

Dana: Hi, my name is Dr. Dana Hebreard and I work at the college of Liberal arts and sciences Center for experiential learning at Grand Valley State University this year. I had the distinct privilege to work with the inaugural cohort of the lake or accelerated talent program. This is a unique program where traditional meters are matched with technical positions, which gives students the opportunity to explore careers. They might not have considered helping address the talent shortage in our community. This two part series will be hearing from students and employers about the lessons learned advice for future cohorts, and both of which applied to anyone in the middle of the job search or career transition.

Ethan: liberal arts and sciences I graduate with a double major in writing and psychology and then obviously I got my certificate project management and I did my internship at Amway, go down the line

Greg: I just recently graduated from Grand Valley majoring in finance and then of course with my certificate and project management where I interned at Amway as well right next to eat actually.

Laighla: Psychology major and in my senior year at GVSU and I am currently having a certificate in project management thanks to the program, but my current position at Amway is actually human resources after the internship because thankfully this program gives you the opportunity to move forward.

Talumba: I graduated last year at Amber with my bachelors statistics from the arts and science college at GV and I did the project management track for the Larry and with that I was able to work with the HR department on a people analytics team and now I am also still working there. They extended my contract until the end of September.

Dana: so that's the reason I wanted to gather you were if you're listening as you all my guest today all four we're at Amway with very different majors

Laighla: One of my mom friends told me about the opportunity and I actually listen to her and I applied for the talent link and I started off when you're going to talent link of course you have to get application for the job not just the program so I did that and I did it through Amway and of course what you said Dana with interview they are going to ask you why you're interested and what I personally said in my interview and I said I am interested in talent because I am looking to expand my skills to be broader on what my major teaches me and the business world could teach me. I also said that I am looking for the opportunity to stay with a company long-term after college and the talent will give you that Headstart in a career that is exactly what I'm looking for and I always look out for it. It's great to have the people in your corner.

Dana: Ethan, how did you hear about talent playing and what would you say to the question of why you want to be a part of the program?

Ethan: Yeah so funny because I would've never heard about it if I didn't have one of my professors. Basically for us to go to the career center I didn't wanna not get a passing grade for an internship class and so I went to the career center I had an appointment with Lisa. Can you help me sort of try and find a way she wrote up literally a whole book and what I could do maybe feel a lot more confident with really a doomsday clock and then she threw in you know there's a town like program that might be interested in has all these different internships that could appeal to you and don't really require you to be in a specific major like business or what not and that really interest me because being a writing and psychology major you often don't think of a leadership physician my project management along those lines and I've been a leadership role before I've been a coach. You know I've been a lacrosse coach and such. I didn't really think was for me and it was kind of felt like I was being pushed more into a box of oh you're gonna be a writer or you're gonna be doing psychology things gonna be a therapist right and those were two things that I was interested in, but I didn't really feel compelled towards. I guess it was nice to know. There's an option for me in a space that I didn't think was for me and I think this shows that there is an internship or an experience for everyone.

Dana: Gregg one supervisor wrote that it was a unique program where we match nontraditional and individuals with positions that have those transferable skills yet giving you maybe some extra hurdles to overcome. Can you tell me a little bit like do you disagree and what might be the long-term benefits of putting yourself out there and kind of stretching?

Greg: I would completely agree with that statement supervisor. I'm a finance major and I was put into a position at Amway where I was working in a very heavy software development department and so that was an environment that I've never been in before. I'm not familiar with any IT software development terms or really what they do, so it was really a whole new experience for me and it was difficult at first. I remember my first meetings. My team would be going through their tasks and I would just have no idea what they were talking about like it was all just a foreign language to me so I was a little concerned at first and nervous but after that first two weeks I would say I started to get more comfortable. I got a better understanding of what they were talking about and I was really able to adapt to what I've learned in class and be able to transfer that transfer skills that I had learned to my position and it might've not been exactly the way I thought it would've been because it was an software development driven environment, but it was. I was still able to see those connections and I was able to make those connections on how I could apply my skills that I learned.

Dana: When you're the CFO, I want to see you being able to talk to the team the CIO and actually be like I got you cause I know I know this world that you live in from this experience.

Greg: The experience taught me that I may feel anxious or nervous at first, but I know that I have those skills that are transferable, but I can't. I'm able to apply in any given scenario, so I mean, I think that that helps me adapt to my professional environment.

Dana: That's great, thank you for sharing. Laighla, on a similar note. What experiences did you have that were beneficial yet?

Laighla: Maybe surprisingly Gregg also answers some of my experiences where I wouldn't even think I'd be able to use my skills in a business platform as psychology. I had no idea. Well psychology does go into business but to answer your question and when I was working, I am way through accelerated talent link I was very surprised by the community that I gained and not only was I able to get my certification and project management, but when I was doing my internship, I learned a lot about community and community is extremely important in your career when I was a project manager. You have to be close to your team. You have to trust your team if you don't have trust, and you don't have some kind of interpersonal relationship with everyone, you know you're not gonna come to conclusions and, the bonding exercises that we did together as a team business mentoring I even got from my team members I was able to network very well and I only with my team but with other people when you go into a new career you're able to build strong relationships that's why a lot of people say once they get out of college you know you really gotta find your friends wherever you can find them but I would say I was just very surprised by the community. I was able to just really enhance my skills by learning from the people around you, which is very important. Getting mentors with people that you work with is very important as well and if you're pursuing project management, I would say trusting your team and building those relationships are so essential so I was very shocked that speaking of a community that I love that about you.

Dana: I mean after college how you build community is so important because it's not as easy. You don't have the resident hall that you can just knock on the door and pick up a conversation or you know it in your work community that's gonna be a whole now that can be a whole. Nother podcast we can talk about Work community, you mentioned in previous conversations that one of the benefits of talent link was the opportunity to work with a diverse group of academic discipline I mean, even the four of you. I mean, both Ethan and Leila are psych majors and you know college of liberal arts and science, but they were very diverse group our 21 inaugural cohort. Talumba, can you tell me a little bit more about that when we talk about the benefits from the program?

Talumba: like just being a part of that inaugural group and also like you know, reaching out to my whole heart members in Amway like you know, Amway had the opportunity to higher a large majority of us so that was really nice to connect with them there, but I'm going back to the inaugural group I saw people from Ms. where you know traditionally were always told you know don't take that if you if you go with the liver, you're not gonna be very difficult for you and even with me even though I'm not necessarily an art, major statistics I kind of had no clue how I was gonna fight that and I was kind of just shooting for the stars with this just talking to a bunch of people and realizing that they all had something that they were able to use in a unique way in their internship, it really helped me understand how narrow my perspective was or how much I didn't know about the working world, and it really open my eyes to that and specifically when reaching out to my cohort member is working at Amway it also aided in that community aspect and I did not realize how valuable having a group of people going through the same thing as you especially when it comes to something stressful like trying to get a job trying to get internships trying to try to grow your résumé just having that group of people who also add

something unique to the experience as well was very beneficial and I think I don't think I would've had that experience.

Dana: What are your thoughts on high impact practices like internships?

Talumba: that I think that internship abroad all those things they're highly undervalued highly underrated I think just having the environment to learn applicably is not something that we really can simulate in the classroom or in just strictly academia I realize also when I started my internship is that most valuable skill there was being flexible was being adaptive and those are the types of things we hear you know all those are just buzzwords who who actually is any of that stuff you have to have the academics you gotta have the accolades but this internship experience and I'm sure you know type of program like that it really teaches you how to apply for the sake of having that thing I think people forget is that when when they when they take you, they don't know a lot. They know that you're probably not gonna change the business overnight so don't be afraid to go there and make mistakes.

Dana: It's a fail safe so I highly encourage people to try and sometimes those failures and success experiences so when I started an internship I in grad school in Chicago I had to go to Evanston from Rogers Park and I took what was that the train but I ended up on the Skokie swift which no one knows that goes directly to the city of Skokie past Evanston where I needed to be and so then I had to turn around and I was late for where I needed to go and getting I was very worried that I'd get in trouble but I ended up it just ended up being up funny moments sort of that welcome to the world of work. You're never ever gonna make that same mistake again.

Greg: There's a snowstorm on the second day and the roads were horrible and I had left. It normally takes me like 20 minutes to get to Amway from my house and I left 45 minutes early. I'd say to give myself some time cause I knew there was gonna be traffic, but I guess I did not give myself enough time because I ended up showing up I think like 10 or 15 minutes late and I was so I was like kind of embarrassed like what are they gonna think of me but it was really no big deal and they're actually all still waiting in the lobby because there is a lot of other students late to the lesson and realize what it will be OK.

Talumba: I can add something OK so there was a project that I was working on for people analytics and they handed it off to me and normally I'm just like OK I'll figure out a way to do. It may take a couple weeks but you know at the end of the day. I'll contribute something and I'll learn some thing and that's kind of the reciprocity that I expect there, but I think one of the projects they gave me kind of over my head and I didn't know what to do and I didn't tell anybody and I kept trying my best kept trying kept acting like I was making progress because I was really scared that they would find me out and then I would be an imposter and it just stressed me out and one day I was I was like there's nothing more I can do I don't wanna just wait around for my finish so I kind of admitted like I know it's been like a couple weeks. I know it's been a long time but I haven't done anything. I don't know what you guys are asking for and it was just to complete the fee on my end but they quickly came in and we're like yeah that's

fine. You can ask us whenever you feel like we don't have a problem. We know that you don't know much and it's an opportunity to learn, and that really.

Laighla: I took an accounting class cause I had a business minor, but I really was not up-to-date on how to do finances and I was during my internship taking the classes for the certification so there was some things where I was still learning it in the process while working on the job I ended up liking it that way, but when you're doing that, where are some things like wow, this isn't in my major might have to calculate these numbers to see what's off. Trusting this is definitely outside of my major. Let me give it a shot, and I was able to do it very well, and I noticed other than that one moment where I had to calculate some numbers while looking at some contracts, I noticed that most of the work that I did was thankfully have so many pre-classes in college that you'll learn some bigger to outside of your major so I was able to succeed in the business field, even though there were some moments that stumped me up.

Dana: Greg and Ethan, this is the first summer without any homework. How does that feel?

Ethan: It's nice homework, no more group projects that's not your projects with me. Totally great but yeah I've been working full-time so that's a little bit of an adjustment but yeah it's nice to not have to worry every time I get home about if I did something or didn't do something.

Dana: I remember that summer when I graduated that I could actually read a book and enjoy it and not be a part of a class. Thank you all for being here and for taking the time to chat with me to be vulnerable and share your stories about your lessons learned and thank you. The listeners for taking the time if you're interested in learning more about talent link or experiential learning at Grand Valley State University please check out our website at gvsu.edu/CCEL or the center for experiential learning.