


Making the World Smaller: Google, Internships, Going Above and Beyond

 http://www.goldsborough.me/mws/2020/08/09/16-03-10-making_the_world_smaller-_google,_internships,_going_above_and_beyond/

Peter Goldsborough

Sat Oct, 17 22:49

This anonymized email correspondence is part of my series on “Making the World Smaller”. See the [introductory post](#) for context.

Hi Peter!

I’m X, a sophomore at Yale University majoring in CS, and I’ll be interning at Google Mountain View this summer. It’s my first ever software engineering internship, after taking my first CS class first semester of college, so I’m both excited and nervous. I have been reading your blogs about your various tech internships and have been really inspired by your work ethic, open mind, and humor. Thank you so much for sharing your experience and wisdom with newbies like me!

One thing I find particularly admirable about your experience at Google is that you not only did your assigned project, but took the initiative to do projects with other teams. I was wondering if you wouldn’t mind sharing with me how you managed to do it (both getting the projects in the first place, and how you managed to fit them into your schedule). I’m asking because while I find the work of my current team important and worth learning (Search Infrastructure), my true interest is in machine learning (especially NLP). It would be ideal if I could apply my NLP knowledge in real-world engineering setting, such as doing a side project with another team at Google. Your experience would be highly valuable to me!

I hope I wouldn’t be taking too much of your time. Thank you in advance for your reply!

Hi X,

Nice to meet you and thanks for your compliments on my blog, I’m glad you like it. Congrats on your internship.

For your question: In my case the other team I worked on was our sister team, so I knew the people and that made it easier to eventually be like “hey why don’t you work on this with us”. It sounds like in your case the team you’re interested in is not directly in touch with your current team.

Nevertheless, I think the only thing really stopping you from reaching out to a team working on something you’d like to do is your hesitation to do so. To give you some reassurance: Now that I’m

full-time for a while, I can say that if an intern sent me a message asking for some task to work on just because they're interested, that would not be a problem at all. I'd be happy. We (FTEs) all have huge piles of work lying around and often times it's exactly the easier-to-understand tasks that would be great for someone to just poke around and get some experience, that get pushed aside in favor of higher priority stuff. So I would recommend you just check out some teams or even some folders in google3 that look interesting to you, and then find a POC (e.g. the person who last edited cool_nlp_thing.py) and explain that you're interested in contributing a little. As an aside, this will also help you immensely if you wanted to do another internship at Google next year and then work on that team.

The only thing you'll have to figure out is when you want to do the extra work. You can always do it in evenings/weekends if you feel motivated. In my case I actually finished my main project early, which gave me a couple weeks of just focusing on this additional project. This really depends on your progress in your current project. For example, if you're expected to complete your project early given your current progress, you could ask your manager if he/she would be fine with letting you work on something else one day out of the week, just like in Google's 20% policy. You could also maybe take an hour from your main project in the evening, then add on one hour (not going to kill your evening schedule) and suddenly you have two hours a day to work on your other project. Something like that :)

I hope that helps and good luck with your project(s).

Peter