



## Josef Wolfe

Business Development Placement

# THE VALUE OF A PLACEMENT

## Introduction/University

Two years ago, I remember coming from a placement talk and thinking about what sort of role would suit me best. There were so many questions – which industry, which position, which location, and in the end, CI Distribution offered a unique proposition.

The chance to be placed in an experienced team, with the opportunity to develop personally and professionally throughout the year and some actual responsibility. Being able to work in a medium-sized business was another appealing factor, having worked for a large corporation before, I wanted to see the differences in operations and the environment.

## Ci Distribution

CI Distribution is a distributor of 'rugged' and traditional hardware and software. Having these specialities has enabled a broad learning experience spanning multiple industries. Before I started, I had a few key things I was looking to learn throughout the year, understanding the IT sales cycle and putting my university theory into practice.

Understanding the sales cycle within the IT industry, as well as the distributor's role, is a key taking from this year. Starting, I had little understanding of the IT industry (coming from a retail environment), my knowledge of the IT industry was limited to a few articles and one or two conversations. Now it is a different story, having been able to talk to vendors and resellers regularly, I have clarity on each step of the cycle.

One of the first things I learnt at CI Distribution was business etiquette. I vividly remember picking up the phone for one of the first times, to Jon Atherton, with a mere "Hello". I was quickly educated in the ways of answering the phone, but it's little things like that, which come with working in this environment, I am grateful for learning.

Arguably the most important point I will be bringing back to university is the theory into practice aspect of a business. Whether it be marketing, accounting or economics, having been in this environment has allowed me to gain a more detailed understanding of these theories and how they are applicable in a real situation.

# Role/expectations

My role throughout the year began as business development and transitioned to hybrid product management and business development. Being in this role allowed enables a vast scope, from the annual 'Rugged World' through to a dragons den type project, the range of experiences have been challenging and exciting.

A degree of autonomy is what I was after, and the fact that was allowed throughout the year was excellent. Having the opportunity to learn first-hand arguably resulted in higher retention, as well as first-hand experience in situations, of which I would not otherwise have had the chance too.



# Undergraduates

For the academic year, there were five other undergraduates based around CI Distribution. Having the chance to develop alongside other undergraduates was another huge benefit to my placement. Being able to interact with people of a similar age and experience was very reassuring. It allowed me to work alongside like-minded individuals as well as those more senior. It added another dynamic to the year and has led to new friendships and networking opportunities.

# Conclusion/Going Forward

As I come towards the end of my placement at CI Distribution, I am grateful for all the experience and knowledge I have attained, and I am looking forward to utilising my newly developed skills next year at university.

In conclusion, I will leave my placement with a new level of confidence, a renewed sense of direction and a transferable set of skills that will help not just back at university, but throughout the rest of my career. I am hoping to complete a dissertation on the topic of negotiation. Being able to link back to my time here at CI Distribution, and having had the opportunity to negotiate will bring more validity to the piece.

Should anyone have the option, I would recommend a placement. It brings a different perspective and provides some essential skills/learnings that are not possible solely on a university course. If there were one piece of advice I would give to a new placement student, it would be to get stuck in with as much as you can, and you'll never look back!