

Fall 2011 Arts Work Term Report:

Health and Safety Officer

Risk Management Services

Government Services, Fall 2011

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information withheld*

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Mr. Kevin O'Brien,

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Sincerely,

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Executive Summary

My first work term has been spent performing the role of a Health and Safety Officer in the Risk Management Services Branch for Government Services. The Health and Safety Sector works to develop and deliver a comprehensive Health and Safety Program for the Ministry of Government Services and its clients. As a Health and Safety Officer I aim to enhance team effectiveness, enhance branch organization, and promote environmental and occupational health and safety.

The duties which I regularly perform act to accomplish my work objectives. Tasks I perform such as recording minutes, compiling information, or completing and sending memos and reports enhances team effectiveness. I work to enhance organization with general assistance, developing and managing the new health and safety filing system, and creating spreadsheets to effectively track relevant information. Lastly, I work to promote environmental and occupational health and safety in tasks such as conducting and reporting on workplace inspections, researching and developing articles or policies, and compiling statistics on workplace injuries.

My work objectives are primarily fulfilled with skills of analysis, research, communication, and organization. University has developed these skills of mine; however, the hands-on work experience is serving to complete and round-out these (and more) skills and tools which will significantly benefit my future academic and career pathways.

My work term has proven to be extremely beneficial. I am accomplishing my goals to learn about Government careers, develop and enhance skills, and become comfortable in a professional setting outside University. I will continue to strive to provide quality work for Government Services in the second half of my double work term.

Analysis and Discussion

Work Term Placement

I have spent the first half of my double work term at Government Services as a Health and Safety Officer. This Government Services organization, consisting of approximately two hundred employees, “supports government program delivery by providing central support services of accommodation and property management, furnishings and supplies, transportation, purchasing, risk management, records management, telecommunications and mail distribution.”¹ My position falls under the Corporate Support Services sector in the Risk Management Services branch. I work primarily with and for my supervisor who heads Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety and my fellow co-worker who is an Employee Health and Safety Officer. In general, the Risk Management branch provides services to identify and prioritize risk exposures, supply “recommendations on loss prevention and reduction,” manage claims and investigate reported incidents.² The work experience so far has been dynamic, challenging and valuable. My primary work objectives are to enhance team effectiveness, enhance branch organization and promote environmental and occupational health and safety.

Work Term Duties and Objectives

I have worked to enhance team effectiveness by providing assistance to my supervisor and fellow Health and Safety Officer: recording minutes, compiling relevant information and completing and sending out memos, reports or forms. For instance, I have joined my co-worker in conducting numerous workplace inspections, whereby I record observations, complete an

¹ Government of Saskatchewan, “Ministry Overview – Government Services,” <http://www.gs.gov.sk.ca/ministry-overview/> (accessed December 28, 2011).

² Government of Saskatchewan, “Insurance / Risk Management – Government Services,” <http://www.gs.gov.sk.ca/insurance-risk> (accessed December 28, 2011).

inspection checklist, and follow-up by providing a report of recommendations. Furthermore, as a co-op student I offer a positive work ethic and can serve to add a fresh perspective to the team.

My contribution in special projects and general assistance has worked to enhance branch organization. Developing and managing the new Occupational Health and Safety filing system, creating spreadsheets to track incidents and statistics and sorting and classifying documents are among my organizational duties. For instance, I am currently working on various spreadsheets which will track all Government Services workplace incidents including injuries, dangerous occurrences, near misses and damage to property/equipment, for the year 2012. This project will simplify the tracking and documentation of vast information.

Lastly, as a health and safety officer I perform various tasks which promote environmental and occupational health and safety. Conducting and reporting on workplace inspections, researching for occupational health and safety policies and procedures, and compiling statistics for senior management have added to fulfill this work objective. For example, I am continually given various topics on which to develop Government Services policies/procedures or articles for. Some topics that I have addressed are: bat and bird precautions, carpal tunnel syndrome, mercury spills, prescription safety glasses, and carbon monoxide poisoning.

Skills and Tools Required for a Successful Work Term

A dynamic set of skills and tools are required to properly fulfill the job duties of a Health and Safety Officer. To begin with, analytical and research skills are essential: problem solving; interpreting and comprehending relevant information; and assembling ideas, issues and observations into clear and useful explanations. Tasks such as preparing statistics and spreadsheets on WCB claims, or researching for a staff or tenant safety concern require this skill

set. Next, verbal, written and listening (communication) skills are significant in effectively executing job duties, such as following up on workplace inspections or creating health and safety articles. Furthermore, organizational skills—delivering balanced, logical and thorough work—are of particular importance as the Health and Safety Sector shifts to a new filing system and aims to increase accessibility to relevant documents. Finally, it is important for a temporary worker to have strong self-motivation. Both the employer and employee will gain no benefit if the employee does not strive to act as a valuable source of work. A co-op student should have the ultimate goal to gain as much knowledge and experience as possible from the work term. I believe I hold this motivation which drives me to perform to my best abilities and make it worthwhile for both parties.

Work Term Learning Experience

This work term has educated me in many positive ways. Firstly, I have learned a vast amount of practical information about environmental and occupational health and safety; including the fact that occupational health and safety job positions are rapidly increasing in demand. Next, I have discovered the flow of general conduct in a professional setting including communication, time management, and independent work. Additionally, my eyes have been opened to the set up and operations of a government organization. Moreover, my work experience has developed and enhanced skills that will be essential for my future career paths. I am constantly gaining hands-on experience which works to develop the skill sets I am lacking in, such as editing efficiently, communicating comfortably in various forms or operating programs like Microsoft Excel at a more advanced level. I am eager to continue to grow and develop skills and knowledge in the second half of my double work term.

University Preparation for Work Term

The connection of my university experience to my work term lies mainly within the transferable skills I have developed in my studies. My university courses do not relate to health and safety; however, they have prepared me fairly well to perform the role of Health and Safety Officer.

As an Arts student I have produced several research papers, projects, and presentations which require strong organization and analytical skills as information is gathered and compiled in a clear and concise manner. These skills are essential to fulfilling a bulk of my job duties including writing reports and developing policies and procedures. The three online university courses that I have taken have greatly increased my independent-working, time-management and self-motivation skills; the work I perform now calls for these tools to effectively assess issues, determine priorities and commit to development and learning. Furthermore, my academic career has boosted my confidence in taking on new challenges. For instance, starting up Cree 100 or delivering seminars for my Indigenous Studies 338 class required me to step outside of my comfort zone just as the co-op application, interview and job start-up process has. Finally, as a member of the University of Regina Cougar Track and Field team, I understand the value of teamwork. This attribute complements my work objective to enhance team effectiveness for the Risk Management branch.

Of course, my university experience has not entirely prepared me for the work term. While I have developed written-communication skills in school, I do not yet feel fully comfortable and confident in presenting information in various forms. Tasks for my work term such as oral presentations, creating Excel spreadsheets, or writing memos may have been easier to complete had I previously taken any Business and Computer Science courses. Moreover, had I

taken courses relating to health and safety my training at work could have been cut shorter and my input would be more valuable.

Application of Work Term to Future University Courses

On the other hand, my work term has contributed to enhancing missing skills and knowledge. Performing tasks such as writing workplace inspection reports, compiling information on environmental or occupational safety issues, and producing the WCB quarterly report have developed and enhanced my professional communication and Excel operations skills. Further, discussing and presenting ideas and developed work to my supervisor and co-workers has increased my comfort in oral communication. For example, I am currently working on developing a “Green Calendar Challenge” with members of the Government Services Green Team; part of my responsibilities have been to research and present ideas at group meetings. These personal developments will undoubtedly act positively towards success in future university courses, especially as group projects and presentations become more prominent.

Application of Work Term to Future Phases of my Career

Some may be confused as to why I am filling the position of Health and Safety Officer if my area of studies is so disconnected. However, not only has my university experience helped contribute to success in my work term, many aspects of the work term will be valuable in future phases of my career. I strive to eventually have a meaningful career ideally working with or for a government organization. I am gaining knowledge of government processes and procedures and furthermore the general scope of the Saskatchewan Government. Specifically, I have held interest in research and policy-making for future career plans; a large portion of my work tasks include just that. Clearly, my work term connects closely to these ambitions. Moreover, a main objective for Risk Management Services is to protect and enhance lives—to perform sincere

work to help people. This is something I hope to accomplish in my future. Therefore, I am gaining valuable experience in an abstract sense as well. Finally, the experience I am gaining from working in a professional office setting—becoming comfortable with daily operations and work ethic, for example—will prove to be extremely beneficial for future work endeavours. Considering these factors, this work term has reinforced my academic and career goals.

Closing Remarks

Clearly, my work term so far has been a beneficial experience. My job duties have served to develop and enhance many personal skills, as well as benefit the Risk Management Branch. Although I am able to fulfill job duties satisfactorily with the help of my academic history, my position continues to challenge me on many levels. Overall, I am very glad I took the step outside of my comfort zone to join the Co-op program. My work term has been a valuable learning experience, prepared me for future university and career pathways, and reinforced my personal goals.

Works Cited

Government Services - Government of Saskatchewan. Web. 28 Dec. 2011.

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