

GETTING AHEAD

Virtual Trivia Nights and Helping Fight COVID-19: All in a Day's Work for This Remote Intern

by *The Muse Editor*



Kevin Litzinger, a mechanical engineering intern at Philips

Last spring, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic threw a wrench in the plans of students everywhere who were working to solidify [summer internships](#). Thankfully, many companies were able to pivot quickly and offer remote opportunities to students such as Kevin Litzinger, who went on to complete a mechanical engineering internship at [Philips](#), a global leader in health technology.

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“This summer was unique to say the least,” says Litzinger, now a college senior. “It was challenging to not see my team and coworkers daily, even if that was just chatting for a moment by the coffee pot.” But, he says, “I was happy with how well my team helped me transition, meet new people, and learn about the organization.”

The company ensured that Litzinger and his cohort of interns had the right equipment to work from home and also paired them each with a “big buddy,” or mentor, to guide them. This support prepared Litzinger to contribute to meaningful projects, including research that directly impacted how Philips responded to the pandemic.

Here, Litzinger talks about what he accomplished during his internship, how he was still able to have fun (virtually) with his fellow interns, and why networking is so important for students

Tell us about your academic background, and what led you to your internship at Philips.

I am a senior at The Pennsylvania State University, majoring in mechanical engineering, with a minor in engineering leadership development. After completing two internship rotations at a smaller private-sector company, I knew that I was ready for a different challenge. I was ready to immerse myself in a larger, global organization that conducted work in a new, unfamiliar industry where I would be able to learn, develop, and grow



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...and that's why I really had to work to learn, develop, and grow.

Staying near Pittsburgh was also important to me, so I began to investigate companies within the region and soon found that Philips, a global leader in healthcare, provides sleep and respiratory care solutions in the area.

What attracted you to Philips and made you want to intern there?

Philips' goal is to improve the lives of two billion people a year by 2025, and that aligned perfectly with my personal goal of carrying out meaningful work. Philips also has a large intern program that allowed me to network with other young people and make connections and friendships throughout the country. I also talked to several peers who had completed internships with Philips and they had nothing but good things to say about their experience.

In what ways did Philips support you and any other interns while working remotely?

Philips did a great job with the onboarding process and gave interns the appropriate equipment we needed for home: laptops, chargers, keyboards, a mouse, a headset, and so on. They also made the onboarding process rather seamless as we were quickly able to set up our accounts, download software, and immediately get plugged in to the appropriate resources.

What did a normal day in your internship look like?

What I liked about Philips was that no day seemed "normal." I always had a diverse array of tasks to complete spanning many different projects. There are always emails to respond to and meetings to attend, but all in all, I was challenged to work not only with my team, but also in support of other teams' engineering functions. This not only helped me to network, but also exposed me to the numerous pieces of Philips' business.

What kinds of projects did you work on during your internship?

This summer, I worked for a group called Sleep Therapy, which focused on new product development, particularly CPAP (a machine that helps people breathe more easily during sleep) for people who have sleep apnea. This role was heavily concentrated in research and development operations, and I had the opportunity to complete design work, rapid prototyping, testing, report writing, and effectively communicate with my team the status and results of the various projects they assigned me.

What accomplishment from your internship are you most proud of?

One of the coolest things I got to do at Philips landed outside of the scope of my immediate group. I was able to make an impact in helping Philips respond to COVID-19 by completing a study to increase line yield for ventilator production in a local Philips factory. The results I found in testing enabled my superiors to make appropriate recommendations to help improve the line yield for ventilator production. Not only was it a fun project, but it also had a direct impact to help combat the deadly effects of the pandemic.

How were you able to connect with other interns and employees despite being virtual?

Philips' campus recruiting did an excellent job keeping all the interns connected throughout the summer. I was fortunate to serve as a campus liaison for the Pittsburgh area and was responsible for coordinating virtual social events for interns in my region. We had lots of fun "hanging out" together and we had events such as trivia nights, engineering roundtables, and free time to chat and get to know each other better.

Campus recruiting also held virtual lunch-and-learns with folks from across the company in different business functions. This was a great opportunity to make connections and hear colleagues' stories about their career journeys.

What did you like best about the internship program at Philips?

Virtual or not, one characteristic I noticed surrounding my local Philips organization is how kind and helpful everyone is. I am not quite sure how else to describe it, but folks would go out of their way to help me even if they didn't know me directly. They would drop what they were doing and try to help me with a task, learn a new skill, or troubleshoot a problem I was having. It gave me confidence that my colleagues wanted me to succeed as much as I did.

What benefit or impact do you think this internship will have on your future career?

Philips is an outstanding company that provided me with personal and professional skills that facilitated my development as an aspiring engineer. This opportunity not only helped me make new connections, but also provided me with a valuable perspective on my strengths and weaknesses and how I can best apply myself in future career opportunities.

What advice do you have for other students looking to land a remote internship?

Network. Network, network, network. It sounds simple, but it is so very important to make essential connections to help you get to the point you desire. I would also advise getting a mentor either in academia or in the industry who can look at your resume, connect you with professionals, and give you advice, especially early on in your career. Opportunity is out there, but it won't come to you if you sit around and wait for it. We can only see so much of our life from our personal viewpoint and having that other person can help you identify strengths and weaknesses and guide you to the best fit in your career.



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