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Introduction: The Internship

My primary motivation for choosing this specific internship was the opportunity to work in radio journalism. I have always enjoyed radio broadcasting, which was also the first subject I picked when I started to study journalism in Bratislava for my bachelor degree. Over the years I have gained more perspective, thanks to my job experience in different newsrooms (not necessarily radio ones) and I have discovered another passion of mine – podcasting. Therefore from the beginning of my search for an internship, I was sure I want to work in radio and preferably for a broadcaster where I can get my own space on air and start creating my portfolio. During my time doing the MA degree I have also realized that I am not very fond of the work on hard news. I am interested in current events, however looking back at my time interning in different media outlets showed me that it is not something I want to do as a profession. The main reason was the feeling of being ‘consumed’ by all the information and instead of feeling joy and relaxation when doing my work, I found myself being stressed out or upset quite often. That is why I tried to focus on a search for different types of news outlets.

Another important issue when choosing my internship was the networking opportunity it offers. As I mentioned, I’d like to see myself working in podcasting, entertainment and music one day and therefore I tried to look for an outlet with lots of independent DJs, music producers and specialists with connections to the music scene in Europe, which Barcelona City FM definitely is.

To sum up, my motivation, therefore, was to work in a newsroom, where I could have my own time on air and therefore I could start creating my radio portfolio. I wanted to learn how to handle work with different types of software and the mixing desk, which are necessary skills in order to work in radio journalism. I also wanted to improve my skills in audio and video editing and get a better perspective on the work in a small radio outlet, where you have to be able to manage more than just one specific department. As I explain later, my expectations were met.

About the radio station

Barcelona City FM is the only English-speaking radio station in Barcelona and it covers the area of the city and partially the area of Badalona and L'Hospitalet de Llobregat as well. The radio was established in 2015 and it provides great musical selection, news on hour, studio
interviews, remote interviews, social media management and a news website/blog focused on current events.

The radio office consists of five people who are here on a daily basis and they organize the financial side, advertising, interview bookings and everything else connected to the radio work. Aside from these people (or simply ‘the office team’) there are approximately 65 DJs who come to the radio on a weekly basis or broadcast their shows remotely from their homes or from other studios in Spain or abroad. A part of these shows (mostly the ones which are broadcast live from our studio) are talk shows, news shows, lifestyle shows etc. Another part consists of music-based shows (with a DJ mixing the music live, often video streaming as well) and of course, part of the shows combine both talking and music.

My main role at the radio station was acting as a producer for ‘drivetime’ shows (weekdays from 5 PM to 9 PM), as a radio host and as a production assistant. In the beginning of my internship I had a chat with my boss about the new format that is being made for drivetime shows and my role was to be the producer for all these shows (there were 10 of them in total, 2 per day). Besides this I was helping in the production process of other shows made in our studio, I co-hosted one show and hosted my own show once per week.

The meetings of the radio staff were every day. We usually talked first thing in the morning and discussed four main parts of the radio – shows, advertising, events and finances. I was mainly responsible for the shows and events, however, I occasionally helped with advertising and financing as well. As the office team was fairly small and we did not all work at the same time (the second intern, Laura, and I tried to cover different parts of the day), there were sometimes only three people in the meeting. Because of this, the meetings looked more like a small group brainstorming, where I had lots of space to express my ideas, pitch my own stories and propose solutions for any problems that would occur. It several times even happened that the meeting was a just one-on-one conversation with my boss, which was always very helpful, because I had more space to express my ideas and get a direct feedback.

Barcelona City FM focuses on several different areas. Firstly, of course, it is a news outlet and it provides news on the hour, especially focused on the news events in Catalonia. This focus was also one of the reasons why I chose Barcelona City FM as my internship provider. The current political situation in Catalonia helped me to get an insight into politics of a different country that I wasn’t particularly interested in or knowledgeable about before. I find this ability to quickly pick up information and research a political events in a whole new country
really important for my future career. Besides news, Barcelona City FM provides soft news, interviews and music, which requires radio hosts (including me) to obtain a certain level of interviewing skills but also to develop knowledge about particular topics they want to include in their shows.

My tasks

During my three month internship in Barcelona City FM, I had an opportunity to try different jobs on the radio and explore which jobs I enjoy and which I don’t. However, I had several tasks which were my primary responsibility for the whole length of the internship. These tasks were: producing drivetime shows, hosting my own show once a week, co-hosting another show once a week, following current events, helping with event organization and recording voiceovers for different advertising campaigns. In this part of the report, I will describe these tasks in more detail.

Producing

Radio producing was my primary and the most important task. The timeslot I was producing was the drive time, every weekday from 5 PM to 9 PM, which was also the peak hour of the radio, audience-wise. Before I started with the task, this timeslot wasn’t specifically organized or united. Therefore, my main task was to help to plan a new format for the shows which would apply to all the shows in this timeslot. We’ve been brainstorming about the ideal format for few days and eventually created a sketch of what the shows should look like.

Drivetime has 10 shows, 2 two-hour show every time. Some of these shows are done in the studio and consist of both talk and music. Some are remote and more focused on music. Therefore, my task was to organize all shows in order to create a unified set of shows, out of which every one is special, however, they have some common features. The task has started with familiarizing myself with all shows, the DJs and hosts, their visions, ideas and the way they do the shows. After this, I’ve started to approach them and communicate the new ideas, such as unified music playlist and pre-prepared weekly features in the shows. Most of them were happy to get more attention from the management, however, several times I had to make compromises, especially when it came to a music selection restrictions, where DJs had to play music out of pre-made playlists, instead of making their own musical selection.

After two or three weeks of initial planning I have finalized the drivetime schedule, everybody was introduced to the idea and had instructions what to do. During the course of
next three months, I’ve been mostly working during these hours, making sure that the DJs and hosts are sticking to the format of shows, that the right music, right commercials and the right news are playing, making sure that everything in the studio is set correctly, preparing the studio before every show, organizing video streaming and problem-solving on the spot. Part of this job was also working on advertising and promoting the drivetime slot.

Before I started to work on this time slot, the shows were unorganized and every DJs was deciding what format the show would have, how much talk and music ratio there is, what music is playing on air etc. After the formatting of the show, a certain structure was created. For example, every show needed to have several weekly features, which were always the same (we did, for example, a 5 minute improvisation comedy game on one show, another show had ‘weekly French hip-hop selection’ etc) and DJs needed to prepare for them. The talk was restricted to 3 minutes without a guest and 5 minutes with the guest and the links between songs were done at particular times, instead of whenever. Also a music playlist was provided, so it could reach a wider audience (not only genre-specific as it was before).

Overall, I’d say I was pretty successful when applying this new format. However, it was challenging to try to manage every aspects of someone’s show and there were definitely several examples where I was not able to apply everything as it was supposed to, for example allowing talks a little bit longer than they were supposed to be etc. However, in general, the new drive time format was successful, because it’s main point was to boost the audience engagement and create a certain audience habit and we have succeeded in that (according to statistics).

Hosting/ co-hosting

During my stay in Barcelona City FM, I also had an opportunity to host my radio show and co-host one of the drivetime shows. My show (Monday Mimosas) was aired live on Mondays from 11 AM to 1 PM. The job included: coming early to the studio, setting up the mixing desk, controlling microphones, setting up the video stream, recording audio, preparing jingles, commercials and news, interviewing and handling the mixing desk during the show and then making sure the studio is prepared for the next show.

I have organized the promotion of the show using the radio’s social media platforms, but the content of the show was my responsibility. I usually interviewed guests who had something to do with ecology, fitness or health (which was my niche), however during some of the shows, I
just did the show by myself and focused on the music selection. I chose this content because I wanted to have a wider selection of guests. Because I just moved to Barcelona and didn’t have a network created yet, I figured that ‘lifestyle and health’ is an easy option and since I am interested in fitness and nutrition myself, it was a good choice. Of course, I sometimes had troubles multitasking and there has occasionally been a few second silence on the air 😊

However, before the shows, I had an intensive training weekend, which consisted of 12 hours of learning how to do live broadcasting, therefore I felt quite confident from the very beginning.

On Tuesdays from 5 PM to 7 PM I co-hosted a comedy drive time show Technically Funny. I’ve been co-hosting the show on the top of producing it, so it was sometimes hard to focus on broadcasting and production at the same time, because they both demand full focus. Therefore sometimes I would find myself going over talk time I set up for the shows, for example. However, after two or three tries it has become easier to handle both at the same time.

**News**

Barcelona City FM focuses on current events in Catalonia as well. Therefore during the length of my internship, I was responsible for researching news and staying updated with current events in the Catalan capital. This was quite a satisfying but also a challenging task, because I did not have much background knowledge about the situation in Barcelona before I got here, so I had to research the history of Catalonia on my own in order to understand current events. Overall, I think I have succeeded in this task. I tried to avoid political commentary but if it was necessary for other shows I was usually able to follow their talk and understand the issue.

I was focused on the news writing mostly in the first few weeks or my internship. I had researched my fair share of contemporary Catalan issues, but also world events and wrote approximately one article per day. However, as the studio work and the drivetime production got more time-demanding, my co-intern had started to focus more on news writing, while I was focusing on what’s happening on air. It was an interesting challenge because I don’t particularly enjoy neither writing nor hard news, however, I consider it important to do a bit of something I don’t like as well as doing what I enjoy doing. However, I have to say that I did not build a more positive approach towards news writing during my internship.
Events organizing

Another job was helping out with events the radio organized. There were usually several types of events – business networking events, radio training and music events. I have mostly worked on music events promotion (creating commercials, managing the social media etc), which was one of my favourite things about the job and also one of the reasons why I chose this outlet. The event organization usually consisted of communication with the bar or club, with the DJs and working on promoting the event.

Voiceovers

My favourite part of the internship was creating voiceovers for the radio and for clients. This was usually done after signing a new contract with a client, who paid for radio advertisement. Then my job was to write the commercial, record it in the studio and edit the recording so it is ready to be played on the radio.

Of course, during three months I have tried lots of different tasks, such as video recording and editing, communicating with clients and so on. However, the tasks described above were the main and most re-occurring ones. Other tasks such as video editing, setting up the interviews and handling the camera were less common, however I got certain level of training in those areas as well.

Supervision

The supervision during my internship was very thorough. As I mentioned before, Barcelona City FM is quite a small media outlet and therefore I was in everyday contact with my internship supervisor. I was able to ask any questions during my stay and I have to say that I definitely learned a lot. As mentioned before, I obtained a training in radio broadcasting, studio work and technical work and I’ve gained more experience with social media work, event organization and an insight into different parts of radio organization.

Usually, I would be in almost constant touch with my internship supervisor. If we worked the same shift, I was able to ask anything I needed (such as asking for help with software, organization of the radio schedule and so on), and if not then we were still communicating and making sure everything runs smoothly. I was usually asked to follow and observe when there was some technical issue and there was a need to check the settings / fix a software/ change some cables in the studio etc. I found this especially helpful, because over the course
of three months I either fixed or observed how to fix dozens of different possible issues with radio broadcast, which definitely helps me to feel more confident in the studio.

During the time when I was on the air, I had constant technical support as well. I could either ask or text my boss, however, I liked the fact that also all the DJs and hosts were connected in both Facebook group and WhatsApp group, so there was always an option of ‘brainstorming’, which was very refreshing and helpful.

We also stayed in touch during the weekend and out of my working hours, just in case there would be some issue with streaming.

The supervision from my university was good as well. I sent a journal entry every week and my supervisor answered all my questions. At the beginning of the internship, we had a Skype call where we talked about my visions and plans for this internship. We agreed to Skype again in the middle of the internship, however, we did not. But I didn’t see this as a problem at all, because my internship was well organized and all my questions were answered promptly and carefully, therefore there was no actual reason for another Skype call.

Evaluation

During my internship, I’ve been able to apply the video and audio editing skills I have obtained during my master’s. This was very helpful because I had only a basic knowledge of audio editing before I started my master and here it turned out to be an especially useful skill to have. Beside this, I have definitely used my researching skills that came in useful when writing news articles and the interviewing skills I have obtained during my studies.

The skills I did not obtain during my master but I have caught up with during my internship were technical skills. During my master’s we only had little time to learn more about work on a mixing desk, about different streaming software and the ‘magic’ behind live broadcasting (TV or radio). On the other hand, I do understand these skills are not necessarily journalistic and they would be redundant for lots of people who are not particularly interested in radio or TV journalism.

The master course was, therefore, more abstract and wide, while my internship was very specific – which was something I expected and I enjoyed the balance between these two.

When it comes to a personal and professional development, this internship did a great deal for me. Before I started my master, I worked in several media outlets in Slovakia, because I did
my bachelor’s in journalism. However, in these jobs, I had more specific tasks and less responsibility. In Barcelona City FM I have been one of the crucial people for the smooth organization of the radio work. In the beginning, I had to overcome the feeling that I have only been in the company for a few days and I am supposed to produce shows for people who did this for a much longer time. However, it didn’t last long before I realized that lots of people who only come once in a week actually have fewer skills than I did since I was in radio full time. So it helped me to feel more self-confident about my abilities and the academic background I have. The other issue we specifically worked on was the assertiveness because I am generally a person who is not great at arguments or simply in telling people what to do. Because these were essential parts of my job, I had to make constant progress on that.

Also, I have developed a solid network of people who work in media, podcasting and music that I can work with in the future. I have decided that I will move to Barcelona again after summer, and this is one of the reasons why. I am not particularly looking for a 9 to 5 media job, but I would like to start my own business in podcasting and news industry, so I think these connections will be very helpful.

Overall, I think I have fulfilled the goals I set for myself in my internship plan. I have tried working in all different departments of the radio and I learned the skills I have not obtained at my degree. Comparing my internship plan and this journal entry makes me feel like this internship was a good choice and I have reached my goals.

Conclusion(s) & Recommendations

I haven’t really noticed anything that should be improved about my internship. The workload was very demanding and required being non-stop present and alert. I would often receive messages from either my boss or from DJs during weekends or late evenings because the shows were usually running until 1 AM. This required me to have my phone on me at all times and be able to answer any questions at any times. However I did not find this particularly troublesome, because there were always at least two or three people who were able to reply to the person, so I didn’t have the full responsibility.

In general, I have enjoyed my time in Barcelona City FM. I learned a great set of skills, created a solid network of people with the same interests who could be potentially helpful in my future career and found a place I would like to come back to and work for in the future. I definitely recommend Barcelona City FM as an internship provider, however, it is important
to have a very strong interest in radio because the internship included much more than just a journalistic experience.
Appendix A: Radio Shows

As mentioned in the report, during my internship in Barcelona City FM I have host a show on Monday Morning. I have uploaded some of the shows on MixCloud.com. Here are the links with description:

16/04/2018
Monday Mimosas on Business Inovations Trends Event and a world of fashion.

09/04/2018
Monday Mimosas on popular neuroscience with Iris Stracke.

19/03/2018
Monday Mimosas on zero-waste life with Doris Knickmeyer
Appendix B: Voiceover work

During my internship I have written, recorded and producer several commercial spots that were airing on the radio. Here I provide several examples:

Commercial for Charlotte, Luxembourg:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/wsqw38xx4a6azh4/Luxembourg%20Charlotte%20Commercial_mixdown.mp3?dl=0

Commercial for 2Monkey Comedy Club:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/z85wthmkc7i0gk1/Sitges%20Commercial_mixdown.mp3?dl=0

Commercial for concert of Tori Sparks:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/1yoj310u128vb32/Torimixdown_mixdown.mp3?dl=0

Commercial for Yays.com:
https://www.dropbox.com/s/i0sb9fl2mtr8rz1/Yays%20mixdown.mp3?dl=0