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Internship Final Paper

This summer I spent my time at a start-up company called Intrinsic Value, LLC. This was my first internship a great learning experience and resume boost. I learned many new programming languages and was able to have my first hands-on experience in app development which I really enjoyed. I had the chance to become comfortable with both reading and writing documentation, UI design, and third-party software such as AWS, Twilio, CometChat, FCM, etc. Although there were a few bumps along the way, I learned a lot of skills that will help me with another internship or a job right out of college.

The objectives I was originally assigned were to learn the programming languages used within the company, become comfortable in a startup environment and become knowledgeable about the product. Although these were specified for a different project that I was very quickly moved from, I think they can still apply to the project I ended up on. Because of the number of hours I worked, it didn’t take very long to blow through these objectives. Becoming comfortable in a startup environment was easy since we were all Lipscomb students or alumni. However, there were times where I was shocked at how quickly and drastically things changed. On multiple occasions, things that we had been working on for months were completely discarded of.

Learning the languages and the product were a little harder. After asking tons and tons of questions, sometimes more than once, I would get the main idea. However, discussions about the vision of the product still came up as we continued to develop, even though we thought we were on the same page. We all had different visions for where the product was going which lead to more specific questions as we ran into problems. The languages like React, React Native, and Ionic primarily came with hands on experience. I learn best by trying to decipher it myself and googling as I go. I figured out that online tutorials are not my friend because they do not keep my attention well and I never retain the information.

Within the first month I had a great opportunity to enhance my adaptability and written communication skills. As you can imagine, things move rapidly within a start-up company. Within the first month I was already on a completely different project with a new concept and new languages to start fresh on. I had to learn to go with the flow and try my best to help in every situation I was thrown into. Along with working on the new project, I was asked to write documentation on the work I had being doing for my teammates and future developers for the company. I learned the expected detail and formatting and became comfortable with the technical writing involved.

The second month I was able to show off my creativity and teamwork. I was assigned to redesign the Ionic mobile app single-handedly. I was given free-reign to do what I felt was right. I chose to do what I knew would match the rest of the product based on mock-ups that were already created and well-loved with only a few minor changes. This led to the redesigned Ionic app being a hit with the team and will help clients view the app more professionally. After completing my own tasks, I was asked to help other members catch up on some assignments we were falling behind on. Because of the complexity of some of the assignments, it took a lot of communication to figure out the goal of the task, figure out what has already been accomplished, and what I can do to help expedite the process. With the extra help, we were able to complete the task on time.

Within my final month with Intrinsic Value, LLC, I displayed skills in communication and time management. In the beginning of the month I was frustrated with the number of hours I was worked versus what we had agreed to on my paperwork. I asked to speak with management privately to get it sorted out. Although I approached it in a calm and direct manner, I did not go as smoothly as I had hoped, but in the end, they heard my concerns and I was able to work 10 hours a week from home which is much closer to what we agreed upon. Because of this drastic change in scheduling, I also needed to learn about communication in a different way.

Now that I was working at home, the best way to communicate with the team was through frequent zoom calls and screen shares to continue working efficiently. Without these calls, it was common for us as a company to have multiple people working on the exact same thing without knowing it, or getting caught up on a bug that someone else may already know how to solve. And, of course, I displayed time management by having to pace myself while also completing my tasks and making time for those important phone calls.

Most of my time was spent with Twilio, and with the UI for an Ionic mobile app. The first month and a half or so was with Twilio which we were attempting to use for call and text capabilities. This proved to be extremely challenging because their documentation was extremely vague and only gave samples without explaining why or when to use certain aspects as well as having to implement it completely by myself into a web app that I was unfamiliar with. I was looking at Twilio by myself for a long time.

Because it was my first time reading documentation like this, I just assumed it was me, not Twilio. As time went on, other team members started trying to help me. They discovered that the web app was so broken, anything I would have tried to implement wouldn’t have worked and had the same problems with the documentation. After weeks of back and forth communication with Twilio’s support team, we still could not seem to get answers we could understand. Eventually we decided to look at other options with similar functionality.

From this experience I learned that it’s not always my fault for things not working. If you are following the documentation to a tee with how it is written, then maybe it’s the documentation! This gave me confidence that I kept throughout the internship to explore other things that could be going wrong on the third parties end. If I would have realized this is could have saved us a lot of time. Honestly, it tended to fall on the third party’s end more than ours. Not only did I build the confidence to say it’s not always me, but I built up the confidence to ask questions that may sound really simple to someone with experience and became comfortable with reaching out to my manger, teammates, and third-party support.

Another big assignment I had was creating the UI for the Ionic mobile app as I had mentioned earlier. Conner designed the mock-ups for the web app and together we created wireframes for the React mobile app using Sketch. I didn’t go as far as making true mock-ups for the Ionic app due to time crunches, but I based it off of the React mobile app that everyone liked. So, single-handedly, in a language I had no knowledge of, I began changing the UI. I started with just the changing the color of the headers and menu, and moved to a complete re-layout of some pages.

Of course, at first it was stressful and hard, but it soon became fun and much easier. During presentations, customers where most pleased with the UI of the app, which, as I said before, I cannot take full credit for since I really just put to life what Conner was thinking, but I was proud nonetheless. I think with more practice I could really love and be good at UI design. As I was slowly building the UI, I was also slowly learning the entire app and soon became one of the go-to people for questions about the Ionic app which made me useful for backend issues as well.

Although much of my time was spent on these two big components, I also spent time learning React, and React Native. I became familiar with XCode and Android Studio, debugging my terminal, downloading software, making sure versioning between software was correct, databases, AWS, FCM, CometChat, etc. The list could go on and on. But, once again, I think the most valuable thing I learned from this internship was having the confidence in my abilities to figure something out, or ask for help when I need it.

With that being said, I would strongly discourage other Lipscomb students from interning or working for this company due to many unkept promises to all the employees who work there and extremely unprofessional attitudes from upper management. I feel as though I could have learned much more in a more structured and organized environment. I especially wish I could have gotten the opportunity to work with experienced developers rather than having a team full of students, although it was fun. I will be looking for something like that for my next internship or job.

My summer with Intrinsic Value, LLC was very busy and chaotic. But there were also a lot of laughs along the way with my fellow Lipscomb students while we learned and grew together. Skills like reading and writing documentation, UI design, and familiarizing myself with popular third-party software will be a helpful addition to my resume. Because of this I will be more valuable to the next company I work for and have skills that I can bring to the table that others right out of college may not have.