

Year in industry- Mikaeel's Testimonial

Let's face it: taking a year in industry is not easy. Nothing in the whole process is. From coming up with hundreds of cover letters and answers to motivational questions, preparing for all sorts of interviews, receiving tons of rejections in a row without any explanation why or – perhaps even worse – at the very last stage. All of this during term and exam time. This is all very daunting. And for what? Adding a year to your course and spending it away from your friends when you could have done just a summer internship.

However, the benefits of taking an industrial placement are countless, especially in today's job market characterised by economic insecurity and huge competition. Recruiters want brilliant graduates who are ready for the job. Who know what it means to put your heart and soul in it. Better if they've already spent a year working with them.

Read what Mikaeel has to say about his experience at ING Bank and bear in mind – he was just like you last year: worried and unsure.

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Why did you decide to take a year in industry?

Originally, **taking a year in industry was not the plan**. However, the opportunity came up in March which was when I applied. After that I kept getting through the different stages of the application process and when I finally got the offer, **I decided I would take it as it would give me the opportunity to get a foot in an industry that is extremely competitive**.

What was the most challenging part of any application for you? How did you overcome it?

There were several different stages of the application process. But the most difficult I'd say is when I first came to ING and **was interviewed by a director in the company**. I was quite nervous about how that might go but the best thing to do is to prepare. In my case, I knew the name of the person who was going to interview me; I searched up his name on LinkedIn and looked through his professional journey. Right at the end of the interview when they ask you if you have any **questions**; I mentioned how he made the transition from his old work place to ING and what differences he noticed between the two companies.

What have you learnt from the whole application process that will be helpful when looking for a graduate role?

One thing I've heard the most during the application process is to **be yourself**. And I couldn't agree more. Companies are not looking for the "perfect" candidate. All they want to know is if you are an honest person, hard-working and if you have a real interest within the chosen field. **Do your research!**

What advice would you give to students who are looking for their industrial placements now?

Always keep an eye out for the **QM careers email**, that's how I got mine. There are always opportunities being posted so always check your emails and follow through with the application.

Careers team are great at QM. Use them! Whether it's the careers email that is sent every week or the careers advice you can book to **practice interviews, polish CVs, whatever you need**. Also make sure you are a part of all the relevant **societies** to your field as it shows recruiters that you are interested. Being around people who are interested in the same things as you can also motivate you to challenge yourself.

What would you say to students who are not sure they want to do a full year out of university?

I wasn't sure either. I was worried I wouldn't be graduating with my friends whom I spent first and second years with. I was also worried about getting back in to education after a year out. But sometimes you just have to **take a leap of faith** and take what you are given and make the most out of it. Your friends will be there to support you no matter what. The opportunity may not come again.

Did you receive many rejections? What advice would you give to students having a tough time with rejections?

Yes, can't count how many but that's normal. **If you're not getting rejections, then you are doing something wrong** – not applying enough. What you need to learn is to use these rejections as a learning curve. Most companies nowadays will give feedback, depending on the stage at which you are rejected. If you struggled with the numerical, go to **jobtestprep** and practice everything on there and be comfortable with it. Most applicants don't take time when they complete their applications and rush through it. **Take your time**. Read the job description and match your CV and cover letter to match those requirements. Do your research on the company. **Apply to everything possible**. An opportunity will present itself. Make sure you take it.

What are three things that you are enjoying the most about your current role?

- 1- One thing has to be **my exposure in the firm. I meet regularly with very senior people** from all different teams and work on different projects with them. Once I was sitting at my desk and my manager's boss pulled me up and asked if I could spare an hour for him to use my

brain on an acquisition he was working on. We researched a lot of stuff and my input was massively used and appreciated in the decision-making process. I have also sat with many different desks from rates, FX to credit.

- 2- **Working on whole company projects.** Interns oversee many events that go on around the building. During Christmas we had to come up with a way to raise as much money as possible for our chosen charities with a budget of £20. Currently we are preparing to host the Charity quiz night where nearly 200 people will attend, organising everything from catering, prizes and doing so with a finance team to keep track of spending. These kinds of projects allow us to get away from our desks but also develop project management skills and improve our ability to work on multiple tasks at once.
- 3- Before starting the role, we had a **two week training period** where we attended Ashridge Business School and stayed there for two days. During this time, we completed a project management course, training on Excel, Outlook among many other useful skills. This was very useful when we started our internships and began to incorporate these skills into every day work.

How will your year in industry help your career progression?

Aside from the **wealth of experience** and all the **technical skills** that are picked up, the best thing has to be the **network** we build during our time. **Speaking to people, shadowing** them on different projects and even just asking them to a coffee can make a big difference. You speak to people who would oversee the recruitment and interviews of the roles you want so you know what they are looking for. This is a **massive advantage** when going for your next interview whether that is in the same company or not.

Any other comments you'd like to share with us:

If there are any questions about job applications, interview process or anything to do with a placement year just **pop me an email or message me on [LinkedIn](#)**. I'll be happy to help you with whatever I can. Good luck with exams and remember to do lots of applications whenever they are open.