


David Hughes Memorial Award 2018 Entry

Submitted by:

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Entry Checklist

Placement Organisation Statement	✓
Course/Programme Leader/Tutor Statement	✓
Appendices:	<p>Appendix 1: Programme Leader Statement</p> <p>Appendix 2: Placement Organisation Statement</p> <p>Appendix 3: Photographs taken during my placement</p>

1. Please give a brief overview of your placement, including the host organisation, your role and responsibilities, the length of your placement (Max 750 words):

From the 1st June 2016 to 28th July 2017, I completed a placement at The Cruise Portfolio in London as a Sales and Marketing Assistant. The Cruise Portfolio is a general sales agent (GSA) of, currently, two luxury cruise lines; Crystal Cruises and Paul Gauguin Cruises. Both Cruise Lines have their main office in the USA, and it is The Cruise Portfolio's job to represent the companies in the UK; completing tasks such as reservations, sales and marketing on their behalf. Throughout my placement, Crystal Cruises was always the more time-consuming and most popular cruise line. We represented Crystal Cruises at several events over the year such as the Daily Mail Cruise Show, the Family Travel Show as well as hosting our own events and ship visits whenever one of the ships came to a nearby port. During my time on placement, Crystal Cruises began their adventure into river cruising, winning awards from prestigious magazines such as Travel & Leisure and Conde Nast Traveller (Crystal Cruises, 2018). The other brand that The Cruise Portfolio represents is Paul Gauguin Cruises, a niche 'bucket-list' cruise line that sails year-round in the South Pacific. We worked hard to feature Paul Gauguin Cruises in several magazines over the year, as well as offering the opportunity for familiarisation trips to travel agents making consistent bookings.

My role as a Sales and Marketing Assistant was very diverse. I spent the first few months learning my role with the previous placement student, Bernadette. I settled in very quickly and began to use a software called Mailchimp to create at least three emails a week (two for Crystal Cruises and one for Paul Gauguin Cruises) that were sent out to over three thousand travel agents. It was quite difficult to master a completely new piece of software in such a short timeframe, it was very much learning the basic skills and then finding my own rhythm as my placement went on. I also sent out a lot of marketing material, in the form of brochure requests to potential clients and travel agents as well as within our own on-the-road sales team, whom I had a very tough job of keeping up with! Our sales team visited multiple travel agents across the UK and Ireland providing product training and taking brochures and it was my job to make sure they had the most up to date sheets, offers and various other collateral – which I kept updated myself using Microsoft Word and working with our third-party designer, Graham. I used spreadsheets daily to manage our various databases and to mail merge addresses for mailings and to send clients postcards welcoming them home from their cruise and sending them various offers. I ended up using the spreadsheet data in Microsoft Excel to convert our whole client and agent databases into a new system to better store the information. I created and ran competitions occasionally on top of my usual workload with our travel agent partners such as selfie competitions, social media engagement and cruise-related quizzes and brain-teasers. I spent the final month of my placement training the new placement student, Penny. I ensured everything was tidy and organised for the start of her placement – including creating help sheets for her and creating a schedule to ensure she met everybody involved in the company and understood what they did. I taught her everything that she needed to learn so she too could have a successful placement like mine and found this exercise very fulfilling.

2. What did you expect from your placement(s)? Please tell us about your reasons for choosing to undertake a placement, how you thought it would complement your coursework and how it might shape/has shaped your aspirations for your future career (Max 750 words):

Initially, I was going to apply for study abroad but eventually decided that a placement would be far more beneficial for myself and my course. I chose to undertake a placement as I believed that it would provide me with good, transferable skills when it came to applying for graduate roles in the industry by having industry-relevant experience and a recognisable brand on my CV. I also wanted to gain a better insight into the cruise industry and how it works as I had written an essay on cruising during my second year of university and was really intrigued after completing the research for that assignment. In my heart, I knew I wanted to be involved in the cruise industry as it is a rapidly growing area of travel and by completing a placement in the industry, I was exposed to areas of the industry I did not even know existed as I always thought that the only jobs available were mainly those physically working onboard the ships.

Once I found out that I had gotten my placement, I was over the moon. Obviously, I was very nervous going into a new job with people who were older than me and had a lot more experience than myself. I expected my placement to be full of exciting opportunities in the industry after asking in my interview what the best experience my interviewers have had with the company and they both said that they had

been on spectacular cruises and to industry events. It was exactly what I was looking for in my placement, a varied role with some interaction within the industry itself. I wanted to use my placement to work out what route I wanted to take within the cruise industry for my future career.

Completing my placement in such a rapidly growing industry enabled me to learn a lot about current events in travel and where to look for relevant news and information regarding cruise news and travel in general. I found myself taking notes and thinking that it would be useful to retain this information for when I went back to university to aid with my assignments and it has been. Upon my return to university, I had the opportunity to network with a gentleman from MSC Cruises, and we struck up a really good conversation about cruising in which I relied a lot on my experiences on my placement to have an engaging conversation. Without my placement, I do not think I would have gotten much out of this experience as the knowledge of the industry gained whilst on my placement fuelled discussion and questions that I had and he seemed impressed.

In terms of my future career aspirations, I did not know exactly what I wanted to do within the cruise industry – just that I wanted to be a part of it. I planned on using my placement experience as a chance to find out the different areas of the cruise industry and where I thought I could really excel. After my year of placement was over, I was so sad to be leaving that I realised that it was the perfect job that I had been seeking; an office-based role but still being able to be immersed in the luxury cruise product, trade and consumers equally.

3. What have you learned about destination management in practice? How will your experience enhance your professional skills and complement the theory and principles you have learned during your course? (Max 750 words)

Chose to answer question 4.

4. What skills, processes and practice have you acquired during your placement(s) and how might these be applied in the context of destination management? (Max 750 words)

Throughout my placement year, I have really had my time management skills tested. In October of 2016, I had to take a leave of sickness and when I came back I had to organise my time effectively in order to catch up and ensure that I stayed on top of my various duties. Once I came back, I sat down with my manager and we prioritised all of my outstanding jobs. From then on, I kept this list on my desk and used it whenever I felt like I had a lot of work to do and have passed it on to the next placement student. Another time where my time management skills were tested was towards the end of my placement when I was planning for the arrival of the new placement student and needed to put together her schedule. I had to ensure that all of my usual jobs such as trade emails were completed so I could teach her other tasks included in the job role. I emailed everybody a timetable that I had put together and checked that everyone could do their slot, I also planned over a month in advance so I could schedule trade emails gradually to cover the first few weeks of training. Resulting from planning ahead and putting together a timetable lasting two weeks, I had a schedule that I kept to for training the new placement student and I did not get overwhelmed with my job role whilst completing training. I believe that time management is a vital skill to have in destination management and the travel industry in general, everything changes so quickly and I found the need to be able to adapt rapidly and manage my time effectively in order to get everything done. An example of this during my placement was that I had been completing a lot of marketing for the Crystal River Cruises product, mentioning launch dates that were unfortunately pushed back. I had to send out a copy of our press release to thousands of travel agents, ensuring that everybody was up to date with the launch dates and did not try to advertise the expired dates to their clients. I also had to go through all of our marketing material and update them to have the correct dates, all alongside completing my usual jobs for the week so being able to manage my time was essential.

Communication was another important skill that I really improved over the course of my placement, the first and most frequent one being answering the telephone. My previous jobs were retail related, where I did not have to take phone calls so coming into an office job where I took multiple phone calls in a day was challenging at first as I worried that I would not be able to help. In order to overcome this I tried to pick up the phone as much as possible and soon found myself really comfortable making and taking phone calls. Being able to professionally handle telephone calls is such an important skill in destination management as, beside emails, this is the best and quickest form of communication with clients, tour operators and other businesses. Another experience I have had with improving my communication skills is during ship visits (See Appendix 3, Figures 3 & 4) and events (See Appendix 3, Figures 1 & 2) where I was required to talk to guests of all ages and backgrounds and provide them with information about Crystal Cruises and the ships. This was difficult because half of the people were clients and the other were travel agents and I had to ensure that I spoke in the appropriate manner depending on who I was communicating with. I found that every event that I did, I was able to improve my communication skills more and more and I ended up being able to really work out who I was talking to and change the way I came across in order to impress and provide the relevant information. The confidence in my communication skills really came from learning about the different brands. As I become more confident with the information I needed to provide, I was then able to focus on my delivery therefore being able to communicate in a fluent and professional manner whether I was dealing with telephone communication, email communication or face-to-face communication. This skill is essential within destination management as it is important to be able to adapt the way you communicate with others to remain professional and knowledgeable.

References:

Crystal Cruises (2018). *Crystal Cruises - Awards And Accolades*. [online] Crystalcruises.co.uk. Available at: <http://www.crystalcruises.co.uk/about-us/company-profile/awards> [Accessed 30 Jan. 2018].

Appendix 1: Programme Leader Statement
(Alethea Bradley)

Bethany is a hard working student who embraced the placement opportunity fully. She has a clear idea of what she wants her future career to be, as her time at the Cruise Portfolio has created a true passion for this sector of the industry. Bethany has returned from placement more driven and determined to succeed. She has gained confidence and developed professional skills that are above and beyond those that we can teach in the classroom. Her ability to take charge of a group's project, and her time management and verbal communication skills are now excellent. She is also very confident networking at industry events and starting or contributing to discussion in classroom with her peer group, academics and guest speakers. I fully support her application.

Appendix 2: Placement Organisation Statement
(Elaine Gillard, Sales and Marketing Manager at The Cruise Portfolio)

Bethany was a wonderful addition to the team throughout her placement year at The Cruise Portfolio. She took every opportunity to learn including attending ship visits and hosting her own group; consumer shows and trade events, which increased her knowledge on our cruise lines greatly. Increased knowledge also helped Bethany's confidence grow significantly too. Her work always had a good level of accuracy and she is a really good team player as well as being able to work well on individual tasks. Before she returned to university she wrote various blog posts for us, showcasing all the wonderful activities and options available on our cruise lines. Over the year, Bethany worked hard on improving her time management and prioritising her tasks and it was lovely to see her take a full circle and take responsibility for training our new student in the job role for the last month of her time with us. She really took on the new challenge with determination and really does have a natural ability to train, calmly explaining not only how, but why and giving them space to find their feet while pointing them in the right direction when needed. Bethany is a hardworking and ambitious girl with a great future ahead of her and it was a pleasure having her in my team.

Appendix 3: Photos taken during my placement



Figure 3: Attending the CITA Annual Christmas
Figure 2: Attending the Daily Mail London Cruise Show on behalf of

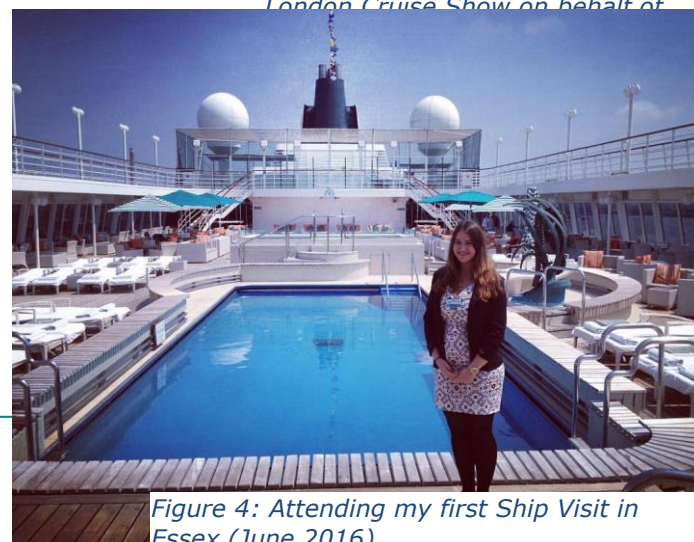


Figure 4: Attending my first Ship Visit in Essex (June 2016)

