

Ansley Stone

Language and International Business

State Farm Insurance

Sales and Marketing

COOP 1020

State Farm is a company of several individually owned insurance providers located across the country. The location that I worked at, in Camden, SC provided various types of insurance for individuals and businesses including auto, home, and life. My position has changed since the first co-op I completed last summer. I now work as a Sales Intern for State Farm rather than Farm Bureau and my mentor has changed. My specific role in the department involved supporting all of the agents with any tasks they needed to complete, taking payments and answering the phone, marketing towards new leads, and heading a recruitment effort for the branch.

I was required to complete a few online training sessions concerning internet safety, cyber security, and the integrity of our information systems and protecting client information. After that formal training, I received informal training from my mentor about how to take payments and how to handle phone calls. After that, most of what I learned happened on my feet and when I was not expecting it. The general work environment within the company was fairly calm on most days. Towards the end of each month, more people make insurance payments, so the office becomes more busy.

I had more responsibilities during this rotation than last summer. My daily routine involved answering the office phone and responding to customer questions, taking cash, check, and card payments over the phone and in-person, handling any technical malfunctions with printers and computers, cold-calling for the purpose of generating client leads, creating graphics for marketing purposes around the office and in the local community, handling the influx of job applications and inquiries, and generally assisting all of the agents in the office in any way that they need. There were no other co-op students on-site.

I am now capable of taking payments, running the reception desk at the office, answering a variety of questions over the phone, and generally handling customers better than in my first rotation. This rotation is more hands-on than the last rotation, and I am interacting with customers on a regular basis rather than rarely. My communication skills have greatly improved, as I have needed to be able to handle a greater variety of inquiries from customers and other agents, and I have had to think on my feet. I have needed to learn how to create interest over the phone in the branch and give customers better deals. I have also been communicating with various state universities in a hiring attempt that my mentor trusted me with, which included several email exchanges with head of departments, professors, and prospective agents. I applied much of my course knowledge to this co-op. At Clemson, within my major, I have learned how to use technology to my advantage when it comes to facilitating connections with strangers, and this co-op made use of this skill. I have used fax machines, phones, printers, and computers to complete tasks for my job and for the purpose of connecting with clients.

I managed a few projects throughout the summer. I led a campaign event to draw in over 600 client leads through cold calls. In terms of the hiring effort project, I created a Handshake account for my mentor, handled applications and communications with applicants, and connected

with insurance and sales programs with the University of South Carolina and other in-state universities. I managed another project to garner more client interaction online by creating graphics and posters that connected customers to review pages and phone app links to help them more easily pay for their insurance and give feedback for the office. I felt that my greatest contributions to my team were simply handling more mundane tasks and making their jobs less stressful and tedious. Any way that I could contribute to bettering their everyday lives was how I felt like I best accomplished things on the team.

Overall, what I liked most about this assignment was how much I got to work alongside the agents and help solve customers' problems to the best of my ability. I made some lasting relationships with my coworkers and even some of the clients, and I was able to learn from their experiences and lives more than I could have predicted. The only part I did not like was when customers were difficult or did not understand that we are just people trying to help them as best as we can, and sometimes they would raise their voices or say hurtful things. But I learned how to have a thick skin and become better at explaining myself or the other agents in an effort to help them anyways. While I loved both rotations, this rotation was much more interactive with clients, so I felt more of a connection with the work. The advice I would give a student is to not be afraid of making mistakes and even admitting them. Oftentimes, if I could not answer a customer's question, I simply had to explain my position as an intern with limited access to files and system knowledge, and they were very understanding and even encouraging. And simply being a Clemson student allowed me to connect with local alumni and relate to them on a more personal level. Overall, it was a great experience and I learned skills that will assist me in the workforce after graduation.