

What it's Like Being an Intern at the Big Four

Among the business undergraduate students, there is a myth that working for the Big Four is tough and challenging. To unearth the truth, I took a gap semester during my Year 3 study to join PricewaterhouseCoopers Hong Kong (“PwC”) and Deloitte Touché Tohmatsu Hong Kong (“Deloitte”) as a **Risk Assurance** and **Consulting** Intern, respectively. In this article, I share my experiences of my job duties as an intern, some personal reflections, and some recommendations.



PwC Hong Kong – Risk Assurance
7 Jan 2019 – 28 Apr 2019



Deloitte Hong Kong – Consulting
3 Jun 2019 – 28 Aug 2019

In the short span of four months with PwC, I was engaged in five different IT audit projects, serving large corporate clients such as HSBC Securities Services, AXA General Insurance Hong Kong Limited, Chubb Insurance Hong Kong Limited, Branding China Group, and First Shanghai Securities Limited. I applied my IT auditing knowledge and performed actual IT control assessments for my clients. In particular, I helped obtain audit support documents from clients to facilitate testing procedures. To ensure that clients’ operating systems, applications, networks and databases were secure and reliable, I carried out various IT control tests, ranging from governance, access rights, program change management, and software development management to computer operations.

One of the challenges I faced in PwC was the tight deadlines for performing complete IT audit assessments. There was limited manpower, and it was also difficult to obtain relevant supporting documents from clients on time. It can be difficult to maintain a high level of courtesy when urging clients to submit supporting documents on time. My senior manager told me that such a situation is very common in the workplace and taught me how to lightly push for clients to submit documents in a polite way, without making them uncomfortable. Eventually, I learned how to maintain a good business relationship with clients, which had not been taught at school.

Although IT auditing might sound boring, it was interesting and challenging. One story that comes to mind is the Branding China Group (“BC Group”) engagement. As you may know, BC Group is famous for being the first listed entity to expand into digital asset markets in Hong Kong. Thanks to PwC serving as BC Group auditor, I had the chance to engage with this unique project, which truly broadened my horizons. I gained knowledge in digital asset trading, such as hot and cold wallet ownership and understanding the reconciliation matching rules of trading platforms. At first, it was difficult to understand the whole mechanism, but eventually I managed to handle it and improve my understanding of blockchain and distributed ledger technologies. It was an enriching experience to be part of PwC, as I learned a lot of technical knowledge and gained valuable hands-on IT audit experience.



Team photo taken with all PwC Risk Assurance Intern



Team lunch with colleagues in PwC Risk Assurance

Upon the completion of my internship with PwC, I joined Deloitte Asia Pacific Blockchain Lab as a consulting intern. My team was quite distinct from other consulting teams. We focused more on implementing distributed ledger technology (“DLT”) and other FinTech-related services for corporate clients across the region. The job duties in consulting were quite different from risk assurance, in that consulting does not have a standard operating procedure at all. It is more dependent on the nature of the engagement and the client’s needs. During my internship, I was assigned to an e-sports and betting strategy project for a wagering corporation in Asia. My daily routine involved meeting with clients, conducting market research, and preparing presentation decks. Eventually, my team and I submitted a 60-page written report and a 120-slide presentation deck for the client’s perusal, including details of the e-sports market landscape, future trend predictions, betting market size and recommendations on operating as an e-sports bookmaker. In market research, I used both secondary research and primary research methods, such as conducting a survey with a sample size of over 1000 and interviews with industry experts.

I think one of the best parts about working in consulting is that the tasks are complex and diverse. Taking my experience as an example, my team could engage in a wide variety of technology consulting projects, such as supervisory technology for one of the financial regulators in Hong



Representing Deloitte to attend Cyberport E-Sports forum



Team gathering with colleagues in Deloitte APAC Blockchain Lab

Kong, and artificial intelligence for object identification. My exposure in this field trained me as a generalist in different cutting-edge technologies, such as blockchain, natural language programming, chatbots, and cloud implementation, among others. In this sense, consulting is relatively better than other functions in the Big Four because it involves training in diverse and up-to-date skillsets. If you prefer to become a specialist, you could consider other functions, such as risk assurance, in which you can learn and handle specific domain knowledge. I am so grateful that I had an opportunity to try out both specific and general functions.

It is worth mentioning that I liked the way Deloitte treats interns just like full-time Associates. Interns are assigned meaningful tasks, which is crucial and beneficial to career development. At first, I found it difficult to maintain good relationships with clients. In Deloitte, my manager took me to client meetings, which helped me sharpen my business communication skills and build business connections with clients. It is rare to find an internship that allows interns to communicate with clients directly and regularly. Moreover, my team gave me a high degree of autonomy. The presentation deck I prepared was submitted to clients directly without intense review and corrections. They tended to encourage creativity and welcome input from interns. Whenever I faced difficulties, they approached me promptly to provide relevant guidance and support. I felt a strong sense of accomplishment after the completion of my project, which was also the most memorable part of my internship.

Overall, the journey in the Big Four was fruitful, and pushed me to further develop my skills. Despite the fact that you may need to work longer hours than you might expect, the engagements you have will truly transform you into a more mature and all-rounded undergraduate student. To those who are interested in working in the Big Four, I would recommend the “3Ts”:

1. **Take the initiative in everything that you do:** You will never get assigned to “good” projects unless you reach out to your manager. Always take the initiative and grasp every opportunity to learn. Opportunity will never come by chance.
2. **Treat your internship like a real job:** If you would like to get a return-offer from your company, please take your job seriously. Bear in mind that your work will always have an impact on your organization. Your supervisor will recognize your efforts and contributions.
3. **Talk to new people and make connections:** Reach out and listen to experienced industry personnel, whether he or she is your colleague or your client. It will definitely help you ace your job hunt and career planning. Don't be shy. Try reaching out to different people around you.