



The Internship Experience at Primera

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Igniting a Positive Career Outlook

By: Ruben Martin Jr.

As a college student, an internship is an important factor in determining if your career of choosing translates well from the classroom into the workplace. It's where students gain firsthand experience and better judgment on what their strengths and weaknesses are as an individual. Primera's founding principles of Quality, Teamwork, Integrity, and Balance has helped create a work environment that is both inviting and joyful to work in. Throughout my summer internship, these ideals have presented themselves in some form or fashion, and have reinforced that the Primera of today is just as driven, if not more than, the Primera from 1987.

Learning who you want to be, regardless of what stage of life you're in, is always a difficult task. This situation is encountered in the most critical and simplistic of situations. For students, the most critical decision is choosing which major to pursue, and the career path you ultimately envision yourself in down the line. Prior to this summer, I knew I wanted to be a civil engineer for quite some time but was uncertain about my future role. I had been stricken with bad luck in previous positions and did not experience or immerse myself in an environment that I felt could be my future. That changed the summer I interned for Primera.

The people at Primera are what makes the company special. As an intern you come in with cautious optimism, not knowing what to expect because most projects being done cannot be taught in a classroom. Instead of being hesitant and doubting myself and my work capabilities, I have the peace of mind that my colleagues are my support system and are there to help me grow as part of a team. While working on projects, I heard meaningful conversations between Primera and their partners and was impressed by the strong communication link between them. While producing Notices of Utility Work Orders and Maintenance of Traffic designs, I improved on the quality of my work because I was able to have open, in-person conversations with my coworkers, allowing for fantastic constructive feedback. Every employee is a people person and for someone who is learning how to design technical reports and drawings, it's a lifesaver. I can learn, write down, and discuss what it is that I can improve on and implement it when I went back to my desk. My level of organization also improved the quality of my work. Writing down important information in meetings, 1-on-1's, or chats, is important because more likely than not, that tip or step will come up again on a different project.

As project deadlines neared, the importance of teamwork increased. Helping my coworkers get tasks done in the right manner felt rewarding. It was a collective

achievement and learning process as we grew to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses while picking each other up when someone needed support. It improved the integrity of the group as everyone was able to trust one another in getting their part completed and if not, they would seek guidance in order to reach that goal.

At Primera, balancing my work and personal life was not very difficult either. During my internship I not only balanced the Primera workload, but I was also taking five credit hours at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, all while living an hour away from the office. Even with all of that, I was not worn out because I woke up excited to go to work each day and make an impact, knowing I could work at my own pace and be productive.



2019 Summer Intern Meet & Greet event.
Ruben is pictured third from the left.

Primera has established an environment that can rival any other with their prioritization of making connections that mimic a family. Through this approach, I know what I envision myself doing in my career. I've gained more knowledge on designing in MicroStation, collaborating with engineers in ProjectWise, and refining my Excel skills. While doing so, I practiced and improved my technical communication skills, a trait that is invaluable to young engineers like myself.

As I reflect on what I have accomplished this summer, I am astounded. There are many projects that I never would have thought

I would be a part of, let alone learn and support the tasks that helped complete those projects. Without the dedication and patience that our team of engineers have for one another, I don't believe we would have been able to accomplish as much as we did. Most importantly, that spark of being able to make a mark is what I looked for and I believe to have found here. Ultimately, Primera has allowed me to be a true engineer throughout my internship and for that I am forever grateful. They are a close-knit group of hardworking people who are open to helping others - something that is very hard to find as both an employee and a client.

About the author

Ruben Martin Jr.

Transportation Engineer and former Primera Intern

Ruben was a Structural Engineering Intern in Primera's Transportation group throughout the summer of 2019. During his internship he assisted in project design work spanning across multiple divisions including Transportation and Utilities. Ruben recently graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is now an entry level Transportation Engineer with us. He plans to take the Fundamentals in Engineering (FE) exam in 2020 and pursue his Master's degree in the near future.



Coming Back for More

By: Cooper Galuza

After my sophomore year of college, I decided to start looking for a summer internship position. After applying and interviewing with a few companies, I landed a job at a rigging company, mostly working on Computer Aided Design (CAD). While the work was interesting, I knew I wanted to gain a different type of experience. So, when the following summer approached, I decided to open up my options and apply to a few engineering firms, Primera being one of them. I was soon given the opportunity for a phone interview and was invited to come to their Chicago office for an in-person interview the following week.

Before even stepping into the office, the Primera team caught my attention with how organized and helpful they were. While most companies that I had interviewed with just gave me a time and a place to show up, Primera told me exactly how to find their office, where to go when I arrived, and who I would be meeting with during specific time slots. They even told me the best way to get to their office from where I lived. I was both surprised and impressed with their attention to detail and the care they portrayed toward a potential intern.



2018 Summer Intern Meet & Greet event.
Cooper is pictured top row center.

On the day of my interview, I took the train into the city and made the short walk from the train station to their office (only a few blocks). As I walked into the office, I was greeted at the front desk and reminded of what my interview schedule for the day was. My visit started with a tour of the office, where I saw the spacious conference rooms, tons of natural light streaming in from the large windows, and a fantastic view. I interviewed with several employees in thirty-minute increments, and felt very comfortable talking to them, rather than intimidated like I had in previous interviews. For these reasons, I knew Primera was a top choice for me, and I was ecstatic when I received an offer.

When my first day finally arrived, I was welcomed with open arms by everyone on the Transportation team. Throughout every project and assignment, I was given

detailed instructions and was encouraged to ask questions when I didn't understand something. The pod-style layout of the office provided me with quick access to three people I could turn to for help as well. Also, the employees at Primera are not only friendly when it comes to work, but it is also a great social environment. Things like going out to lunch together, organized give-back events, and happy hours in the office make Primera a closely-knit group and made me look forward to going to work every day. The next thing I noticed as my internship continued was Primera's commitment to quality work. I quickly learned the importance of attention to detail and getting things done right the first time, rather than putting in half-effort and having to fix errors. I was also impressed by the QA/QC process that Primera follows, which involves multiple rounds of backchecks before submitting a final product. Their commitment to quality work is what gives Primera its great reputation in the engineering industry and is why I quickly became proud to tell people about the company I worked for.

I was also very pleased at the fact that my coworkers listened to my feedback. As an intern, I expected to be working on busy work or mundane tasks, but this wasn't the case at all. I was often asked what jobs I was interested in working on, which allowed me to work toward my goals and interests. This made me realize that I was not just there to help the company get work done, but also to learn about what I enjoyed and become a better engineer in the process.

Another important quality I found in Primera is their flexibility. As a college student, I had some obligations and plans over the summer. Whether it was driving back to Missouri to move apartments, a family vacation, or leaving early for a doctor's appointment, Primera always gave me the time off that I needed. Their one requirement was that I let them know well ahead of time when I had to take days off. Because of this policy, I learned to be accountable and well-organized. As the summer came to an end, I was offered a position for the following summer, but while wanting to keep my options open, I

had a few phone interviews with other firms before formally accepting. However, after doing a lot of research and asking questions, I realized that none of the other companies offered the full package that Primera does. The friendly work environment, commitment to quality work, willingness to accept feedback, and their flexibility makes it a one-of-a-kind place. Therefore, coming back to Primera for a second summer was a no-brainer. And as expected, it was everything a student could have asked for in an internship and a great way to build my resume.

About the author

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Civil Engineer and former Primera Intern

Cooper was a Civil Engineering Intern at Primera for two subsequent summers from 2018-2019, including working with us during his winter breaks. He graduated from the University of Missouri-Columbia in December 2019 with a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and is currently working as an entry level Civil Engineer for Sargent & Lundy.

