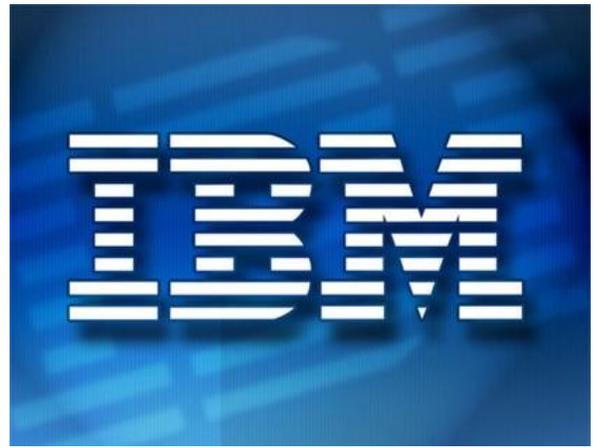


Strategic Outsourcing Delivery Leadership Development Program at IBM with Jay Hartenbach



MEMP Alumnus 2013

By Margaret Kuleshova



7:30 AM on a Tuesday morning Jay Hartenbach stepped foot into the office of the executive he was currently shadowing in strategic outsourcing delivery at IBM as part of his leadership development program. In strategic outsourcing, IBM would pitch their IT expertise to a Fortune 500 or 1000 company and maintain their servers, mainframes, and data exchanges. Whether coming to work or working from home, as Jay's current accounting concentration would allow, no two days are the same.

"Good morning, Jay! Checking in?" said the executive.

"Yes, sir. Good morning," said Jay.

"We've got a global conference call lined up at 9 AM today, but other than that you're welcome to work on your projects."

"Excellent, thank you!"

Jay could normally check in with the executive over email, but it was good to speak face-to-face. In his previous rotation at the delivery center, he had to pay a visit to the second line manager regularly. Pulling up his calendar once he made his way to his office, he checked the work he had scheduled so he could determine which projects to prioritize and tackle before the conference call. Decided on a project to review, he went on to sort through the waves of email that had arrived since he left the office yesterday at 6 PM. He had to make sure he hadn't missed any important messages and stayed up to date.

Before he got a chance to review his project plans, he remembered about the phone interview scheduled with CDAR at Duke's MEMP. He should expect the phone call any minute now.

On cue, his phone rang.

"Hello?" said Jay.

"Hi, Jay. This is Margaret from Informational Interviewing at Duke. Thanks again for agreeing to do this."

"Hi, Margaret. It's my pleasure. Fire away."

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“I noticed from your LinkedIn profile that you started out as a biomedical engineer. How did you end up at IBM?”

“Good question. I did my undergrad at University of Miami and, while I was there, I had the chance to work in one of the labs. That was a good experience, but I realized the long repetitive hours in the lab didn’t really suit me. The following summer I pursued an internship at a genetic engineering company—a small start up—and ended up working with the executive vice president, mainly on industrial relations and due diligence reports. Having the science background really helped me communicate the technology they were developing. I learned a lot about how to present the material in a way that wouldn’t put people to sleep. That’s when I realized there existed a career option that could hybridize business and technology skills. Duke’s MEM Program focused on just that. I really enjoyed it.”

“Glad to hear it! How did you pitch that to hiring managers? Any advice?”

“No matter how well you’re prepared, there’s still going to be a significant amount of information to absorb. So even if your background is, for example, biomedical and you’re going into IT it’s just about being really upfront and saying, yes, I may not understand this – but being very open and excited about learning. That goes much further than being able to rattle on about servers or operating systems you’re familiar with. Anyone can learn that stuff. And for someone who’s switching concentrations, you have this unique opportunity to look at things with a fresh perspective and question old means of doing things.”

“Excellent tip. Can you give an example?”

“Sure. Back when I worked at the delivery center, there was this project where within IBM people had to claim their time and there was an issue with having to do that for multiple accounts—it was too tedious. That had been the way it had always been done, but I got the chance to work on an Excel-based tool that would automatically distribute their time across a fair amount of accounts without the need for manual entry.”

“Nice work! In other words, when your background or your way of thinking is different from everyone else’s, you find ways to use it for innovation.”

“Exactly,” said Jay.

“Could you tell us a bit more about the program structure? How long does a rotation typically last?”

“It varies. The range is 3 to 6 months and the program itself lasts 2 years. Starting January, I will be doing my next rotation for six months with the sales team bringing in new business. There are four rotations total and you have the opportunity to repeat rotations and get different perspectives on some of the similar roles.”

“Thanks for that. Are there any ways in which you find your work similar to consulting?”

“In a way, yeah. But with generic consulting it’s more about providing recommendations to achieve a certain goal, whereas my job is more solutions based and I get to see some of the projects I’ve come up with get implemented and become fully operational. Project management skills definitely come into play there. And you interact with clients a lot so it’s important to be relatable. Every customer has their own way of doing things, even if they’re from the same organization. You’ve got to adapt and meet them at the same level rather than apply the same approach to everyone. The consulting practicum was definitely a big help for me in MEMP.”

“Good to know! Are there any other knowledge areas students should explore if they’re interested in IT?”

“Definitely. For strategic outsourcing, for instance, look into ITIL and universal standards for technological services. It’s good to be up to date. But the biggest thing is, as I mentioned, be willing to learn and be very open minded. Coming into IBM, there was just so much I didn’t know in terms of the different systems that companies run on—it’s amazing. Going into the program, I was pretty explicit in my interviews about balancing technology with business and that was repeatedly assured to me that it fit with what the program had to offer. That has certainly confirmed my expectations. You’ve got to

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know the technology you're talking about with your technical teams – nothing that any graduate from the MEM program can't handle. And you also of course have to know the financials and make sure that everything is being done right on a much larger business scale."

"And what about IBM, how is it different from other IT businesses?"

"IBM has been around for over a hundred years, which makes it very unique. One of the reasons they're still around is because they have a constant drive to innovate and change business models. People think of IBM as selling laptops or computers when in reality we haven't done that in many years and now we're focusing on services. Within the time I've been in IBM, these five months, there's been a dramatic transition to focus on cloud computing and you can watch it change every day in how they're developing training modules and how they're rolling that out to the customer. There's a constant need to reinvent themselves."

"I think that's worked out pretty well for them and in a way that's what we're doing at the MEM program too—we're reinventing ourselves as engineers. It's what we do best."

"Absolutely."

"It's been so great talking to you, Jay. I really appreciate your input. I can't wait to share it with the rest of the program. Thanks again!"

"No problem. And please let your classmates know that IBM is accepting new applicants for the rotation program. Anyone interested is welcome to reach out to me."

"That's so great! Thank you, Jay! Have a great day."

"Same to you."

Jay hung up the phone. It felt strange to think all the way back to his days of lab work as he now sat in his IBM office, but he wouldn't have it any other way. He leaned into his keyboard and returned to his project review. ■

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