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Introduction

I will graduate from Youngstown State University with an Associate's Degree in Information Technology this December. Upon completion, I will continue to fulfill the few classes needed to complete my Bachelor's Degree in the same field. I plan to have this done by the end of summer semester in the year 2004. I was not quite sure what I would do with such degrees upon graduation, so I was excited about the chance to prove my skill and learn new ones in a real working environment. The opportunity to do this arose when I acquired the position of Help Desk Assistant. Throughout my internship, I continued to learn new things on a daily basis, this aspect made the decision to stay at my position following my internship a rather easy one to make.

Position Description

The position I am filling is that of Help Desk Student Intern for the Computer Services department at Youngstown State University. This position includes the following duties and responsibilities as stated on outline form provided by YSU. "Field client contacts (phone, e-mail, walk-in) in a manner that assists, educates, and supports client's technology concerns. Correctly and effectively diagnose technology problems. Work with technical partners to correct problems. Perform fieldwork. Create informational, educational materials, web pages and additional tasks as needed". The position serves as a good stepping-stone to larger, more specialized areas within the Information Technology field. It also is a good opportunity to explore new software and even some hardware features that may be implemented in the future.

Experience

Many experiences that I have had played a role in my success at the help desk. I have been enrolled

in the Information Technology program at Youngstown State University for the past four years and in that time I have had the opportunity to educate myself in a wide variety of technological areas. I have had courses in system configuration and maintenance, which provided me with the basic knowledge about basic hardware configuration.

I also participated in the Cisco Networking Academy semesters one and two. These courses have proved very valuable in diagnosing minor connectivity issues and other networking problems. Finally, I have had some experience in computer sales. At first I did not think that this would benefit me in this position, but on occasion I have been asked to give advice to a client on purchasing new office or home equipment. I have been able to draw upon my past salesmanship to good quality input to these inquiries. I have also had several spreadsheet design and database courses. These classes mostly focused on the use of Microsoft products such as Excel and Access. I have not had to implicate many of these skills so far, but the experience and understanding of these programs contributes to my overall knowledge base.

Overall, the classes that I have taken have definitely contributed to my success. Without my current background, I am fairly certain that I would not effectively be able to complete the daily tasks of working at the help desk.

Overview

I wasn't quite sure what to expect when I began working at the help desk. I didn't know exactly what would be expected of me on a daily basis and how much knowledge I should already have before starting at my position. I must admit that I was a little nervous on what to expect. From my first day I became much more confident at my job and daily processes. I was a bit surprised at the relaxed atmosphere of the help desk. My fellow workers are extremely nice and very helpful; this fact really aided in my

transition from a new employee to a member of the team.

I began by familiarizing myself with the various software and hardware that I would be working with from day to day. The first item I had to learn was the Magic database software. Magic is an online database that the help desk uses to track all work orders and trouble tickets. The first task I needed to accomplish was learning how to navigate between the different options and screens and how to accurately document a work order. The process involves searching for the client in the database (or adding them if they do not exist) and taking a descriptive summary of the client's issue. From here, I must assign a subject to the trouble ticket by selecting an appropriate one from an available list. Finally I must assign the work order to the right department of faculty member for completion.

I also learned the procedure to retrieve voice messages. The mailbox codes for accessing messages and how to transfer and save messages were critical tasks that might seem minute but still very important for me to master. A vast majority of incident reports take place over the phone so it is extremely crucial that I can do it efficiently.

Software knowledge was another aspect of the job that I needed to excel at. I had to learn the basics of a secured shell program that allows access to email profiles and password information. Most clients use a variety of programs (such as Outlook and Netscape) to access email messages and address books, so a basic knowledge of these items also has to be learned.

Programs that I have exposure to on a daily basis include the following: Microsoft Office programs, Excel, Word, etc. Microsoft Outlook and Netscape are two programs that many clients use for transferring emails so a basic knowledge of the menus and functions of these programs is a must. Many students place calls pertaining to issues with word processing applications and other basic application needs. For this reason, a well-rounded knowledge of these programs is a necessity.

Passport is another program that gives both clients and staff access to student records and registration information and other important data. Password changes and menu commands are some

frequently asked questions regarding passport. Numerous other programs must be learned in order to explain their use to clients so they can understand why they are important. Virus scan program such as McAfee and Norton are two such utilities. Familiarizing myself with the options and screens of these programs can allow me to quickly walk a client through how to configure their machine to perform routine scans and operations to add a further level of security to their network connection.

I have begun to explore the world of Mac users, but so far have not learned a great deal. This was one aspect of my training that I would really like to focus on. The help desk only has one Macintosh unit in the office and a small minority of our clients calls relate to Mac issues. However, I would like to continue to gain experience and skills in working in a Mac operating system environment. Overall my exposure to these aspects has been limited due to the lack of resources and knowledgeable staff pertaining to Macs. One member of the help desk staff acts as the Macintosh specialist and performs all work orders that need completion. My continued efforts to learn from such a resource should prove very beneficial.

I would like to address the specific work environment at the help desk. The people in computer services have been extremely kind to me in my learning and advancement in becoming a member of their team. I was warmly welcomed and always felt at ease. I have had several other jobs (not related to the IT field) and none of them gave me a sense of accomplishment like this position. For once I actually feel like an important member of an important team. My work has meaning and worth and this message has been conveyed through my management authorities. The supervisors that I am working for show an interest in my work and offer meaningful suggestions, as well as praise for a job well done. I have not been used to this sort of thing in my past working endeavors.

Conclusions

This internship experience has been extremely productive. I am extremely happy with nearly every

aspect of the position. At first I was disgruntled that I was unable to obtain a position over the summer and was forced to complete my credit during the fall, but everything has worked out in the end. I have learned a lot about my abilities and skills that I wanted to put to the test. I would say that this has definitely been successful. I have been given the opportunity to prove what I can do in a real office environment and I think I have impressed a few people in the process (including myself). Not only have I been able to use the skills I have acquired from my past courses at Youngstown State, but I also have picked up a multitude of new skills and tips that can improve efficiency. The team I am a part of has made the whole experience that much better too. I have learned so much from them, both new techniques and refreshers on previous things I have learned but never had the chance to utilize.

I am very pleased with how this position has turned out for me. Every expectation that I had to begin with has been either met or exceeded. I have nothing negative to say about this experience, everything that I have done, from major work order projects, to minor password problems has shaped my overall business outlook. I enjoyed this position so much that I have decided to stay working at the help desk through the spring semester. I feel that the knowledge I have gained so far is just the beginning of what I can learn and accomplish and I'm looking forward to continuing my learning in the future.