

Laure, stage (SUEZ), étudiante de l'école des affaires internationales



Laure Mouttapa is a student in the Master in International Economic Policy with concentrations in Emerging Economies and Latin America. She recently completed an internship with SUEZ, a French-based utility company which operates largely in the water treatment and waste management sectors.

What was your role and main responsibilities?

For my internship at SUEZ, I was integrated in the International division of Large Projects and Commercial Strategy. I was working mostly on developing knowledge on Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), to help the business teams to work more and better with them. It is often the case that organisations like the World Bank or AFD are associated with large water or waste infrastructure projects. SUEZ needs to respond efficiently to the bids, to know well what are the messages to address, and to maintain good relationships with those stakeholders in general.

I have mostly been focused on **research/analysis and commercial strategy**. Some of my tasks have included:

- a weekly news round-up to inform my manager on the main business topics related to development flows in the field of water and waste, international announcements, or reports that would have an impact on the sector, in order for us to transmit it to the internal network.
- a calendar with international events updated regularly and shared with the internal network.
- a detailed mapping of the different DFIs and export credit agencies working with the Group, in order to help business teams to quickly identify opportunities, and build a strategy and criteria for further collaborations.
- summary notes on the main DFIs, their links, and their history with the Group

Additionally, I assisted manager with various needs as they arose, such as drafting presentations, finding some data, preparing a note, conducting research (for example on a CO2 emissions reduction roadmap), access to water and privatization debate, the problem of the financial gap for waste, climate finance, and many other tasks. I was also working with the institutional relations team on topics related to regulations, events and professional federations.

HOW DID YOU SECURE THIS ROLE?

I applied through the offer that I saw in **PSIA Careers newsletter**. I sent my CV, cover letter and a reference letter from my previous supervisor at the OECD. After two Skype interviews with my future manager, I was accepted.

I think what really made the difference was the different experiences that I had during my gap year, so if you did not acquire a lot of professional experience before your Master's degree, I would really advise to do the same.

WHAT WAS THE MOST FASCINATING AND/OR SURPRISING ASPECT AT YOUR ROLE?

My mission was at the intersection of business and institutional relations, which I really liked. I was surprised by the fact that my manager really treated me like a colleague, not an intern. This was a very valuable aspect which enabled me to gain autonomy and take responsibility of the products I delivered.

I had never worked in the private sector before and I was quite surprised. I learned a lot on the nature of the relationship between big multinationals and development finance institutions, and how sustainable development goals can align the interests of the private sector.

On the more negative side, I realized that in big firms like SUEZ, it

can be hard to enter, grow, and evolve. Despite positive market growth, multinational companies are big engines that are re-adapting constantly, where experienced and internal staff will often be prioritized over young talents.

Plus, as a French industrial firm, it is an engineer world, and more than that, the hierarchy of degrees is very present (most of the directors for instance have a top-business-school degree, plus a top-engineering-school degree). Having a career in such a company after "only" Sciences Po is possible, but there will always be a glass ceiling, or we will sometimes be redirected to "support fonctions" (HR, CSR, communications, public affairs, etc). This is not bad per-se and can be great if that's the place you want to be, but it can be frustrating if you want to work on the projects or strategy side. So, it really requires you to show an eagerness to learn, to prove your capabilities, and to adapt.

HOW DID YOUR PSIA EXPERIENCE HELP YOU WITH THE ROLE?

I was able to reinvest my knowledge of international development and economics, and how to find data and information in those subjects. I also made the most of my ability to research and quickly synthesize information, which I developed at PSIA. I also knew how to be rigorous with references when drafting a note or a presentation.

Interpersonal skills, project management, and public speaking were also crucial for me to adapt and I think we really develop it at PSIA with the group assignments and oral presentations.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHERS?

Always try to keep a business angle in the subjects you choose, this will be essential when working in any private company. Applying to a dual-degree can be really rewarding.

When you do an internship, always take some time to network. This is something I really wish I did more. Just contact a person you find on LinkedIn or on the company's internal contacts and ask her to have a discussion about her job, her background, the profiles working in her team, maybe over lunch or coffee directly at the company while you are still there! This can lead you to consider a position you might not have thought of, meet someone else, or even hear about a job/internship opening for later. Plus, this is a perfect training for introducing yourself and storytelling your professional project. A related piece of advice if you want to stay in a company in which you did your internship is to contact operationals first, not necessarily HR.

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