

NYU STERN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

OPPORTUNITY

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A Look Back, One Year Later

Yes, There is Life After Stern. And No, it Doesn't Suck.

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Greetings from San Francisco, SWIB members! I hope you're all enjoying your last few weeks as a Stern student before you embark on your summer internships (MBA1s) or as you come to the realization that *gasp* your time at Stern is nearing its end and that *double gasp* you have to re-enter the "real" world after spending the last two years having the time of your life (MBA2s). Well, as an alumna who was in your shoes just a year ago, I am very happy to report that there is life after Stern and more importantly, it doesn't suck.

Since graduating last May, I've moved back to the San Francisco Bay Area. The transition from student life in bright-lights/big-city Manhattan to working life elsewhere wasn't nearly as traumatic as I'd expected. Not only was I moving to another metropolitan city that (arguably) has as much cultural and culinary diversity as New York, but I was extremely excited to start my post-MBA career in product marketing with Wells Fargo in the group I'd interned with the previous summer.

Given that I work in financial services, it would be remiss of me not to address the impact that the economic downturn has had on my job. Not surprisingly, I have been directly impacted, in part because my "product" is a line of credit. The industry is in the midst of a credit crunch; my job responsibilities have evolved tremendously as customer risk profiles change and management priorities shift. Navigating through it all has been challenging, but you know what? It's also been fun, as I learn how to do more with less on a daily basis.

The Real World Application of a Stern MBA

Stern truly prepares you for the "real" world, even when the economy in that world is not quite as booming as when you left it. As cliché as it may sound, the hard skills I acquired in class along with the soft skills I gained outside of class were absolutely applicable to my summer internship and post-MBA career.

While an intern at Wells Fargo, I was asked to identify why a particular region was outperforming others. The assumption was that customers behaved differently in that region and that the bankers were better salespeople - a very marketing-oriented hypothesis that I felt very comfortable with. After spending several weeks analyzing rows and rows of data however, I

determined that a handful of high-wealth customers were actually taking advantage of a short-term arbitrage opportunity that inflated the numbers for that region.

Professor Silber would have been proud, not just because I'd managed to incorporate his favorite concept ("arbitrage!") into my internship, but because I had a very qualitative PR/marketing background prior to Stern and I had a false belief that I was not analytical, had never been analytical and could never be analytical no matter what Silber said. Yet there I was, analyzing financial data, finding the anomalies, debunking a marketing hypothesis, replacing it with a financial one, and presenting my findings to upper management, all with a level of comfort and confidence that I never thought I'd have.

I've also come to realize the value of the networking, which I used to view as a dirty word because I hated doing it and I thought it meant being fake and kissing *ss to get ahead. It's not any of those things.

Rather, networking simply means building relationships to increase your social and professional circle. I encourage you to take advantage of all the opportunities that Stern offers to practice networking, be it through OCD, clubs, recruiting events or even Beer Blast. After a while, it becomes second nature, just in time as you re-enter a work force where "playing well with others" is crucial to success and knowing who to reach out to when you're ready to make a career change is key. (I do want to point out that opportunities to network are not nearly as easy to come by post-MBA as they were at Stern. No one is flooding your inbox daily with mandatory events invitations. Every company has opportunities of course, but you'll mostly likely have to seek them out yourself.)

Sure, waking up early and going to work every day is not as exciting as keg parties on Thursday nights, Fridays off, or trekking to exotic countries with 75+ of your classmates under the guise of "doing business in ". But you know what? It certainly isn't terrible, and it most definitely doesn't suck. In fact, it makes coming back to Stern and seeing all your friends and other familiar faces again (as I did this past February for the SWIB Conference) that much more meaningful.

Veronica Hsia graduated from Stern in May 2007. While at Stern, she served two years as the SWIB Conference Co-Chair.

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