



PLACEMENT CASE STUDY

NAME:

Hattie Weatherley

COMPANY NAME:

PA Consulting Group

ROLE:

Industrial Placement

– Sourcing, IT, and Strategy

Why did you decide to do a placement?

I wanted to do a placement for several reasons. Mainly to increase my employability, but also to experience the working world, find out more about what sort of jobs I like/don't like, and to expand my network.

Can you tell us a bit more about the organisation, your role, and the skills you learned?

I did my placement year at a firm called PA Consulting Group. PA are a technology consulting firm with over 4000 employees. They work across several sectors including defence & security, financial services, consumer & manufacturing, and public services, and deliver several services such as procurement & IT, delivery, and operation modelling. You might recognise some of their projects including the invention of the Guinness can widget. PA are particularly proud of their contribution to helping the UK during COVID-19 when the government asked for help to produce ventilators. PA produced over 30,000 ventilators in just 8 weeks, co-ordinating with companies all over the world such as Ford and Rolls Royce.

I worked mainly in defence & security delivering sourcing, IT and corporate services. During the year I worked on 2 large projects.

My first project was delivering a procurement transformation for the University of Cambridge, where I assisted my colleagues across seven different streams of the project. This gave me a lot of experience to typical sourcing and procurement processes, and I learned how organisations can run a procurement department to ensure they source supplies sustainably, cost effectively, and maintain relationships with suppliers. Specifically, I ran workshops, created toolkits, and analysed data using excel to produce several pieces of work for the client.

My second project was Procuring and implementing a new ERP system for the Ministry of Defence (ERP stands for enterprise resource planning, and an ERP system is a suite of IT applications that allows a business/organisation to carry out essential business functions). As I was more experienced, I had more responsibility on this project, and I led the Comms & Engagement part of the project, supporting the ongoing development of a 'one team' culture following the merger of three teams with strong individual cultures (approx. 60 people).

This allowed the team to work effectively as one, and cope with structural change whilst working on a high-pressure project.

To do this I...

- planned, coordinated, and delivered several team building workshops to address, voice, and escalate client concerns within the programme.
- Produced and presented project dashboards using Excel and presented updates to client teams.
- Installed a regular drumbeat of communication through the team with a biweekly bulletin of programme updates.

Throughout my entire experience at PA, the most important skill I developed was building strong, trusting relationships with clients.

How did you find the transition back to UEA and your final year more generally?

Before I came back to UEA for final year I was concerned I wouldn't enjoy it as much as a lot of my friends graduated the year before. However, I made lots of new friends and still had a great time. Also, my productivity improved massively during my placement year which helped me to study far more effectively. I'd say my final year was my favourite year at university!

What are your plans after graduation?

I am going back to PA to be a Business Transformation Graduate!

What advice would you offer to students for a placement?

Applications:

- Definitely do it! A placement is one of the best things I've ever done for my career and self-confidence.
- Have a plan: Plan some time for internships, make a LinkedIn, start practising interviews etc.
- Don't give up hope during the application process, I was rejected by about 25 jobs before I landed PA- you will be successful if you keep applying!
- Be open minded. I hadn't really considered consulting as a career as I wanted to be an economist for the civil service, but I got rejected by the GES and now I think I'm far more suited to the role I eventually ended up in.

While on placement:

- Ask questions! You are not expected to know anything, if you are not sure what's going on, just ask and you will learn so much. Your experienced colleagues want you to clarify your understanding, and you will receive positive feedback for this.
- Be keen. Enthusiasm will make you an enjoyable person to work with. You will receive more opportunities and maybe even an offer to return as a graduate.
- Reach out if you need help. There are various layers of support at your fingertips: Advisors, Lecturers, Employability Team, older students, Economics Society, CareerCentral.