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The Grad Perspective

A workplace as individual as you are

Ekkehard Freidrich is an analyst in management consulting, and has been with Accenture for one year, having graduated from the University of Stellenbosch with a degree in industrial engineering in 2007. Before that, the 26-year-old had completed his M Sc. in Engineering Management in 2003, during which time he gained some work experience.

So, what first drew him to Accenture? ‘I like the investment consulting environment,’ Ekkehard answers. ‘It’s diverse, which means there are so many different areas you can get involved in – different industries, clients and projects. For me, that’s ideal, because I have a lot of different interests.’ He also gives Accenture’s culture the thumbs up. ‘The team is friendly and helpful. I’ve found that I can ask anyone for advice, at any time. It’s easy to approach people because the culture is very open.’ There is a proviso, though: you’re expected to do the same. This works to your advantage, because you learn a lot during the process of imparting knowledge and taking on a mentoring role.

Clearly, there’s a lot of give and take in relationships between Accenture and its workforce. There’s also a large degree of autonomy. Ekkehard says that he appreciates being able to set his own career milestones. ‘There are so many opportunities open to you as an Accenture employee. The company gives you everything you need to take advantage; then it’s up to you to make things happen.’ He gives an example from his own career experience: ‘I always wanted a job in strategy but, when I first joined the organisation; I was given a position in customer relationship management (CRM). So I started networking and made sure I spoke to the right people, and it wasn’t long before I was appointed to strategy.’

One of the great pluses offered by the organisation, he repeats, is that because it has such enormous scope, you’re sure to find an area that matches your interests. ‘In fact, even if you’re not entirely sure of what you want to do, you’ll find your niche,’ he promises. In the beginning, all candidates are placed in an analyst pool, and rotated throughout all service lines. This ensures that you experience every aspect of the organisation: ‘You can find out what it’s like to work in supply chain management, if you prefer that to CRM, for instance,’ Ekkehard says.



Ekkehard Freidrich, Analyst in management consulting



Shari Nambiar

He adds that he’s also benefited a great deal from the training provided by the organisation. One of the highlights of his career so far has been a two-week trip to Chicago for a training session which is attended by all Accenture employees who have been with the organisation for six months. ‘It was absolutely phenomenal,’ he says enthusiastically.

He concludes by saying that, as a workplace that accommodates your individuality and lets you pace your own career, Accenture is an outstanding choice.

Diversity and development

24 year-old Shari Nambiar had heard a lot about Accenture during her studies (a Bachelor’s degree from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, followed by an Honours degree at Rhodes University and finally a Masters at the University of the Witwatersrand). She had heard that Accenture offered an innovative workplace, particularly for scientists such as herself. ‘It had a reputation as a company that seeks out people who think creatively and then invests in them by, for instance, sending them overseas to study towards further qualifications.’

Inspired by the fit she perceived between the company’s values and her own personality, Shari was inspired to investigate further, and joined Accenture as an analyst in management consulting in January 2010.

So, did the company’s reputation match the reality? ‘I’ve certainly found Accenture to be a dynamic company that gives employees the platform to express their creativity,’ she answers. The company’s training practices are a case in point, she adds. Employees are sent to Chicago, where they have exciting opportunities not only to advance their skills and knowledge, but also to meet and interact with other analysts from around the world. ‘You really get to develop as an individual during this experience,’ Shari muses.

She’s been fortunate to benefit from other overseas training courses, too. Last year, she spent two weeks in Madrid as part of a learning initiative. ‘This is definitely one of the aspects I enjoy most about working at Accenture. The sheer scope for learning is amazing.’

There are also many lessons to be learnt from the many diverse areas in which Accenture operates, and the vastness of the company’s scope means that employees have many avenues for broadening their knowledge.

‘At Accenture, people aren’t interested in your age or what you’ve studied; it’s all about what you can bring to your team and the organisation. What matters most are your skills and personality,’ Shari continues. It’s not surprising, then, that Accenture has developed a culture that places firm emphasis on the value employees add to their peers and to the organisation’s clients. This is yet another facet of the company that she relishes.

‘I consider myself to be a passionate go-getter, and Accenture has certainly given me the platform to be my best and share my knowledge,’ she concludes.