

Arts Work Term Report – Summer 2010

Summer Student – Argue and Associates Management Consultants, Inc.

January 14, 2010

Name and Contact Info Withheld

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Mr. Kevin O'Brien:

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Sincerely,

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## **Executive Summary**

My third work term was with Argue and Associates Management Consultants, Inc. (AAMC) as a summer student. I had a wide variety of responsibilities and I was exposed to almost all of the aspects of a small business.

I was very involved in the accounting of the company. I prepared invoices, paid bills and ensured that the business kept running. My accounting classes prepared me well for finally working with a real life accounting system.

I also helped develop marketing and branding strategies for AAMC. This task is not really what my studies are focused on, but it provided an interesting challenge. My university experience of a couple of marketing classes certainly helped me to more effectively develop the branding strategy.

A major project that I helped start and will continue in perpetuity at AAMC was the development of a quality management system (QMS). My incoming knowledge of QMS was based on one related class, but the research skills that I have developed and improved in university helped me to contribute significantly to the QMS project.

My work term at AAMC gave me the opportunity to gain first hand knowledge about how a small business is run. It is clear that to be a successful entrepreneur one needs to be dedicated, organized and hard working. This was easily predictable, but the extent to which each of these attributes contribute to the success of a small business cannot be appreciated without first hand experience.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

### **The Organization**

This past summer, for my third work term, I was employed at Argue and Associates Management Consultants, Inc. (AAMC). This is a company that offers environmental, health and safety, and business consulting. It was founded in 2004 by Shawna Argue, the CEO and principal consultant. AAMC is a small, home-based business with only two permanent employees. AAMC employs sub-contractors to complete the audits that they perform for clients. When my boss, the CEO and lead consultant, was out of town performing audits I would work from my home.

### **Job Duties**

The job title of “Summer Student” is certainly indicative of the duties that I was assigned at AAMC. I was assigned a wide variety of tasks that ranged from accounting to marketing to audit preparation. One of my main weekly duties was to enter the bills that were incurred by the company into QuickBooks. Twice monthly it was my duty to pay these bills, ensuring that they were paid on time. Each month I had to prepare financial statements for internal use.

Another project that I worked on over the summer was branding and marketing for AAMC. I was responsible for redesigning the company logo and website. I was also asked to redesign the reports that we submit to clients. Part of the branding effort included creating a consistent image will all of the materials that we distribute, including flyers, brochures, business cards, invoices, and letterhead, among others.

One of the most important duties that my job entailed was preparing audit reports for clients. AAMC performs environmental and health and safety audits for clients, and it was my responsibility to create the reports for the clients. The audit team would submit their data to me,

and I would insert it into a report template for each individual audit. Every audit template had to be customized to each specific project.

My other main duty at AAMC was to help to create and implement a quality management system (QMS) for the company. Me and a co-worker performed a quality management audit of the company, and prepared a report for the CEO. We developed a QMS and an implementation strategy and timetable to go along with it. The QMS is an ongoing project that was started with my assistance, but will continue to be implemented and improved over the course of the company's lifespan.

#### Tools / Skills Required for Completing Job Duties

My job duties required a wide variety of skills. The most predominant skill that I had to use throughout the work term was the ability to work independently. The audits that AAMC performs take the audit team to various locations throughout Saskatchewan and Alberta. I was assigned tasks to perform from home, and it was my responsibility to ensure that all tasks were completed on time.

Another skill that was important in my job was the ability to be versatile and prioritize. As mentioned earlier, I had a wide variety of tasks. In addition to the variety, there were ever-changing priorities. Many of the reports required feedback before they could be finalized. Since it was fairly unpredictable as to when I would receive feedback, it was important for me to be able to change priorities, and still complete tasks on time.

One tool that I was happy to be able to use during the work term was my accounting knowledge. The AAMC accounting system is fairly simple, since it is quite a small company, but it was still important to have a prior knowledge of accounting to be able to perform the accounting duties to the highest quality.

## Practical Learning from the Work Term

This work term gave me the opportunity to learn a great deal from a fairly successful entrepreneur. I worked closely with my boss, the founder of the company, on quite a regular basis. One of the things that I noticed right away was the level of organization that was present at AAMC. Since it is a small business, all of the employees are required to be involved in numerous aspects of the company. To keep all of your duties manageable, it is important to keep them very organized. It has always been taught to me that good organizational skills are important for working effectively, but it is evident that when one's livelihood depends on them alone, the importance of organization is amplified.

This work term also gave me the opportunity to see how a small business is run. Since the company is so small I was exposed to almost all aspects of the business. I saw that all aspects of the business are important, and it is important to have the right people to perform the tasks. AAMC does not have different departments to handle different aspects of the company. The employees try their best to perform as many tasks as possible, but AAMC also employs consultants to help them in the areas in which they lack expertise. Seeing all of this first hand definitely makes the prospect of starting a business less daunting. It clearly takes a lot of your own hard work, but you also have to be able to seek the expertise of others when you lack it.

My work term at AAMC also gave me the chance to work with an actual accounting system. Exposure to a real accounting system, as opposed to just learning about it from books, is definitely a better way to understand how accounting is used in the real world. Seeing such a simple accounting system gave me a chance to better understand how an accounting system would be set up for a small business.

### Application of Knowledge / Skills Learned at University

My work term at AAMC gave me an opportunity to use much of the knowledge and skill that I have learned at university. I have taken a couple of marketing classes, and these classes helped me a great deal when I was creating the branding for AAMC. I learned that AAMC should be presenting a consistent image in everything that they do, and that this image should portray important qualities of the company. My branding strategy helped to elevate AAMC's image from a home-based company whose materials appear somewhat homemade, to a more professional and dynamic image. This strategy is more in line with what AAMC wants to portray.

Another university class that gave me knowledge applicable to my job was the "Business, Society and the Environment" class that I took during my academic exchange in Jyvaskyla, Finland. This class helped me to better implement and understand a QMS that would be suitable for AAMC. This is the only class that I have taken in university that has addressed a QMS and its importance. Not only did the class help me to create AAMC's QMS, but it gave me a better understanding of the value of AAMC's entire business.

This work term also allowed me to use knowledge that I gained from the various accounting classes that I have taken. I only really needed the very basic fundamentals from these courses to do my job satisfactorily, but knowing more than just the basics did help me perform my job better. It was easier for me to identify if mistakes were made in entering bills and receiving payments, and I was able to easily identify why AAMC's books did not always match the bank statement.



### Relation of University Experience to Work Experience

My university experience thus far is not directly related to my most recent work term experience. The most evident relation is that both university and my work term at AAMC require a lot of independent work. At both university and AAMC I was responsible for getting my own work done. The main difference was that at university my work only affects me, while at AAMC my work is important to a variety of people. My work was important to my boss, my colleague, and AAMC's clients.

Writing skills that are important in university were also important in my work at AAMC. The audit reports that I prepared for clients had to be formatted and written in such a way that allowed for quick and clear reading. It was important that the findings in the reports stood out, as they were the entire reason for doing the audit in the first place.

### Knowledge Gained that can be Applied in the Future

Much of the knowledge that I have gained from my work term can be applied in my future academic and professional career. All of the practical aspects that I was able to observe about running a business will certainly be of use, no matter what field my future career is in. Whether it is the simple fact that one can never be too organized, or if it is the practical experience of using a real-world accounting system, these are experiences that will certainly be of use in the future.

Some of the business management techniques that I was able to observe may help me in future classes if I am to take more management classes in my university career. There are certainly some techniques that will appear more valuable if I am to receive more instruction on them in the future.

The most important thing that this work term, and my other work terms, has taught me is that hard work in a business environment is always appreciated. This is certainly not news to anybody, but in a small business environment with all of the employees doing such varied tasks, the business just does not work if the people are not working hard.