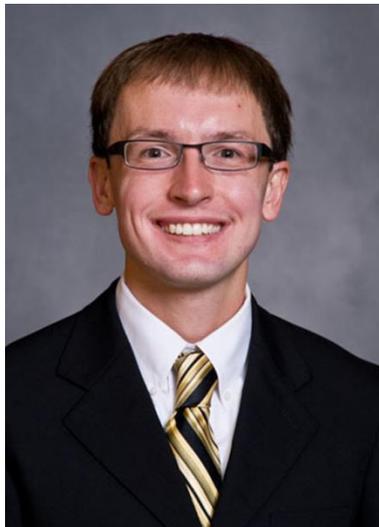


Darla Moore School of Business
University of South Carolina

Full-Time **MBA Programs**

International MBA • Accelerated MBA



Project Profile:
Kyle Webb

IMBA Class of 2013
Company: Continental AG
Location: Hanover, Germany



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA
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Journal Entry #1

Returning to Germany... finally.

It was 6:15 a.m. on June 26, 2006, and I had already been up for two and a half hours. Wide-awake and sitting on an airplane headed back to the U.S., I was experiencing mixed emotions. Excitement. I was, after all, on my way to seeing my family and friends. Exhaustion.



Like I said, I had been up for two and a half hours and it was only 6:15 a.m. Sadness. I genuinely enjoyed my time in Germany, and Europe in general. Fear. What if I never made it back?

As we took off, I smiled. It was at that point that I promised myself that I would make it back some day, sooner rather than later.

After experiencing one of the most grueling, and paradoxically best, periods of my life in the last six months of 2011 at the University of South Carolina, I was thrilled to return to Germany for four months of language training. When I accepted the offer from Continental AG – Tire Division to do an internship in Central Demand Management and Supply Chain Management for 7 months in Hanover, Germany (more on this later), I was even more excited. An entire year in Germany... perfect.

First, I want to welcome you to my blog and tell you a little more about myself. After graduating from Ohio Northern University with degrees in Accounting and International Business and Economics, I began my career with Marathon Oil Corporation at their refinery in Texas City, TX, as an accountant. In this role, I was able to get exposure to many areas of accounting since the staff in remote locations tends to be smaller than in the corporate office.

After learning a lot about operations accounting in the field, I transferred to the corporate headquarters in Houston, TX, as an Advanced Accountant. Here I was responsible for parts of the North American operations, this time separated from operations/field staff.

While I enjoyed my time at Marathon and in accounting, I needed a change from the “routine” that accounting can become. Knowledge of accounting is extremely important, but I was ready for something more dynamic. This is what brought me to the Darla Moore School of Business.

As I searched for an MBA program, I wanted something with an international focus because in the future, I want to work abroad. Also, as everyone knows, globalization is here to stay. Those who master relationship building and cultural sensitivity are best positioned to succeed.

In addition, I wanted a program that integrated language study into the curriculum. With a minimum of four months language study in each of the eight language tracks, the Moore School was the clear choice for me.

When I arrived, I began to think about my concentration(s). I was pretty sure I wanted to pursue finance because I consider it the forward-looking cousin to accounting and had thoroughly enjoyed my finance classes in my undergraduate university. However, I wanted to specialize in an additional area.



While I had not considered it before I arrived, Supply Chain Management

immediately stood out to me as the clear choice for my other concentration. It plays to my strengths and obsessions of planning and efficiency. Furthermore, it has become increasingly important in companies as a way to become greener, both for the planet and for the bottom-line. Last, it is the epitome of dynamism—from interactions with customers, colleagues, suppliers, and others, there is certainly a never dull moment in supply chain management.

In my internship with Continental AG – Tire Division, I will be spending approximately 50% of my time in Central Demand Management and the other 50% of my time in Supply Chain Management. This will give me the opportunity to get exposure to two very important areas of logistics. In both functions, I will be working in the Original Equipment part of the business, which sells tires that are installed on newly manufactured vehicles (as opposed to after-market tires).

In Central Demand Management, we work closely with key account managers to forecast the demand for tires from our customers. In addition, we try to manage inventory levels through the use of these forecasts. There are other reports and analyses that need to be performed as well.

Whereas Central Demand Management could be seen from the sales side of the equation of a business, the Supply Chain Management at Continental AG is concerned with production in the factories. Supply chain planners rely heavily on the forecasts produced by Central Demand Management to plan plant operations so that customer demand is adequately met.

Even though I'm only in my first couple of weeks of my internship, I have already learned so much and am seeing opportunities to apply the knowledge I gained from my first six months at Moore. In the next few posts, I will explain more about Continental AG, my work, and a little about German culture. Until then, enjoy the beginning of your summer!

Journal Entry #2

Summer, Soccer and Skepticism



Abuzz with excitement over the European Soccer Championships, summer has truly arrived in Europe. With a recent victory over Greece, Germany is into the semifinals and can now say they “own” their Mediterranean friends financially and in sport. Sadly, some claim politicians are using the European Championships to distract their citizens

from the deep financial crisis that is sure to persist for the rest of the year. With unemployment rates at record lows, on the other hand, the crisis has not had a major impact on the German economy. The German people are still skeptical about their future economic success and have concerns about the potential fallout that would occur should one of the European Union (EU) countries default or defect from the political and monetary union.

Nevertheless, the European Championships offer the continent a brief reprieve from their financial woes. Even the reserved German people, who do not typically express their patriotism openly, sing and honk their horns through the streets with every victory and hang flags on cars and in windows. Right after the European Championships end, the traditional vacation months of July and August will be upon us and for those fortunate enough to be able to take an extended vacation this year, this period will offer a continued break. We can only hope that when autumn arrives, leaders will have agreed upon long-term solutions.

Until then, I will continue to be busy in my internship at Continental AG (“Conti”). In my last entry, I gave you a brief overview of my assignment. Since that entry, I have attended several workshops and started to dig deeper into my daily tasks and other projects, about which I would like to tell you.

Two of the workshops I attended were off-site retreats where we met with colleagues from all over the world to solve problems, set vision and build the “Conti Team Spirit”. In these workshops, I was able to go even deeper into many topics that had been mentioned as I was being trained. Also in these workshops, I experienced first-hand just how global Conti is. I met colleagues from Malaysia, Italy, Spain, Portugal, France,

Romania, Ecuador, Brazil, and yes, the USA.



We also had a little fun at these workshops, including attending a crime mystery city tour through Lueneburg and a climbing exercise near Schneverdingen. You can see photos from these events in this post, including one with me and my co-workers in Central Demand Management.

Furthermore, I have been working on a

couple of projects in the past couple of weeks. One revolves around the new EU Label regulations which go into effect in November 2012. Every tire that is sold in the EU will be required to have these labels which inform consumers about three categories of a tire's capabilities: rolling resistance (fuel consumption), wet grip and noise emission. While I cannot go into details about this project, I can say that I am assisting with making sure that the numbering structure for our tires is correct. This structure has a major effect on plant operations.

Another project that I have been working on also has an impact on the plants. Each forecast entered into our systems should be broken down into weekly buckets so that plants can plan production. However, sometimes this is not done by those responsible for producing the forecast, at times for a good reason (such as bulk orders or plant shutdowns). My job is to analyze the forecast data, request more information from the forecasters, and document reasonable reasons why a forecast was not split.

You may also be wondering what language my work is being performed in since Conti is both German and global. Many of my conversations in the office are in German and some are in English. I am really fortunate to have patient co-workers that allow me to practice my German on them! Most of the smaller meetings have been entirely in German, while the larger workshops are conducted in English. All of the computer programs are able to be accessed in English and some are also available in German and other languages.

With the uncertainties that the financial crisis is causing and the somewhat paradoxical success of German businesses (Continental AG, along with many German auto manufacturers, are forecasting record or near-record sales for 2012), one thing is certain: I will be busy analyzing forecasts and inventory positions, as well as learning about the worldwide operations of Continental AG.

In my next entry, I would like to tell you more about the German culture and update you on my work. Until then, *Alles Gute* and Go Deutschland!!
