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Besides initiating team-bonding events during her internship at food delivery platform Deliveroo, Ms Kang Ru Ying also took part in projects such as the launch of Deliveroo's on-demand convenience campaign. She was later offered a permanent position as a marketing specialist. ST PHOTOS: ARIFFIN JAMAR, STAMIL SAPARI

# Ace online internships even in a pandemic

Traditional working styles have been upended, but interns can still glean experience online

Cheryl Doan

The pandemic may have shaken up work arrangements, but it has not stopped some from taking on and evenacing online internships.

Ms Kang Ru Ying, 26, who was offered a full-time position during her internship at Deliveroo, is one of them.

When she found out about an internship opportunity at the food delivery platform while studying in Central Saint Martins college in London, she wasted no time in applying for it.

"I've always been a foodie at heart and I love the start-up space, so I think the internship was the best of both worlds," she says.

The graphic communication design graduate landed the internship and started work on the day after she returned to Singapore, upon completing her studies last year.

Ms Kang initially struggled to adjust to the time difference between Singapore and London as well as to grasp company jargon used during her remote induction. But she overcame such challenges with the help of daily check-ins scheduled by her manager during her first week of work.

"Deliveroo has a flat hierarchy so I also felt comfortable posing questions to my colleague or general manager via our corporate messenger," she adds.

During her internship, she initiated team-bonding events in the company and took part in projects outside her job scope such as the launch of Deliveroo's on-demand convenience campaign.

This involved her visiting photo studios to film branding collateral and colour-proofing them. She also volunteered to be a banana mascot for the campaign, delivering public relations kits to influencers.

"I find it very important to constantly push myself out of my com-



fort zone. When you put yourself in an uncomfortable situation and make mistakes, it's the fastest way to learn," she says.

Before her internship ended in July this year, Ms Kang was offered a permanent position as a marketing specialist.

"This is testament to my eight months of hard work and I'm very humbled that my team values my contributions," she says.

She adds that having a supportive team also kept her motivated throughout her internship.

As for Ms Cheryl Tan, 23, a geography graduate from the National University of Singapore (NUS), wanting to discover what the sustainability industry had to offer was what kept her going in her work-from-home (WFH) internship last year.

Ms Tan's interest in sustainability was ignited when she took part in a case competition during her first year of university. This led her to intern at the United Nations Global Compact Network Singapore from May to November last year.

During her stint, she got to design marketing materials for the organisation's flagship events and contributed to its first online

annual general meeting.

"Keeping all the plates spinning, from obtaining and collating valid votes to organising the actual meeting itself, was a challenge exacerbated by the WFH arrangement," she says.

But the event turned out to be successful and was one of her top achievements during the internship.

Ms Tan was offered a full-time position, which required her to start in January this year. But she had to turn it down to focus on her final semester of studies.

Nevertheless, she says the internship had taught her skills which she could apply in her current role as an executive in policy and advocacy at World Wide Fund for Nature Singapore.

Such skills included how to communicate effectively and being more adaptable to rapid changes.

"Sporadic events, such as convening an immediate meeting or coordinating across different time zones, do not faze me as much as they did in the past as I have more experience in dealing with unexpected situations," she says.

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**MS CHERYL TAN** (above), who had a work-from-home internship at the United Nations Global Compact Network Singapore from May to November last year. She got to design marketing materials as well as helped out in organising the group's first online annual general meeting

## Make the most of your online internship

**1 Outline boundaries**  
"Clearly outlining boundaries is extremely useful in ensuring sustainable productivity when working remotely," says Ms Cheryl Tan, an executive in policy and advocacy at World Wide Fund for Nature Singapore.

Such boundaries can be geographical, temporal or emotional in nature.

To overcome the initial challenge of poor work-life balance during her internship at the United Nations Global Compact Network Singapore from May to November last year, she created a routine to replace the usual system that she had relied on to mentally prepare herself for work. She started her day with yoga to replace her usual commute and went for a walk or run after work to decompress and transition to her studies.

**2 Clarify expectations**  
Consulting director at headhunting and human resource (HR) consultancy firm Genesis Search Jill Lim notes that work-from-home arrangements have significantly reduced face-to-face interactions. "With the lack of tighter consistent communication, interns may find themselves going in a different direction from what was mandated," she says.

She suggests interns maintain an "open channel of communication" and check in periodically with their supervisors to ensure their performance is "in line with the communicated expectations". "Creating a checklist would be helpful to ensure they stay on track with the given tasks."

**3 Establish a support network**  
Ms Kang Ru Ying advises interns to maintain a line of communication with colleagues, whether using social media or corporate channels.

During her internship at food delivery platform Deliveroo, she would talk to a few close friends via corporate messenger whenever she was feeling tired or unmotivated. "It's important to have a support system and a group of friends whom you can go to with questions knowing you will not be judged," she says.

Ms Shelly Leong, who has been working as an HR professional since 2001, says keeping in touch with mentors and co-workers after the internship will also keep interns plugged into job openings in the company after they graduate.

**4 Ask questions**  
When faced with a roadblock or challenges, interns should take the initiative to reach out to others, says Ms Lim.

While asking questions may seem daunting, Ms Tan suggests shifting from a more individualistic mindset of "I'm bothering them with my questions" to a more collectivist one of "I'm supplementing my learning to be a more effective member of the team". Ms Lim adds: "Being able to provide solutions to the challenges faced instead of simply surfacing issues would also make an individual stand out."

**5 Create opportunities**  
"Ask for opportunities and don't be afraid of rejection, because the worst thing the company can say is no," says Ms Kang.

Ms Leong says interns can take a different approach by requesting senior employees give an overview of their role in the office. "Once interns get them talking about their work, they can see how they can be a part of their longer-term or routine projects," she says.

**6 Be professional**  
One mistake some interns make is taking the stint too casually, says Ms Leong. "An internship may be part of their coursework, so interns simply go through the motions and do not pay much attention to the work process," she adds.

She advises interns to approach internships in a professional manner by, for example, setting goals prior to starting the stint. "This will help to define what to accomplish and how to get there."