity surveyor and project manager. The project involved the refurbishment of an existing building, and I was able to observe the assembly of a crane which was essential for the upcoming phases of construction. Witnessing the crane installation firsthand was a pivotal learning experience, as it demonstrated the precision and coordination required in large-scale projects. Throughout the week, I balanced these site visits with administrative tasks in the office, including compiling reports on the company's expansion into a new industry. I was tasked with analysing the industry, editing a company profile, and finalising the brand manual for the launch. These tasks reinforced the importance of strategic communication and branding skills I had initially developed while working on the business development side of W3O.

Reflecting on my third year of practical training, my time at Washirika 3 Oaks provided an invaluable blend of hands-on experience and business insight. The combination of site visits, client engagement, and administrative responsibilities allowed me to develop a comprehensive understanding of how construction projects are managed from start to finish. I saw firsthand the importance of leadership, communication, and planning in ensuring a project's success.

My continuous role as a Tomorrow's Leader for the CIOB complemented my internship at W3O, offering me opportunities to hone my leadership and organisational skills. Balancing my responsibilities between W3O and CIOB taught me effective time management, the ability to work in diverse environments, and how to adapt the varying demands of project execution and industry leadership.

As I look forward to the final stages of my academic journey, I am confident that the experiences and lessons learned this year have prepared me for a successful career in the construction industry. Whether in the office or on-site, I have gained a deeper appreciation for the work required to bring projects to life and the leadership necessary to guide them to completion.