

My name is Arturo Leon and I am from Mexico. I am currently enrolled the last semester of the Master in Management program at the Otto-von-Guericke Universität (OvGU) in Magdeburg. I would like to share with you my experience with the Master program.

After I completed a Bachelor in Mechanical Engineering I decided to take a turn in the direction of my studies, having a special interest for the Management area. It is for this reason that, after some internet research, the Master in Management program called my attention. At first two things were important to me:

1. The courses are offered in English.
2. During the third semester we have the possibility to choose between specializing in an area by means of elective courses, studying a semester abroad or completing an internship. The last option is what called my attention at the most.

After a successful application I packed my stuff and came to Germany looking forward to study in English, improve my German and complete an internship in a "Big German Company".

As mentioned before, I had a completely different academic background and for this reason I had to pass all the Bridge Courses which, I have to say, were a very good start and simplified the understanding of the actual Master courses.

After one year of courses and seminars I realized I was successfully completing two out of the three objectives I had: study in English and improve my German, but what about the internship in a "Big German Company"? So I began to apply, in my case, for internships related to Operations Management. Some months after the application, I received a call from an unknown number which, according to the area code, was coming from Hamburg. After answering the call I figured out that in the other side of the line was the manager of a department of Lufthansa Technik telling me he was interested in interviewing me. After a successful interview I was accepted to complete a six-month internship.

As of my experience, I can tell that the design of the Master program offers many benefits. First, once you have chosen to make an internship, the Internship Report is equivalent to a whole semester, measured in Credit Points. This allows us, with the right planning, to be totally focused on the internship and its report without worrying about exams or seminars. Second, in the case of choosing an internship, it becomes a "Pflichtpraktikum" (compulsory internship). This simplifies our life in many ways. Non-EU nationals are allowed to make the internship without a work permit, since the student visa allows us to make all the activities related to the studies. In addition to that, as the internship is compulsory, in the case of receiving a payment, we do not have to worry about taxation of our income.

During my internship I was able to learn things that cannot be taught in a classroom. An interesting part is that I was able to compare and feel the difference between the academic and practical points of view. In the lectures we learn how things should be done, and why is it like that. Nevertheless, what happens in the companies differs from these theories in many ways, and they also have arguments for that. Given that some people are not related with the academic approach, the main challenge is to implement changes based on what we learn in the lectures. This in an environment in which things are done based on previous experience and people show resistance to changes.

Personally, I enjoyed this challenge. Most of all, seeing that my ideas were applied in a “Big German Company” and that they changed their operations based on my thoughts is a great feeling.

Given that the internship report is an academic paper; its content has the character of a case study. Despite that, in contrast with the case studies that are reviewed in the lectures, this case is based on our own experience. This is interesting not only for the reader but also for us, since we gain experience on implementing changes and reporting about it, in an academically proper way. This is a good preamble for the Master Thesis.

Last but not least, given that after an internship one already knows and understands how the company works, it is possible to write the Master Thesis in collaboration with the firm. In contrast to the internship, where we work for the company based on its needs and many times doing different things, writing the thesis implies that we propose a project and we only focus on that. This project has to be interesting from an academic point of view, but also of utility for the company. Said in other words, we are able to play the role of a consultant for a specific topic of our choice.

Summarizing my experience, the Master in Management allows us to have a good balance between the academic point of view and the practitioners’ side. Thus, we can open our perspectives for the future, either by continuing to a doctoral program or by working for a company. If you ask me, I would totally recommend you to complete an internship and keep the contact with the firm for the thesis. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

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