

Summer internships: Opportunity 101

Every summer, Hotelies continue their journey to the top of the hospitality industry through real-world internships. From New York City to the Bahamas to Hong Kong, students tested their leadership skills this summer in the food and beverage, real estate, and hotel operations industries. A combination of Cornell credentials, connections, talent, and determination keep Hotelies ahead of the game.

Bridget Cohn '13 knew exactly where she wanted to work and set out to create her own internship. When George Markantonis, president and managing director of Atlantis Bahamas, appeared

with Sol Kerzner, the founder, chairman and CEO of Kerzner International, as part of the Dean's Distinguished Lecture Series in fall 2010, she made sure to introduce herself to him. "After meeting him at the DDLS, I emailed George constantly," Cohn said. "I knew I wanted to work with Atlantis LIVE. It's a unique program that brings together music and hotels, one of the only resorts that do this."

A month later, the phone rang with Markantonis on the line. After interviewing and securing a work permit, Cohn flew to the Atlantis Bahamas to work on events featuring

Jerry Seinfeld, Miss Teen USA, Jordin Sparks, Jason Derullo, and Jimmy Fallon. Her advice to others with an ideal internship in mind comes straight out of the Hotelie playbook: "Put yourself out there and pursue your dream," she said. "Don't be afraid to take advantage of the alumni directory and the DDLS. This was just the beginning!"

According to the "2010 Summer Work Experience Report," a survey of 469 SHA undergraduate students, 70 percent of those summer jobs were found through networking connections. "The economic crisis has increased the importance of networking to find

jobs," said Molly deRoos, director of career management. "Students need to take a multi-pronged approach to find the internships they want."

Jennifer Davis '12 made different use of her Cornell connections. Faced with the intense competition of investment banking in New York City, the first thing she did was ask for advice from someone who had been there. "An experienced upperclassman



Lindsayville Photography

Twelve Hotelies currently work full-time in Avero's New York office. Included in this photo with interns Matthew Green '12 and Lindsey Brous '12 are, from left: (front) Katherine Kies '11, Cathy Popp '10, and Zoe Hartman '07, and (back) Lucas Jones '11, Robert Nieporent '09, Christopher Ager '09, and Gregory Peppel '07.

The Student Experience

told me how the industry works," she said. "Over 700 people apply for a single job. People in HR scan through these applications and pull names. Credentials and GPA are essential, of course, but even more important is for someone to pull your resume from the stack." To better her odds of getting a second and third look, Davis networked in New York City during the fall of her junior year—job-shadowing, cold-calling, and emailing alumni.

In early February, her efforts paid off. She was offered a position at UBS, an investment banking company that operates in more than 40 countries. "I'm a senior this year, and I'll be paying it forward," she said with a laugh.

But connections are just the beginning. "One mentor gave me this great advice—internships are ten-week interviews," Davis said. "Investment

to interact with executive directors who empowered her to take on projects. "Twenty-one years old, and here I was preparing an entire book-length IPO pitch and listening in on conversations with the CEO. It was wonderful and difficult."

Each intern also had a "mentorship pod" that offered career advice over coffee or dinner. Davis's mentors were Hotelies. They set up networking happy hours and offered to call clients about career options. "Some students focus more on partying over the summer, but if you want to be successful, you have to work hard," she said. After completing her "ten-week interview," Davis now has an offer to work for UBS after graduation and can look forward to a much less stressful senior year.

Surrounded by interns from MIT, Princeton, Columbia, Harvard, and

Yale, Davis differentiated herself through her minor in real estate finance. "Most of the interns in my group had no background in real estate," Davis said. "My bosses enjoyed working with me because I already knew how the industry worked."

"Cornell School of Hotel Administration students are set apart from other students because of their hospitality background and strong business focus," said deRoos. "They are world travelers with work experi-

ence and entrepreneurs with great ideas, and they turn out to be so much more than the employer expected."



Jennifer Davis '12

A strong business and hospitality education helped Lindsey Brous '12 and Matthew Green '12 fully live up to the Hotelie reputation during their ten-week internships at Avero, a consulting company that helps restaurants make better operational decisions.

"I have been recruiting Hotelies for many years, and there is no comparison out there," said Fidaije Nesimi, director of human resources at Avero. "These interns are bright, hardworking, analytical, and truly passionate about the hospitality industry."

"Interns were allowed to run with ideas," said Brous. "Avero knows exactly what we know through our Cornell education, and they expect to utilize interns fully." Prepared through classes such as business computing and Hotel Ezra Cornell, this year's interns analyzed scenarios such as how a casino conference might affect the surrounding restaurants, down to the small details like which tables in a restaurant might not perform up to par.

"Hotelies who have interned with Avero have always shown tremendous initiative," said account manager Robert Nieporent '09. "Merely completing the task is not adequate—they extrapolate



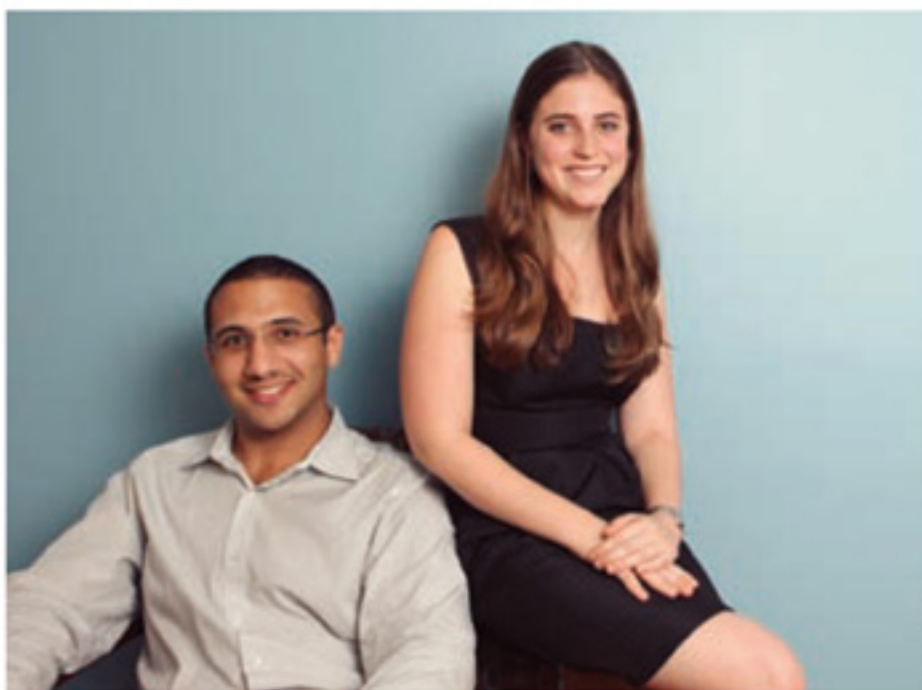
Bridget Cohn '13

banking has a reputation for kicking your butt. I'd work 80-plus-hour weeks and be up until four a.m. delivering books to our clients." Although summer analysts are at the bottom of the totem pole, she also had many opportunities

out to the next steps and determine how they can be of greater assistance beyond what you asked for.”

Although Matthew Green has been involved with the hotel industry since he was twelve years old, this internship was the first big-city test of his leadership skills. “Cornell is close-knit like my home community in Kingston, Jamaica, while New York City is more cutthroat.” Green felt at home in Averro’s “fun, close-knit culture,” however. With a huge kitchen, a cooking contest, and a culinary tour of New York City, Averro gave interns chances to cultivate close ties while also exploring the industry. CEO Damian Mogavero even asked Green to give a presentation on Jamaican coffee. After presentation assignments in almost every one of his Cornell classes, Green was prepared to bring a piece of his culture to Averro executives.

“Before this internship, I wanted to find a job in Jamaica, because I’m a very family-oriented person,” he said. “But now I can go anywhere in the world. I realize how many opportunities are out there.”



Matthew Green '12 and Lindsey Brous '12

On the other side of the world, Jonathan Sit '13 tested his endurance and leadership skills at the Four Seasons Hong Kong in 2010. He spent the first five weeks of his internship there cleaning rooms. “Of course, I was disappointed at first,” he said, “but I gained knowledge I never would have.”

His role was flipped for the last three weeks of his internship, and he became supervisor to the same staff he had just spent weeks scrubbing with, many of whom were older than he is. “It was awkward at first, but it was a learning experience in leadership,” he said. “As a supervisor, you have five floors all to yourself. It was a huge lesson on thinking independently.”

This past summer Sit returned to the Four Seasons to intern at Caprise, which he described as Hong Kong’s only French restaurant with three Michelin stars. “The standard was so high for me as a server,” he said. “To guests, you are a staff member, not an intern. There’s no excuse to mess up. I learned what it takes to run a three-star restaurant.” For next year’s



Lindsay France, UPhoto

Jonathan Sit '13

challenge, Sit aims to tackle another aspect of the hospitality industry, either marketing or real estate.

As undergraduates buckle down for another year of studies, they also begin their search for summer jobs. Alumni have the opportunity to help connect and cultivate these future leaders of the hospitality industry.

“The Cornell alumni network is such an important tool,” said Cohn. “When alumni make themselves available for career guidance, internship support, and campus visits, they open the door to so many possibilities.” ■

Lindsayelle Photography