

< Summer School Programme >

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Hi, I am Sufancia from NTU School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering. I had my 20-week Industrial Attachment with Singapore Oxygen Air Liquide (SOXAL). I was attached to the Electronic Special Gas Centre in the production department, where I worked closely with the operators for my technical project involving the quality analysis of trans-filing mixture gas cylinder. During my internship, I was given the opportunity to participate in the Air Liquide Summer School 2015 program, in which interns were sent to the Air Liquide headquarters in Paris for 9 days during the summer break.

Introduction to Summer School Programme

There were 32 participants for this year's summer school, comprising of mainly Air Liquide's interns. Throughout the program, we attended several presentations by managers responsible for the various aspects of Air Liquide's core businesses. There were two site visits, one of which was to their innovation centre called iLab, and the other was to their research centre based in Paris suburbs, called Centre de Recherche Paris Saclay. iLab is their idea laboratory where the team, which consists of people from different backgrounds such as engineers and economists, think of solutions to solve existing world problems. These problems might not be part of Air Liquide's current business lines, but would create a valuable opportunity for the company should a breakthrough be achieved. The working space, in particular, caught my attention, because it looked similar to companies like Google and Facebook, which boast fun working environments. There are no fixed tables, and employees just sit at any empty table. They even have a napping corner for employees to rest and unwind when they run out of their creative juices.



In the lab, there are cool gadgets like 3D printers to create prototypes quickly. This is in line with their main objective, in which instead of spending years to build a very complex prototype which might not work or even interest the market, a simple and complete prototype can be produced with great ease and be showcased to the potential clients early. In the event that the prototype does work out very well, it would undergo further stages of development. Otherwise, it would be discarded and they will move on to the next idea. It sounds like trial and error which I find it to be interesting as opposed to the typical working environment. This is why their slogan is “try quickly, fail early, and succeed big.”

Highlights of Summer School Programme



As for the main highlight of the program, we were presented with a business case study to work on in groups of 5 to 6, and it required us to come up with creative solutions to solve real existing and possibly future challenges faced by the company. There were two main topics, which involved geographical and cylinder transportation. Each group would be randomly picked to work on one of the topics. At the very end, every group was expected to present their proposed solutions to a panel of judges. There were many ups and downs for my group while working on the project. Besides the coordination of meeting timings outside of office hours, there were also conflicts in work culture and hence the frequent clash in opinions. In my perspective, the real challenge of the business case study was working together in a group consisting of multinational members. Nevertheless, we managed to set aside our differences and solve our conflicts, and I believe each one of us has strengthened our conflict management skills.

Visiting tourist attractions



We had time to ourselves on weekday evenings and weekends, and we were allowed to spend it as we deemed fit. A good portion of it was however, spent on the business challenge meeting. For the remainder of our free time, we had our fair share of fun from visiting tourist attraction spots and having picnics in parks like the Parisians. The free time was also well spent as we had the opportunity to go out with and interact with people from different countries and cultures.

Conclusion



To end off, I would like to thank Air Liquide Singapore for providing me with such a valuable learning experience. The whole journey with Air Liquide from the 20-week Industrial Attachment Program to the 1-week Summer School Program has been an eye-opening and fruitful experience. I am glad to have met good mentors during my internship, who were very willing to guide and involve their interns in many activities. I am also honored to be one of the student ambassadors for Air Liquide Singapore for the summer school program, where I got an in-depth understanding of how Air Liquide runs its business and gained exposure to other cultures from the multinational summer school participants.