

Darla Moore School of Business
University of South Carolina

Full-Time **MBA Programs**

International MBA • Accelerated MBA



Project Profile:
David Stone

IMBA Class of 2010
Company: Nivaria
Location: Tenerife, Spain



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
Darla Moore School of Business

Journal Entry #4

August 2009

I'd like to kick off this final entry by sharing three things that helped me during my internship this summer. Hopefully, you will find them helpful too.

1. Do your research before you start.

Start by looking online, and then ask relevant questions. Your supervisor will be impressed if you take time to understand all that you possibly can about your host company and their industry well before the internship start date. Obviously, you will also be much better prepared. In retrospect, although I understood Nivaria's product and position in the market, I did not research the software/IT industry as much as I should have. Perhaps I could have been better prepared from Day 1, but with help from several brilliant co-workers, I learned much more than expected. If you have an internship in marketing, remember that knowing your market and your competition is often just as important as knowing yourself. Google this, Google that...and complete some basic research ahead of time.



2. Find a language exchange partner.

If your internship is abroad, try to meet a local who wants to learn English. I found potential partners through a simple message board on the University of Salamanca campus back in February. Your universities will most likely have similar resources. Soon I began speaking with a Spaniard named Sara about every other week. We always met at a bar or cafe, and we would speak in Spanish for the first hour then in English for the next hour. The most effective way to master a foreign language is by talking and listening to an expert in the language. It was easy to see my progress accelerate once I began this language exchange.

In Tenerife, these types of language exchange message boards are impossible to find.

So, I found an excellent website, <http://www.language-exchanges.org>, created a profile, connected with a few people and began speaking with them through Skype. I began a weekly dialogue with two of my contacts and in the end, it turned out to be a pleasure chatting with both Francesco and Manuel. We loved talking about travel, food, wine, sports, and current events. Not only will you learn the language quicker, but you will also make some great friends.

3. Have an open mind and learn.

Seems simple enough, but as an intern, this is very important to remember. Your internship may differ from your expectations and it most certainly will be different than any job you've had in the past. Learn from your supervisors and your peers, and embrace the differences between doing business in the U.S. and doing business in a foreign country. Work hard, but don't be a workaholic. Take time to learn from people outside of your office. Head to a bar, learn about the local cuisine, their drink specialties, and the small town fiestas that aren't mentioned in guidebooks. When you're living in a foreign country, no matter what you're doing, you're always learning.



At Nivaria, I was able to discover the social media web-marketing world that I barely knew anything about in the beginning of the year. Social media marketing involves any online tool or technology that allows people to share thoughts, opinions, content, and media. People nowadays are turning toward blogs, podcasts, and social networks for their information and away from newspapers and magazines. As a marketer, it's essential to be in the same place as your customers – and this place is changing rapidly.



Examples of businesses effectively using the most popular social media tools today (YouTube, Facebook, Twitter) to create positive buzz for their company seem to be in the news at least once a week. However, other resources such as digg, del.icio.us, and Alltop are very nice communities for businesses as well. Small business owners in technology often prefer digg. During my final few weeks of my internship, I continued my ongoing analysis of these online marketing tools and planned the details of the

entire social media marketing campaign for Nivaria. Now that our new interactive website has been launched, we will begin with Search Engine Optimization (SEO). This will make it easier for search engines such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo to find, index and categorize our brand new web content on our site. Then, our campaign will be launched with the help of a recent graduate of the Moore School who interned for Nivaria in 2007 and is returning to work full-time for them this fall. All in all, the future looks very bright for Nivaria.

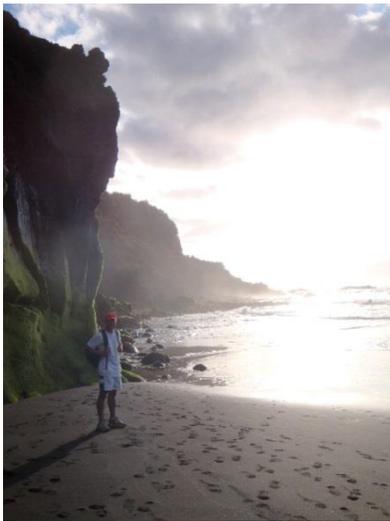
After living in Tenerife for the summer, I completely understand why many Europeans come down for vacation and refuse to leave. The people are really friendly and the island is a special place. I'd like to thank my boss, Mr. Paco Caballero for being a great mentor in the office and a confident guide through the Anaga Mountains, up in the lush

and tranquil northeast tip of the island. I also want to say thanks to Saúl, my marketing colleague, for singlehandedly finding the perfect apartment for me in Santa Cruz, for the extreme mountain biking down El Teide and for the adventurous weekend beach outings down in Las Americas.

I look forward to returning! Hasta entonces!

Journal Entry #3

July 2009



Have you noticed how Espn.com changed their website this year? In the past, a video highlight located on the far right side of the screen would begin playing immediately after the page was loaded, whether you liked it or not. In fact, the ESPN Socccernet homepage still uses this terrible technique. The main Espn.com homepage has changed for the better by enlarging and centering the video area, but more importantly, politely requiring a simple click to begin. The user may choose to watch the video or simply move on.

I bring up this example to point out that the keys to success for completing a website redesign are centered on two issues – content and usability. It involves website content in the form of on-page keywords relevant to your business or product offering, coupled with a user-friendly and interactive template that people want to revisit. Although Nivaria currently doesn't have millions of users to please and retain like a major media website such as Espn.com, we still have much at stake. For starters, we're looking to improve our lead generation, brand loyalty, online presence, and website conversion rates. An example of a conversion rate is the visitor-to-lead rate, which is measured by the number of visitors who filled out a form on your website (first name, last name, e-mail address, etc.) divided by the total number of people who visited the page with the form. For a small company like Nivaria, our website is one of our most important tools used to attract new business.

Within the past month, I made two presentations to the owner and founder of Nivaria, Mr. Paco Caballero. The first was focused on the company's online marketing plan, with a four-step strategy involving attracting, linking, explaining, and selling to our target buyer personas. The other presentation outlined our plan to build our virtual communities through a corporate blog, Facebook Business Pages, LinkedIn, Twitter and other social media avenues. This included an analysis on the pros and cons of seven different online community services and examples of companies in our industry using social media to market their businesses. This month I was also lucky enough to attend a conference on technology entrepreneurship and small businesses at the nearby University of La Laguna. A professor from the University of Texas at San Antonio, Dr.

Cory Hallam, gave a very interesting presentation on the growth of college students and young professionals with extraordinary IT backgrounds and what it means for the future of small technology companies. Since it was in English, I had no problem understanding every single word of the lecture. It was nice to finally rest the overworked translating part of my brain. To me, the funniest part of the 3pm conference was that Dr. Hallam was publicly told to begin his presentation at “promptly 3:20...or maybe 3:25 if you’d like.” Of course, this was common practice as it’s along the same lines of the Spanish daily meal schedule (see May journal entry).



Speaking of food, I failed to have a burger, hot dog and a few ice-cold American beers on the 4th of July this year. Felt bad. But on the flip side, the people of Tenerife have a long-standing tradition of migrating to the same small town on the southern coast in the middle of nowhere to celebrate each full moon throughout the year. It’s basically 12 excuses throughout the year for hundreds of young people go chill out along the small harbor and tiny beach until late into the night. How does

it relate to Independence Day? Well, a full moon party occurred on the 4th. The really strange coincidence was that my co-worker, Saúl, was wearing red, his girlfriend was wearing white, and I was wearing blue (see photo). Still trying to figure out the chances of all of those pieces falling into place.



I also left the island for a weekend to meet up with my dad and brother in Barcelona. We had two great days in the city then flew back to Tenerife together. Two days without a barraquito was two days too long, so we enjoyed a round immediately upon arrival in Santa Cruz. The following weekend, we rented a sporty Toyota Auris and took off for El Teide National Park. We climbed the volcano, enjoyed the magnificent views from above, then made our way down to

the beaches, restaurants and pubs of the tourist-heavy, sunburnt-body-abundant area in south Tenerife. Finally, we took an excellent road trip out to the essentially untouched northwest tip of the island. Views of the coast were simply astonishing with Los Gigantes (Cliffs of the Giants) soaring 600 meters out of the ocean above a black, volcanic beach and a solitary lighthouse. My dad and brother had an incredible few days out here. I can hardly believe that my time in Spain is winding down as well!

Journal Entry #2 June 2009

A local recently told me that the single greatest part of Tenerife is that you can go from El Teide, the highest peak in the EU outside of the Alps, down to the beach in less than an hour. I figured that this would be something worth trying, so I did it – more on this later!



I'm glad to say that my internship with Nivaria is moving along quite nicely. As a matter of fact, Saúl and I welcomed a new member to our marketing team just a few weeks ago. Luisa works from Barcelona, so Saúl and I now speak with her on Skype at least twice a week to discuss Nivaria's current marketing tasks. We've also used Google Docs to edit our company documents together as changes are shown in real-time.

While developing an updated marketing plan, we discussed how old "outbound" marketing is currently being replaced by new "inbound" marketing across all industries. Consumers have found ways to block out interruption-based "outbound" marketing techniques like direct mail, telemarketing, and print and TV advertising. We believe these methods are still effective to a certain degree, but today, people rarely wait for information to come to them. This is where "inbound" marketing can help. It involves attracting new customers through search engine optimization (SEO), blogging, social media marketing on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and viral videos via YouTube. That being said, we plan to keep an updated blog and take advantage of online social media sites to increase traffic to Nivaria's new website once it is launched.

Most important of all, however, is our development of a more dynamic, informative, user-friendly website. We are continuing our work from last month, creating and revising





useful content that will be placed on various pages of our new website. In addition, we are amending Nivaria's White Papers, which will be available in downloadable zip or pdf files directly from the site. Our White Papers include the benefits and specifications of our products, services, and partner programs, and also serve as supplements to the basic information available on our webpage. In fact, these documents were very helpful for me this month as I learned how to construct and format a simple web template using Nivaria's web content manager.

During the last three weekends of May, I did my best Tenerife tour guide imitation. Lucky for me, there were only two people here, and they came at separate times. First was my awesome girlfriend, Keely, and second was a great friend from my Army days, Pat. After a full day of travelling from Columbia, Keely arrived in Tenerife on a Friday. Early the following morning, we hopped a boat to one of the neighboring islands, Gran Canaria, to see what Tenerife's "rival" island had to offer. After a boat ride in some exceptionally wavy waters, we made a beeline for the beach and the impressive dunes of Maspalomas. Undoubtedly, the highlight of the weekend was our camel safari through the vast dunes, followed by a round of savory Barraquitos (see May journal entry for description).

The following weekend, the day came to conquer El Teide, the active but dormant volcano that last erupted in 1909. Located at the relative center of Tenerife and surrounded by Spain's largest and most popular National Park, El Teide towers over the island at 3,718 meters, or 12,198 feet. We rented a Hyundai Getz and made our way up, through evergreen tree-filled forests and rough, eroded badlands. We found a concentration of tourists around the Roque Cinchado, the weirdest of a group of jagged, red rocks once shaped by streams of magma. Somehow, this 27-meter tall rock is currently eroding faster at the base than it is at the top, so this giant freak of nature will inevitably topple over. Next, we took the Hyundai up to the tourist-friendly cable car located at nearly 2,400 meters, where everyone was speaking English or German. After the cable car zipped us from there to a height of 3,550 meters in only eight minutes, we did the last 150 meters on foot. With the lack of oxygen, the strong wind, and the fact



that we were not properly dressed for the cold, it was an extremely difficult 150 meters! Nevertheless, we made it to the summit, where we could see the entire 700-meter wide crater left by El Teide's eruption of 1798 as well as superb views of four other Canary Islands in the distance. Then we tried to catch our breath and get warm, which turned out to be nearly impossible. As you would expect, we made another beeline for the nearest beach and arrived in barely under an hour.

Thank you for reading and I look forward to writing you again next month!

Journal Entry #1

May 2009



Hello everyone! My name is Dave Stone and I'm writing you from the amazing island of Tenerife, the largest of the seven Spanish Canary Islands located about 200 miles west of southern Morocco. Throughout the past month, I've gotten to know very well why "the island of eternal spring" is truly a remarkable place to live and work.

Before I tell you all about life in Tenerife, I'd like to give you a short background about myself. I graduated from the University of Virginia in 2004 with an Economics degree and a four-year active duty commitment in the U.S. Army (as a result of ROTC). In the Army, I completed a year of training in Oklahoma and Georgia, a year as a Fire Support Officer in an Armored Cavalry unit in South Korea, and two years training new recruits at Ft. Jackson, SC in Columbia. After an extremely busy six months of core classes, and an excellent three months studying Spanish in Salamanca, I'm here now, interning in marketing for a software company called Nivaria Innova.

Based in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, one of the two capitals of the islands, Nivaria is a company specializing in corporate content management. With a content management system (CMS), users can create, modify, and manage their own professional websites without prior knowledge of HTML. We're a small company, with only two of us responsible for marketing. Saúl is great to work with – he's taught me a great deal about Nivaria and the unique lifestyle in Tenerife. Together, we're writing the content for Nivaria's new website, to be launched later this summer in both Spanish and English. We've also completed some market research of Spanish software companies that are similar to us in size and function to



define and develop a plan to improve upon our own operations.

The pleasant company culture is one of the reasons why people don't leave Nivaria for other opportunities. Every weekday, about eight of us from the office go out for lunch to a cozy restaurant down the street named Siete Vidas. No matter what time we show up (usually between 2 and 2:30 pm – more on this later), we're always seated at the same upstairs table next to two comfortable leather couches and a coffee table. Naturally, after eating, we spend a few minutes in the mini living room with one of the greatest drinks in the world – THE Barraquito. It's one of the most popular drinks in Tenerife and is made with coffee, milk, condensed milk, cinnamon, lemon, and liquor. Before I came to Spain, I only drank coffee for the caffeine, but now there's no doubt in my mind that I'm going to miss the strong, sweet taste of the barraquito in August!



Beaches. They are, in one word, surreal. Mountains, cliffs, and volcanoes surround many of them, with the scenery and terrain changing throughout different regions of the island. Over the years, strong winds and waves have battered and formed the volcanic rocks around some beaches into distinctive environments that should belong on the moon. Some beaches have black sand, some have grey sand and others are pebbled. On top of that, there are also two or three man-made beaches with golden sand imported

from the Sahara. The best part of all is that Tenerife operates a very efficient bus system, making it easy to “beach-hop” around the island on weekends.

Well, my computer says 10:30 pm, so it's about time for dinner. It's unbelievable how late Spaniards eat their meals! Breakfast usually consists of a coffee and a pastry around 9 am, then lunch after 2 pm, a tapa around 7, and dinner after 10. A few weeks ago, I went out to eat at 9:30 pm at a typical Canarian restaurant and I was the first customer of the night! Viva España!
