

Jayasurya Kalakkal



Jayasurya Kalakkal is in her third semester of the Master in Environmental Policy with concentrations in International Energy and Project Management. She is currently undertaking an internship at the policy and communications consultancy SD Strategies in Berlin, and also previously completed an internship at internship at UNEP in Geneva.

How did you secure this role?

I came across a Facebook post on a PSIA group from a current employee at SD Strategies (who is also a Sciences Po graduate) about a call for internships, so I applied following the procedure mentioned in the post, received an interview call and subsequently got recruited.

What is your role and main responsibilities?

My main tasks include contributing to these ongoing projects mainly in the form of desk research and report writing but, at times, I am also responsible for direct interaction with clients in the form of presentations, brainstorming with my team to come up with creative methodologies for new projects etc. Some of the main projects in this company are in coordination with larger development agencies like GIZ, with country governments and with experts in the field of energy and environment.

What is the most fascinating or surprising aspect at your role?

SD Strategies is a relatively small consultancy. For this reason, right at the start of my internship, I was given the responsibility to handle an entire (albeit small) project by myself, with some guidance and feedback from senior colleagues. I found this experience to be quite fun and fulfilling because I got the opportunity to take a leadership role and decide the course of the project. Despite being the most junior member of the team, I was pleasantly surprised that the head of the organization was willing to let me take on the full responsibility.

How does your PSIA experience help you with the role?

My PSIA experience helps me in several ways. Being an energy, environment and socio-economic development oriented organisation, the work here at SD strategies requires interdisciplinary knowledge about these topics, and that is exactly what the courses at PSIA offer. My classes in environment policy and my concentration in international energy gave me a good idea about the state of global environmental and energy politics. Additionally, my concentration in project management helped me gain some hard and soft skills, such as social network analysis and strategic foresight. This really came in handy in one of the projects that I helped to propose to a client.

What advice would you give to others?

I would like to pass on a piece of advice that someone gave me at a career fair: don't wait to check all boxes listed in a job description. More often than not, your profile will not be a 100% perfect match to the employers' needs. Sometimes you have the skills, but your availabilities don't match. Sometimes you're really interested in the position but you don't think you have every skill listed, or maybe you're a little short of the experience required to apply for a position. If you think you are really interested in a position then my advice would be to give it your best shot. In my experience, if employers really like you, they are willing to discuss several possibilities to accommodate you. Sometimes this doesn't work out but you end up making contacts in the organization who encourage you to apply for other roles in the future. By all means, it is worth a shot.

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