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IARD 4960 Internship Reflection

My Accenture Experience in Indonesia

While working as a summer intern for Accenture Indonesia’s change management consulting and data science practice over the span of 10 weeks, I was assigned the responsibility of organizing our client’s internal employee training and socialization events and conducting quality control and analysis of digital terrains and elevation models using a Geographic Information Systems software. As a multinational technology consulting firm, Accenture exposed me to a wide variety of industries within the Southeast Asian context, more specifically the natural resource management industry and how technology can revolutionize its operational efficiency and effectiveness. Our project’s client, which is one of the largest pulp and paper corporations in Asia, owns nearly 1 million hectares worth of eucalyptus and acacia tree plantations across the islands of Kalimantan and Sumatra.

From the start of June to mid-August, I was involved in a wide range of activities – forming and executing strategies that helped the client raise awareness and understanding of the UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) precision forestry initiative which enables the company to monitor the tree plantation in terms of inventory, flooding events, tree health, and weed coverage. Prior to the project, I had to familiarize myself with the client’s needs, the amount of progress that has been done since late 2017, and how I will contribute to the “understanding” phase of the change management project. As the project commenced, the change management team and I conceptualized how the technology would affect the client’s plantation operations and adjusted the company’s business process to this change. I found it incredibly enriching to be in a project that was innovative in nature, because the technology itself involved three mediums: the UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle), the mobile app, and the dashboard. All of these elements worked together to effectively visualize and deliver insightful information about the plantation’s condition. In order to capture and communicate all of these benefits in preparation for internal employee training events, I created communication materials, banners and informative brochures using Adobe Photoshop to help raise the employee’s understanding of how the technology works and how it will benefit the company.
Completing all of these deliverables within a short-time frame was quite challenging, but I found it extremely rewarding when I saw how well it assisted the company’s transition from awareness to understanding to adoption of the technology. Considering that Accenture’s change management strategy consists of four stages – awareness, understanding, acceptance and adoption – I was absolutely thrilled when I was assigned to go on a business trip with the change management and data science team to the client’s plantations in the island of Sumatra. We specifically went to their headquarters in Riau, where we stayed for a total of 2 weeks.

While we were there, my team and I had the opportunity to identify potential caveats in our technology before conducting the employee socialization and training events across 11 districts in Sumatra. I especially admire Accenture’s approach in this regard because we were not only proposing potential strategies to the client, but also working closely with the client to implement this technology and ensure its success. We worked side by side with the company’s managers and trained them to become facilitators for training events so that employees are aware that even high-level workers support this new initiative. By executing these training events with the managers, my team and I hoped that the company’s employees would readily accept this beneficial change.
Being able to see how the UAV precision forestry technology revolutionized the way the client’s business operated on the ground was truly special. Before this change, the plantation workers were manually monitoring and assessing the trees’ health hectare by hectare, which was extremely laborious, ineffective, and time-consuming considering the vast size of the plantation. Accenture’s concept of change management helps to ensure that once a new technological innovation is introduced to a relatively primitive environment, the people affected by it are aware of its effects and are ready to accept and adopt these elements. All of these efforts amounted to wide acceptance of the technology, because my team and I successfully convinced all levels of the company how transforming visual data to quantitative information through UAV precision forestry can help increase visibility towards the plantation’s condition, facilitate workers’ field-based activities, and raise operational efficiency and effectiveness. This remarkable outcome made the entire experience – from living in an isolated area without heated water to enduring 5 hours of air and ground transportation along virtually non-existent/bumpy roads – extremely rewarding.

Aside from organizing the training and socialization events, I assisted the data science team in conducting quality control for the images we receive from the UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) – otherwise known as a drone. The UAV produced five kinds of images: RGB (Red Green Blue), MUL (Multispectral), NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index), DSM (Digital Surface Model), DTM (Digital Terrain Model). All of these images are analyzed and processed using a GIS software that enables us to determine the plantation’s inventory, tree health, weed coverage and more. My role in analyzing the quality and visibility of these images contributed immensely to the processing of these images into quantitative information. This high level of responsibility was worth the long hours because assessing the quality of these images was critical in determining the plantation's tree inventory and identifying weeds, pests, or disease symptoms that may negatively affect the trees' health.

Indeed, my experience interning in a consulting firm was unconventional yet exciting because I was granted the incredible opportunity to explore how a project was executed from the ground up and across different collaborative teams. Although there was a general timeline as to how the project would unfold, the fast-paced environment, tight deadlines, and late office hours were challenging at times. As a shy perfectionist, I sometimes struggled to present my work confidently to the client – work that was often completed within a short time frame. During the business trip to Sumatra, I also found it difficult speaking to the locals in the usual adept, polite, and professional manner that my team members exhibited. Having to deal with the ambiguous and changing needs of the client and having to rely on and wait for other team members in order to move forward with the project were several scenarios I had difficulty adapting to, but all these challenges were what made this learning experience so special and wholesome. Although I was born and raised in Jakarta – the capital city of Indonesia – I was pleasantly surprised with the cultural differences evident in the Sumatra region in comparison to where I grew up. Nevertheless, I really appreciated the breadth of knowledge I gained not just about business and technology, but also about the importance of cultural diversity and community.
Over the 10 weeks, I also realized that Accenture – unlike most private consulting firms – really cares about the client’s needs and the people involved in the project. Other than strategy and consulting, Accenture prized innovation in its truest form through collaborative efforts across the technology, digital, and operations divisions. Essentially, the firm’s culture is interested in performing – not just proposing – real, tangible solutions to resolve clients’ problems. As one of only two interns in the project, there was certainly a limited number of team members (only 5 in the change management team), yet it was this tight-knit community that made me look forward to coming to work at 8am every single day. Because this project was a partnership between Accenture’s Singapore and Jakarta branches, I was also able to interact with employees from both teams, appreciate the cross-cultural dynamic evident in their contrasting work ethics, and learn from a wide variety of consultants and data scientists. Being involved in this project and seeing how private partnerships can improve the quality and efficiency of resource management was eye-opening and refreshing. Indeed, the high level of trust and confidence they had in me made me feel like I was more than an intern and that I belonged to a family of hard-working yet fun people.

Given that the IARD program values and encourages experiential learning particularly in developing countries, my international experience at Accenture has helped me develop strong communication and critical thinking skills. I learned how to adapt to different working environments, personalities, and people, as well as understand that there are many actors and contributors to the development of a society and a country. Having seen first-hand the implementation of cutting-edge technology - specifically UAV precision forestry - in a rather indigenous setting, I now recognize and appreciate what it is like to collaborate with various people who live in isolation yet also yearn to achieve the same altruistic goal of improving agricultural productivity and raising incomes. Adapting to the local culture of the Sumatra island in Indonesia made me appreciate the worldviews of other communities and has opened my eyes to the regional disparities that exist across the country.

Interning abroad in a globally recognized and impactful consulting firm was also an invaluable opportunity for me to recognize the role of the private sector in enhancing and improving agricultural and natural resource management, which aligns with my academic and personal interests. I gained valuable leadership skills and developed the capacity to situate myself in unpredictable and unfamiliar environments that are out of my comfort zone while enhancing the undereducated workers how to use the new and beneficial technology. Through these various responsibilities, I was also able to increase my work ethic, explore my strengths and weaknesses, identify my full potential, as well as engage with and initiate progress amongst my team members. This kind of agility is something I would not have developed if it weren't for Accenture's fast-paced setting that has allowed me to grow in a positive way. This experience was truly vital in shaping what I intend to do in the future.