Financial Advisor Internship

This past summer I had the distinguished opportunity to be a Financial Advisor Intern with Edward Jones. I was placed in Mr. Gregg Nichols’ Edward Jones office of Nacogdoches, Texas. The internship provided me with the ability to gain real world experience while furthering my education for a professional career in the years to come. In addition, I was able to learn the culture and structure of Edward Jones as a firm. The internship program had a set curriculum in which I participated in client meetings, an inactive client campaign, a branch efficiency campaign, plan and conduct a branch seminar, conducted a community survey and prepared mock presentation of stocks, mutual funds and bonds. In addition, my host Financial Advisor had me engage in a firm consolidation campaign, a five star client campaign as well as conduct basic branch support activities.

Edward Jones aims to serve serious long-term individual investors who are dedicated to implementing an appropriate financial plan for their unique circumstances. The financial advisor of his or her choice will treat each client personally because Edward Jones puts the client above all else. The firm believes in long-term investments. Not buying and selling stock for each client on a daily basis. Edward Jones is a unique financial firm in the fact that it is a privately owned partnership. Therefore, the firm has the ability to make decisions that are best for their clients and the firm instead of concentrating on their price on the stock market. There are over 11,000 Edward Jones
offices across the United States including some in Candida with their headquarters residing in St. Louis, Missouri (Jones).

An Edward Jones office consists of a Branch Office Administrator (BOA) and a Financial Advisor. Technically each is an employee of Edward Jones in the aspect that they file a W-2 tax form each year. However, each Financial Advisor is given the task of building their client base and bringing assets into the firm. In a sense, each branch is viewed as the Financial Advisor’s business with the BOA and Edward Jones providing the basic office support. Each financial advisor’s pay is based off commission. The percentage of commission depends on the advisor. Some advisors have been with Edward Jones long enough to become practicing partners in the business and, therefore, make a larger percentage commission. Edward Jones designates their advisors with levels (1-10). Their level depends on past performance of new assets into the firm and amount of gross commission. Also, Edward Jones breaks down their offices into Areas and then Regions. Each Region has a leadership structure with a Regional Leader, and Level Coaches all of which are volunteer financial advisors who dedicate time to coaching lower level financial advisors to ensure their success. This was an encouraging aspect of the firm. The fact that other financial advisors were interested in each others success at no direct benefit to them.

Each day of the internship I had a quick ten-minute meeting with my host financial advisor to review the assigned tasks for the day and personal goals. This ensured my host financial advisor and me that I was actively working toward a set goal that was helpful to Edward Jones and myself. The ten-week curriculum given by Edward Jones allowed for flexibility based on the host financial advisors needs.
During my internship I spear headed an inactive client campaign. The campaign involved compiling a list of inactive clients (those client who had not had any activity on their accounts for the past four months) and contacting them by phone in order to set an appointment with my host financial advisor. This ensured that Mr. Nichol’s branch was keeping contact with all his clients and was aware of their current financial situation. In addition to contacting inactive clients, I also took part in a branch efficiency campaign. The branch efficiency campaign involved promoting online account access and e-delivery of monthly statements. In an attempt to become more transparent Edward Jones recommends that each client have access to his or her account online. Also, Edward Jones is attempting to cut down on the cost and economic waste of paper. Therefore, e-delivery of monthly statements or emailed statements is highly recommended to their clients.

The internship provided the opportunity to plan and conduct a branch seminar. Seminars are a great tool that Edward Jones suggests its financial advisors use at least on quarterly basis. They provided the financial advisor the ability to see a large group of their clients while educating them on current market or products. The seminar that I had the privilege of planning was a product partner seminar with Lincoln Financial Group over perspective income. The seminar took place at the end of July; therefore, the seminar was presented to clients and prospects as an end of summer BBQ featuring Scott Leonard of Lincoln Financial Group. The seminar was held at a local rustic city owned venue and a local BBQ establishment catered. I sent invitations to 108 clients, made the venue reservations, catering, and coordination with the product partner. 23 clients attended the seminar along with 2 prospective clients deeming the seminar a complete success.
During week eight of my internship Edward Jones had me complete a community survey. The survey was in no way used by Edward Jones other than to evaluate how I conducted myself with the public. This community survey included 8 general questions about the community in which my internship took place, Nacogdoches, Texas. I was required to complete a total of 75 surveys during the one week. Residences and businesses were open to the survey. I personally set a goal to complete 20 surveys a day. This was by far the most difficult week of the internship. Many at Edward Jones referred to this week of the internship as the gut check week. Door knocking can be a rollercoaster of emotions. I had people shut the door in my face but other people invite me into their home for coffee. This was the strenuous test that Edward Jones wanted to ensure if I could pass if I wanted a chance at employment after graduation. During the week I knocked on at total 226 doors 50 of which denied the opportunity to complete the survey and 86 houses had nobody home. By the end of the week I had 90 completed surveys 80 of which were residences and 10 being local businesses. I mainly focused on residences due to their more difficult nature.

At the time of my internship Edward Jones had launched a campaign to consolidate old retirement mutual funds that were held by the mutual fund companies into firm held assets. The reasoning for this move was to better track the complete performance of that fund within the Edward Jones system allowing its financial advisors the ability to better serve their clients. This did not incur any extra cost on the client. Therefore, my host financial advisor had me contact clients with mutual funds held at the fund company whose values were greater than $5,000. The initial contact was to schedule an appointment with the financial advisor. After making such an appointment I would
prepare the proper paper work to transfer the mutual funds into the firm for the client to sign during their appointment.

Edward Jones has a star system in place that allows the firm to track how they are serving their clients. The stars are based on the services the clients are receiving and/or have been offered. For example there is a financial foundation star that requires the clients goals, risk tolerance and a printed portfolio all be completed within the last two years. Clients with four and five stars are considered deeply served clients. The greater the amount of deeply served clients reflects greatly on the advisor. Therefore, my host advisor had me sift through a list of clients that had 2 to 3 stars and find the required services needed to consider those clients deeply served. Depending on the required services needed I would call to schedule a phone appointment, in office appointment, or offer a service such as ACH on demand or online access. By the end of my internship my host financial advisor had nearly 50% of his clients considered deeply served. This was ranked among the top 10% of Financial Advisors at Edward Jones.

For each client appointment I prepared an appointment folder that contained a variety of documents depending on the nature of the appointment. In addition, I ran clients’ financial forecasts for retirement or FAST. For a mock client, I was given the opportunity to create and diversify a hypothetical portfolio and review it with my host financial advisor who gave back some constructive criticism. I was also fortunate enough to sit in on several client appointments and observe the steps my host financial advisor took with each client. I saw first hand how and why certain products were pitched to clients such as life insurance, long term care insurance and annuities.
In addition to the set curriculum given by Edward Jones, I participated in basic branch support activities. I deposited checks into savings accounts, retrieved life insurance quotes for clients, insured each client had a beneficiary on record with the firm, opened new accounts, closed existing accounts, transferred funds, mailed portfolios, rebalanced annuities and made market transactions at the direction of my host financial advisor among many other tasks.

By the end of my internship my actions had directly lead to 52 new accounts being opened in addition to 3 life insurance policies being sold. Numerous trades were made during appointments I had scheduled as well as rebalancing of portfolios.

The Edward Jones internship gave me opportunity to see the Financial Advisor career first hand. The curriculum provided me the ability to experience the rigors and rewards of a career as a financial advisor. I was nothing but encouraged by the culture and services I experienced first hand at Edward Jones. The human interaction and product education could not be matched. I would suggest this internship to anybody who is considering financial advising as a career. Currently, I am in the last step of the interview process with Edward Jones for a place in their Financial Advisor Career Development Program (FACD). The program is for new college graduates who want to pursue a career with Edward Jones as a financial advisor. It is a 9-month program, 2 months of which are spent studying for the series 7 and 66 licenses. Upon graduation from the program I will be given the opportunity to operate my own Edward Jones office in anywhere U.S.A.
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