
Dr. Nick Bontis supervised the preparation of this case solely to provide material for class discussion. The case is not intended to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a managerial situation. Certain names and other identifying information may have been disguised to protect confidentiality. Version August 1, 2008.

Jay Zee at DeGroote

Introduction

Jay Zee is a Level IV Commerce student at the DeGroote School of Business who plans to graduate at the end of this year. He is currently looking for permanent employment. He considers himself a finance major and is quite enthusiastic about throwing himself into the real world. With his experience and interest in investment banking, he scrutinizes every job opportunity very closely. Within DeGroote, ever since his arrival in first year, students refer to him as the “investment guy”. He has worked at the Gould Trading Floor as a supervisor for many years. In this innovative multi-million dollar facility, Jay teaches the techniques of research and investment to DeGroote students (undergrads and MBAs), with the help of sophisticated software that is used primarily in the investment community.

Excerpts from Jay’s personal diary

October 3rd

I read one of the ideal job postings today for the Financial Management Program (FMP) at Imperial Bank. (See Exhibit A). This job posting was targeted only to MBAs but I believe that I possess all the qualities required nevertheless. I am going to apply for this one.

October 12th

- 12:00 I entered the Gould Trading Floor (GTF) and received congratulations from my co-workers and fellow classmates. The short-list for interviewees for the FMP job was posted. At first, I couldn’t believe that I actually got selected for the interview. What surprised me the most was that I was the only undergraduate on the list of 16 interviewees. (See Exhibit B)
- 14:00 I received a phone call from the director of the GTF. He mentioned that several members from the board of directors will be visiting later in the day.
- 16:30 The members of the board of directors came for a visit to the GTF. I, as the supervisor gave them a little tour. One of the visitors is the Managing Director of the Imperial Bank, Mr. Brandon Fraser. I started talking to him about the work environment at the Imperial Bank (IB) and during our conversation, I mentioned that I would be interviewing with them. I also mentioned about my nervousness of being the only undergraduate on the short-list. I asked Mr. Fraser, “*I hope it’s not a mistake*”. Mr. Fraser assured me by saying “*No, Jay, The HR department is trained to pick the best possible candidates for a specified position and I am sure they have made a fine choice*”. Mr. Fraser handed over his business card to me. He also asked me to keep him updated about the job interview. I am really excited about the “contact” I just made. I guess it might help me a bit.

Jay e-mails Mr. Fraser the next day (see Exhibit C)

October 17th

The interview day, Jay is scheduled to be interviewed at 4:00pm

8:30 I will spend the next four hours doing research to prepare myself for the interview.

12:45 I ran into Vince Carter (an MBA), who had an interview in the morning for the same position. Carter is a student in the MBA class that I teach here at GTF. Carter told me *“Man, you are going against us MBAs! I think you as an undergraduate have a great chance of getting this job... Good Luck!”*. Carter's comment boosts my confidence.

13:00 I decide to visit Jennifer Lopez (Director of DeGroot's career office), for advice about the interview. I have known Jennifer for several years. She has always been very helpful and has assisted me with résumé editing and interview tips. I practiced a few interview questions with Jennifer. She explained to me, *“Jay, you should be confident, since you are representing the whole undergraduate commerce program. You should go in there and prove to them that undergrads are just as competent as MBAs”*. Jennifer praised my communication skills and advised me to control my hand movements and improve my eye contact during the interview.

Jay goes home to get dressed for the interview. He is really excited about this opportunity and comes back to school with a sharp look and a positive attitude.

2:30 While at school I checked my telephone messages and received a message from Heather Graham, (Manager of DeGroot's career office) *“Hi Jay, its Heather from the career office. It's 2 o'clock right now and I just want to inform you that Imperial Bank will not be interviewing you later this afternoon, since the position you applied for is just for MBAs. There is no need to waste their time or yours. Thank you!”* I could not believe what I heard, it completely shattered me. I am devastated.

Jay goes back home and changes into normal clothes.

5:30 I went back to school and decided to meet the interviewers, one of them happens to be Katerina Jones (Imperial Bank's Consultant for campus recruitment). I asked her about the confusion. During our conversation I expressed my disappointment on how the situation was handled. I told her that as far as “wasting time” is concerned, I had spent a significant amount of time preparing myself for the interview. I also mentioned that I originally had doubts about me being on the list but was assured that the short-list was accurate. I think they handled this very unprofessionally. Katerina recognized me from her last visit to the GTF and blames everything on the “girl” who sorted out the résumés back at the office. According to Katerina Jones, *“it's all her fault”*. She departs by wishing me *“good luck!”*

The next day, Jay e-mails Mr. Fraser explaining the situation and his frustration (see Exhibit D).

October 24th

Jay Zee receives an e-mail from Jennifer (see exhibit E).

October 25th

10:30 Jennifer mentioned that Elaine Benes (Imperial Bank's Director of the Compensation) has sternly warned the Career Center that she would *“never let me enter the organization as long as she is a part of the Imperial Bank!!!”*. This comment left me fuming inside. I left Jennifer's office wondering how this whole thing had blown up in my face.

Over the next few days, the shock of the event subsided but Jay felt that he was cheated. He subsequently went to visit his 4PA3 Business Policy professor Dr. Slick Bootis. Dr. Bootis had previous experience with the Imperial Bank and had even worked in HR with them for awhile.

A few days later, Jay Zee decided to write a case for use in Dr. Bootis' class so that future students could learn from his ordeal.

Several days later

Jay Zee called Katerina Jones to discuss the situation and apologized for anything he may have done that caused a problem internally at IB. He just reiterated that he wanted this position very much and felt that he was the best candidate internally at DeGroot.

Katerina informed Jay that the wording in his email to Mr. Brandon was a bit too harsh and that set off a firestorm internally at IB that could not be easily assuaged. During their conversation, Katerina was very impressed with Jay's maturity and his attitude.

Two weeks later, Katerina called Jay at home and asked if he was interested in another interview for a different position in IB's finance department. Jay humbly declined.

Characters

McMaster University

Jay Zee

Level IV Commerce student at DeGroot.

He is known for his gentle and friendly personality. A very ambitious but calm individual.

Jennifer Lopez

Director, Career Center, DeGroot School of Business, McMaster University

Heather Graham

Manager, Career Centre DeGroot School of Business, McMaster University

Imperial Bank

Brandon Fraser

Managing Director, Imperial Bank

Board of Directors of the Gould Trading Floor at DeGroot

Katerina Jones

Consultant for campus recruitment, Imperial Bank

Elaine Benes

Director of Compensation, Imperial Bank

*Exhibit A***FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

Imperial Bank Group of Companies, a leader among Canada's major financial institutions, is operating in one of the most dynamic business environments in the world. Through intelligent growth, an emphasis on superior customer service and maintaining an open environment where the development of people is one of our highest priorities, we are ensuring we remain one of the leading North American financial services companies.

As a corner stone to enhancing IB's position in the market place, increased emphasis and executive direction is being given to strengthening our financial management capabilities, such as planning and analysis, performance measurement and client support. The developing area of Finance provides an exciting challenge for business graduates to apply their analytical and management skills in identifying areas of opportunity for improving the performance of IB.

How the Program Works

The Financial Management Development Program has been operating for 10 years, and involves four 6-month developmental assignments working within the various business units of Finance. As a Management Intern on the program, you will have the opportunity to interact with the Senior Management Team of various strategic business units of the Bank and gain an understanding of areas and businesses across IB. You will prepare complete and comprehensive analyses on a wide range of financial issues including reviews of competitive markets, analyses of operating performance and special projects while developing strong analytical skills. A key aspect of the Program involves establishing a wide network of contacts in both the Finance organization and IB as a whole.

IB's Senior Management Team is committed to developing MBA graduates by offering challenging full-time internship positions with excellent future career opportunities. After completing the program, Management Interns typically pursue progressive positions within the many areas of Finance, including the Business Consultant Finance position found within many Finance business units.

IB's goal, quite simply, is to be the pre-eminent Canadian financial services company.

How to Apply

Check with your Career Services Centre for postings and deadlines. Please specify the position or positions you are applying for, and submit your resume to the Centre.

IB thanks all applicants for their interest, however; only those under consideration will be contacted. IB is committed to diversity in our workforce and equal access to opportunities based on merit and performance.

Exhibit B

From: "Bizplace" <bizplace@mcmaster.ca>
Subject: Interview List for IB - Financial Management
Date: Thu, 12 Oct 200X 09:22:53 -0700
To: various other recipients

The following candidates have been selected for an interview with IB's Financial Management Development Program:

Interview Date: Tuesday October 17
Sign up for interview: ASAP

Jorge Kloonee
Andy Garcia
J.D. Peterson
Ashley Juggs
Martina Hingis
Jay Zee
Michael Jordon
Pete Sampas
Vince Carter
Jason Kidd
Shaq O'Niell
Austin Powers
Mini Mee
Mark Jackson
Jerome Williams
Matz Zundeen

Heather Graham
Manager, Business Employment Services
DeGroot School of Business
1280 Main Street West, Hamilton, ON L8S 4M4
Tel: 905-525-9000 ext. 20000
Send job postings to: bizplace@mcmaster.ca

Exhibit C

From: "Jay Zee" <Zeej@mcmaster.ca>
Subject: Thank You!
Date: Fri, 13 Oct 200X 12:48:40 -0400
To: brandon.fraser@IB.com

Greetings Mr. Fraser:

This is Jay Zee from McMaster University. I had a fabulous time meeting you and wanted to thank you for your time and consideration.

Just to mention one thing; as we were talking about my interview with IB on Tuesday, you asked me about the Recruiters who would be interviewing the candidates. I tried my best to get that information, but could not get any answer from the Career Centre. I just would like to draw your attention to the application I submitted. It was addressed to Ms. Katerina Jones (consultant for campus recruitment).

Once again, Thank you for your time and consideration. Have a great weekend.

With best regards,

Jay Zee

Exhibit D

From: "Jay Zee" <zeej@mcmaster.ca>
Subject: Interview!
Date: Wed, 18 Oct 200X 13:31:38 -0400
To: brandon.fraser@IB.com

Dear Mr. Fraser:

This is Jay Zee again, I just wanted to inform you about my interview, which was supposed to be yesterday. Two hours before my interview, I received a phone call, saying that IB would NOT interview me, the interviewer Ms. Katerina Jones refused to interview me, since I am an undergraduate.

I was really thrilled after getting the news about the interview for the Financial Management Program. I was confident that I had the qualities to be a successful candidate. And after meeting you, I was very intrigued by your attitude and personality. That's why I was even more excited about this opportunity.

But after yesterday's rejection, just before my interview, I was devastated. I was not too pleased with IB's HR activities. I don't want to push this too hard, but I just wanted to draw your attention to this incident.

I hope you can get back to me regarding this.

Thank you very much and I really appreciate your concern.

Sincerely,

Jay Zee

Exhibit E

From: Jennifer Lopez <jopezj@mcmaster.ca>
Subject: RE: Interview!
Date: Tue, 24 Oct 200X 16:28:39 -0700
To: "J.Zee" <zeej@mcmaster.ca>

Hi Jay, I've talked with Heather (Director, Business Career Center) about the situation with IB and she has talked with both Katerina Jones and Elaine Benes.

It appears that Brandon Fraser forwarded your message to them and it has created some serious problems internally. They felt that it was inappropriate for you to go above their heads on this issue and that your message to Brandon did not correctly reflect the entire situation. In a nutshell, they're not too happy with you right now.

So, I would suggest that you put together a brief message to them apologizing for your note to Brandon Fraser and explaining that you had no intention of creating any problems for them.

If you need help writing it let me know and I can help.

Good luck

J. Lo