

Becoming A Digital Global Engineer



Intellectual Output 7

Script Story 2

Internship - English





Author

Katja Auffret

Lecturer in German, Department of Foreign Languages,

IMT Mines Albi, France

Co-authors

Dr. Tatiana Golikova

Associate Professor, Department of Foreign Languages and Linguistics

Volga State University of Technology, Russia

Marlon Patiño

Lecturer in Spanish, Department of Foreign Languages,

IMT Mines Albi, France

Vilma Sukacke

PhD Student

KTU, Lithuania

Students from Volgatech, Russia, IMT Mines Albi, INSA Toulouse and ISAE Supaéro, France, Bjelovar, Croatia and NTUA, Greece

Becoming A Digital Global Engineer

Script - Story 2 - Internship - English

1

Hello. My name is Daniel. Let me share my first day of internship with you.

I start early. At around 6 am, I have a breakfast that is not really typical for me and which I didn't enjoy much. In the suburbs, where I will now be living for the rest of my internship, there is no bakery where I could buy freshly baked bread and enjoy the breakfast that I had with my family since I was a child. I feel annoyed that I can't stick to my usual habits and will have to get used to eating pre-packaged sliced bread.

To know what has been happening lately, I turn on the TV to watch the local news.

2

People from my internship country were actually discussing a new law passed in my home country about banning plastic, non-biodegradable bags. A journalist was asking locals' opinions on whether they would also like their country to introduce the same law. Some local respondents said that my home country probably passed the law because of some shady business and corruption behind it. I feel confused about locals focusing on something that is very prejudiced instead of showing support to this environmentally-friendly effort. I turn off the TV.

3

The night before, I prepared the itinerary to travel to work from my suburban accommodation by making sure I know the exact route and what public transport to take to get to work on time. It is important to me as I believe that being late on the first day of an internship is not compatible with the work ethics of the company.

I go to the nearest bus stop. 20 minutes later, there is still no bus. I start worrying about making it to work on time.

4

A local woman explains that because of traffic control, buses start running in that particular street only from 11 am, and to catch the bus to reach the city centre, I actually need to walk to the next village. It'll take me ages and I start to run, feeling anxious.

As I finally approach the bus stop, a bus is arriving. I feel immediately relieved. However, the sense of relief rapidly changes into a sense of shock when the bus does not stop to let me on board even though I establish eye contact with the bus driver.

5

I call a taxi which takes ages to arrive and takes me to my new company. But it costs me too much money to be able to do that every day. I have to think of another solution.

Maybe I should have asked a local for help, but I was too shy and too proud.

6



Minutes later, a local person walks up to the bus stop and seeing another bus approach, waves her hand to stop the bus. This is something I was unaware about – to stop a bus you actually need to indicate it with an actual physical signal.

I have to observe better the locals to get to know the habits in this country!

1

I finally arrive at the lobby of the company. I greet the receptionist in the local language and explain that I'm here for my first day of internship. Based on my accent, my slightly different skin tone and hair color, the receptionist immediately assumes that I'm a foreigner, so she responds to me in English.

The receptionist explains that she is not aware of my first day with the company, but tells me that I can go further down the corridor, where I will find a changing room in which I can leave my outdoor clothes, change if needed, and leave any other personal belongings.

2

I feel a bit confused and frustrated that nobody has actually greeted me to show me around. When I get into the changing room, I realise that a lot of coats on the hangers seem to be female garments. I'm wondering if maybe in this company, the majority of engineers are actually female which makes me cringe and think to myself "Women engineers? No way, they don't have any logical thinking! Why can't they stick to raising children or studying something stupid like literature? My mother would never want me to date an engineer – how would a partner like that have time to take care of the household when I'm also away at work?". As I'm exiting the changing room, I bump into a middle-aged man. I smile and, in local language, introduce myself, explain that I'm there for an internship, and ask if someone could show me around.

3

The man replies: "I am not THAT old, why are you talking to me like that?"

I apologize to the new colleague and correct myself.

The colleague takes me to another department and introduces me to the team.

...

5

Around noon, a colleague tells me that they need to have a break called "fika", because the head office of the company that is based in Sweden, promotes it. Fika is seen as a very important part of the working day and a mean for the employees to bond.

In my country, it is unusual to be paid to have breaks during the day. I'm told that not attending the break and informal discussions during them is considered to be weird and even rude. Even though I feel like I would prefer to continue with my work assignments and not to bring them home later, I join my new colleagues on the break.

Everyone is rather intrigued by me and is asking me questions that I feel are too personal, but rude of me not to answer, so I make things up about my life.

6

As the day goes by, I start feeling more comfortable with the work tasks and attend some meetings with the team. I'm very keen on problem solving and want to display my ingenuity, so I suggest some ideas on how some solutions could be implemented to solve the issues discussed.

Later, in the supervisors' team meeting, my colleague briefly presents my idea. However, I feel like some essential parts were left off, which makes my idea sound less innovative and suitable for solving the problem. <break time="2s" />

What should I do?

1

On the way home, I get a phone call from my mother. As she has been slightly ill recently, I feel like I have to pick up the phone. I try to keep my voice low so as not to disturb other passengers. Despite that, another passenger taps my shoulder, thus indicating that picking up the phone in that particular context and discussing personal matters is not really acceptable. I feel very embarrassed because I disturbed the local social norms and because I had to cut off the conversation with my mother.

2

I feel very embarrassed because I went against the local social norms and because I have to cut off the conversation with my mother. The other passenger looks satisfied, which means I did the right thing. But I have to call back my mother very quickly, she's not aware of these rules and won't understand why I cut off the conversation. I hope she won't be angry with me.

3

I understand that in this country, you're not supposed to talk with a loud voice in public spaces, but my mother doesn't feel well at all. I need to talk to her and to give her some advice about medication. The other passenger looks at me as if I murdered somebody. He tells me that if everybody did that, the noise would be unsupportable. And he doesn't want to know about my personal stories. I feel angry and misunderstood.

4

It's raining and I feel very uncomfortable, but I need to talk to my mother, but I didn't want to go against the do's and don'ts in public spaces. It's a long way back home and I don't have a raincoat. I feel I will get sick if I continue like this. It's incredible, even in the street people look at me as if I do something wrong. Am I supposed to talk about private things only when I'm alone at home?

5

My mother doesn't feel well at all. I need to talk to her and to give her some advice about medication. The other passenger looks at me as if I murdered somebody. He tells me that if everybody did that, the noise would be unsupportable. And he doesn't want to know about my personal stories. I feel angry and misunderstood. It's a special situation and everybody doesn't experience that. If he doesn't want to listen to my conversation, he could just walk away.

6

As I was so disturbed by the upset man, I didn't pay attention to the bus stops and I missed my stop. At the next stop, I went off the bus and found myself lost in unfamiliar surroundings. Suddenly I spotted another bus stopping on the other side of the street, so I rushed up to the bus driver and asked when the next bus back to my usual stop would come, using my basic language knowledge. Now, unlike in my mother tongue, this country's language has two ways of addressing people, one more polite than the other. Not thinking that a bus driver was someone you had to be extra formal with, I used the easier, less formal way of address, which upsets the bus driver enormously and I was very rudely yelled at for not speaking correctly.

1

I was very disappointed, I think it was very unfair of the bus driver; I was at least trying to speak in the local language. and for the rest of the internship my motivation to learn the local language was markedly lower. I think I'll never have the level to speak this complicated language correctly, so I used English to communicate.

2

The bus driver didn't recognize I was not a local, which made me very proud. He was just upset because a lot of young people don't respect him. He gave me the link to the time table for the bus I needed and I came home 15 minutes later.

3

It quickly became a very unfriendly discussion and people started to stop and listen to the conversation. An elder man said that it was very disrespectful to talk like this to a bus driver who was just doing his job and that I, especially as a stranger, had to respect the locals and use formal language. I finally just walked away and for the rest of the internship I was less interested in meeting locals.

4

This bad experience reminded me another unpleasant situation. In the company, where I spent my internship, was a union meeting which I attended to know how the unions work in this country.

The local union representative provided valuable information about our rights and obligations in the company and the laws here. She seemed very nice and after the information, I approached her to ask some follow-up questions. I walked up to her and said (using the easier and more familiar form of address in the local language): "Hey, can I ask you something?" She just gave me a cold look, and said, "I assume you are not from here", before leaving. I was stunned.

5

Then, the same thing happened when I tried to ask my N+2 about some instructions for an assignment. The looks he gave me were like daggers coming out of his eyes. He just answered "no" and left. When I complained to local friends, they could not understand how I could be so rude. Me – rude?!



Where I am from, you are on a first name basis with almost everyone, including doctors, directors, government officials, and all sorts of strangers. I would assume that the union representative would be aware of that since there were often international interns in the company; the director certainly seemed to be aware that I was not a local intern and should have taken that in account if I used the wrong word, so I do not really see what the problem was. I certainly didn't feel very welcomed after that! <break time="2s" />

How should I react?

6

They ask me if I ever heard about Hofstede and the different dimensions. There is a dimension about horizontal and vertical hierarchy and in this country, the hierarchy is vertical. This means that you can't address people in the same way depending on their position.

1

They are still offended and ask me to go to another person to get explanations. I can't understand why they don't accept that foreigners act in a different way. I stop asking questions to people in a higher position and only ask my local friends if I need information.

2

I don't think I have to adapt to all the rules and norms in this country. The locals also have to accept that I am different and there are other ways to communicate. Why should I fall on my knees to ask a question? But I experience that this position leads to an exclusion and that my boss doesn't give me any interesting work anymore. If I want my internship to be validated, I might have to think about this point of view.

3

I read through Hofstede's dimensions and I start to understand much better. Even if this is a bit stereotypical, there are different cultures and you have to respect the basic rules if you want to be accepted. I try to keep that in mind and try to adapt, without betraying my inner convictions. It's important not to reduce the locals to their stereotypes, but to know about their culture and tradition.

4

But let's go back to my experiences in the company as an intern. I was passionate, because my company developed applications using artificial intelligence. Despite the obvious difficulties in creating full-fledged artificial intelligence, successes in this field are quite noticeable and incredibly fast. The police and special services are already using drones from my company for surveillance, and the range of their equipment is certainly not limited to video cameras and thermal imagers. I was enthusiastic about all the possibilities and worked hard to help to develop applications.

But one day, a local friend of mine asked if I didn't think that it is important to maintain some kind of control over your privacy in our personal or professional life?<break time="2s" />

I started thinking about it.

5



As “a law-abiding person”, I have nothing to fear in any case. Anyway, it’s not possible to protect your confidential information using the internet, and I can’t imagine not using the Internet anymore.

I don’t think the government or one of the GAFAs is interested in knowing more about the books or films I like.

6

Especially if there is the possibility of some intrusion into my personal/professional sphere without my knowledge or control. It is crucial for me to maintain some kind of control over my privacy in my professional life.

I might be influenced (like it happened already when it comes to voting) or even manipulated. I might not want my boss to know about my political opinions or my sexual orientation which might lead to discrimination, especially in this country where I don’t know all the social norms.

1

The government (police/ legislative bodies) should be allowed to maintain some kind of control over my privacy in my personal or professional life if there is some serious reason for it for the security of the population for example. In this case, it is also appropriate for me if some officials at work try to control my personal privacy. As I’m working in the artificial intelligence field, I could be someone who tries to use this internship to develop malicious apps.

2

But when I tried to discuss these subjects with my colleagues, it was really difficult to understand what their opinion was. They would agree with me most of the time and never have an opposite opinion. But I knew that some of the former colleagues of this company quit because they did not agree on the politics concerning artificial intelligence of the company. It was of course pleasant to think that everybody had the same opinion as I had, but I had more and more the impression that it wasn’t true.

3

To know more about business cultures, I read Erwan Henry’s book : “Business cultures across the world: a practical guide” and I stumbled over a sentence :” There are 6 ways to say ‘yes’ in Thai and 13 different kinds of smiles, making a total of 78 meanings for ‘yes’ with a smile....”. When I read this, I immediately thought of the discussions I had with my colleagues and said to myself that this could be the same in this culture. But how to find out if this was true?

4

I tried, but the more I insisted, the more people felt agressed and avoided being with me. They wanted to have positive relationships at work and being forced to do something without doing it as a favor wasn’t pleasant for them.

In my country, we get down to the point quickly and I found it rather time consuming and annoying to need to invest so much time to get a reliable opinion or information.



5

I started talking more often about subjects my colleagues addressed rather than me addressing taboo subjects. I observed and tried to find out if there were also different types of smile, indicating approval or objection. I participated in events organized by the company and established friendly relationships with some of them. In my country, we rather get down to the point directly and I understood that getting to know peoples opinion needs much more investment and time here.

6

The end of my internship was approaching quickly. I started feeling at home in this new country where I learnt so much. It was really hard sometimes, but I reflected a lot and I think I do have what they call a “growth mindset” now. I’m open to new things, observe, take risks and understand my own culture much better now. I have also taken a step back concerning my culture and know what is important to me and where I can accept differences. I’m ready for the next adventure.

Don't forget to read the situations in the catalogue of critical incidents. They are real situations told by alumni from KTH in Sweden. There are a lot of open questions... What is your personal answer?