

Accounting, the FBI, and Me



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I served as a Federal Bureau of Investigation accounting intern, and it was one of the best experiences of my life. I learned many valuable things in my internship that will further my accounting career. Going in, I expected my FBI internship would provide very little hands-on experience, and I thought that I would probably be a 'gofer'. However, I was assigned to a case my first day on the job; from then on it was the most awesome experience of my life.

In addition to what I learned from working the cases, I also learned that the FBI is more than just the investigative division of the Department of Justice. The men and women of the FBI do more for the public than anyone could imagine, and to have been a part of the FBI for 9 months brings me so much joy. In order to bring some of the experience that I had more to light, I will detail some of my duties, more about what I learned, what I liked, and my goals.

JOB DUTIES

One of my largest responsibilities was to analyze large volumes of information about FBI cases and condense that information into usable sources for the agents assigned to these cases. It was quite a challenge to sort and classify boxes and boxes of information so that the agents could solidify their cases. Along with sorting and classifying the information, I entered the information into Excel spreadsheets and databases that would make the information easier to understand as well as to retrieve.

As an example of how the FBI uses the information found, consider the following case that is found on the FBI's website (www.fbi.gov). In a governmental fraud case against a realty group, the realty company was purchasing fraudulent loan documentation, which included fraudulent W-2 forms, manufactured employee pay

verification forms, altered bank statements, and fictitious letters of credit. An intern's job on this case might include taking the altered bank statements and laying them out so that incorrect information could be easily found. An intern might also take the loan documentation and enter the information into a spreadsheet so that agents could quickly view all of the loans, including which loans did not exist. These were the types of activities that I spent most of my time doing, and I often worked on a couple of cases at one time, trying to get information out to several different agents.

I also did supplementary research on some of the cases that I worked on. There were cases that required additional research to determine the nature and extent of a crime. This research ranged anywhere from individual identification and history searches to getting information about a business' activities and location. I was also responsible on a couple of occasions for providing documents to be used in trial. For example, the very first case I worked on required researching and analyzing information that could be condensed and explained for use in trial. This meant portraying accounting and financial information in a clear and understandable format so that it could be presented as evidence and could be easily understood by everyone involved in the trial. Preparing information for a trial also required talking with the agent(s) to explain what I had found, if anything, and what I had learned about the specifics of the crime. This was perhaps the most rewarding part of my job. The agents actually considered what I found and often times my thinking followed the same lines of thought as the agents on the case!

WHAT DID I LEARN?

There were so many things that I learned through this internship, that it is hard to list only a few. One important thing that I learned was how accounting was used in the

FBI. It was never very clear to me exactly how accounting would be used, and further, why it would take someone in accounting to do anything that the FBI needed to be done. It seemed to me that simply being an FBI agent, you could do anything, and that accounting would only be a drop in the bucket to the many different areas of specialization that would be needed. However, I found that accounting is used quite extensively in the FBI, and that accountants are highly regarded in the Bureau.

Another thing that I learned was that there are so many different ways to apply accounting in the FBI, and it seems that almost every case needs some sort of accounting work, simply because of the nature of the cases that are being investigated. Accountants are often times used for analysis of financial statements or bank statements, tracing funds from one account to another, analyzing large volumes of transactions, relating different accounts to each other through tracing funds, and the list goes on and on. Accountants are simply essential to many of the activities and investigations of the FBI and I never imagined that accountants would be so important to criminal investigations.

Finally, I learned about several types of companies and how each differs. I realize this sounds petty in relation to the other types of things that I have learned and experienced, however, in only one semester, I worked on 4 different cases, all of which were completely different and entailed differing objectives, companies, and types of businesses. I find it amazing that though I am 22, and have seen many companies, I never really realized how many were truly out there until I started working on investigations. Also, not only are there many types of organizations, but each one has its own little quirks making it distinctive. Through this internship, I gained a stronger

understanding of various companies and organizations, and the different roles each plays in society.

WHAT DID I LIKE?

As you can tell from the heading above, I won't be talking about things that I didn't like, simply because there was honestly not one thing that I did not like, and would not enjoy doing everyday. Each day at work, I found myself excited and looking forward to what I might tackle that day. The most incredible things about this internship were the investigative nature of the work (of course) and the unique challenges of each day. Each day was so full of new challenges and assignments that I was always eager to work on something new. I have listed here only two things that I liked about the job because they are the most important. But honestly, there was not a duty that I carried out that I disliked or made myself do, because I completely enjoyed everything that I did.

WHAT NEXT?

The final stage of my internship was to evaluate my goals. As the semester has progressed, I have looked at several different areas of accounting, and I am still not sure what I will do after graduation. Right now, my long-term goal, after I obtain more experience, is to return to the FBI and become a special agent. I have met so many people through this internship that have encouraged me in so many different ways that being an agent seems like the perfect role for me. In looking back over the semester, and the many things that I have done and experienced, I find that there is nothing in the world that I would rather do. I firmly stand 100% behind the FBI stands for. However, I would like more accounting experience so that I might be an even better agent. I am now considering internal or external audit, budget forecasting, or some type of analyst work to

broaden my knowledge of the internal corporate world. This internship helped me think about many different career paths and these are some of my current ideas.

In conclusion, words cannot express how much I have enjoyed this internship. I expected this internship to be a dull “go-fer” job; however I would not trade my internship experience for anything in this world. I love knowing that my worked helped to serve my community and my country, and that the people I worked with at the FBI share the same passions. It is so awesome to look at the men and women that I worked with daily at the FBI and think about how many lives and families they have changed and helped, simply by making criminals pay for what they have done. This internship was a miracle for me, and lucky enough, I will be interning with the FBI again next semester!