Leeds Exchange Program

Regarding the Leeds exchange program, which took place from 29th April to 20th May 2018, I undertook my three-week work placement at *Adept Consulting Engineers Ltd*.

Adept is a small company, existing for over 10 years now, with currently about 40 workers providing civil and structural consultancy services to meet local, national and international construction clients' requirements. There are three offices (London, Manchester and Leeds) with their headquarters located in Leeds.

In my everyday life in Germany, I am doing an apprenticeship at *e-Spirit AG*.

With their headquarters in Dortmund and several branches all over the world, *e-Spirit* still is one of the smaller IT-companies on the market. However, their Content Management System, called 'FirstSpirit™', is one of the market-leading products in the CMS-Business.

What I did at *Adept Consulting Engineers Ltd*.

My main task at *Adept* was to 'make intranet great again', this started with a meeting about what exactly had to be done.

After reviewing the old version I started with changing the given 'table-layout' to the more common way of floating containers, including refactoring the code and updating it to HTML5. In fact it was not a task give to me, but an important one for the performance of the page.

Since updating to newer HTML- tags damaged every style on the page, refactoring the CSS was my next task.

With that finished I began dealing with the individual requests from my co-workers, like redoing or deleting several pages to make everything look more appealing.

To keep track of the staff at *Adept*, there were pictures included on the home page. On hover, they show the name, extension- numbers and job- titles of the displayed person. For upcoming events a calendar was added and for passed ones a gallery. The gallery contains a slideshow made of CSS and HTML only.

While putting all important folders and documents under 'HR' and 'Policies' I got several server errors, which let to me learning a little about server networking and monitoring as well. The server errors were caused by missing config-files or authentication problems.

Between the tasks, I wrote a guide on how to edit the intranet and an article about what I did at *Adept*, so it can be published under the 'work placements' section on the intranet.

The last few days I familiarised myself with the Microsoft plugin called 'Power BI', which can be used for displaying data like finances and statistics. This should automate generating dashboards from the ACCESS database in the future. However, Power BI gave me a hardship by always denying the connection to ACCESS, because it was 'not registered on the local machine'.

After reinstalling an older version, which solved the error before, another error occurred saying accde- files are not supported.
This led to the decision of keeping the old way to generate dashboards.

Finally, I made a hand-over of the Intranet on my last day at work, for this I kept the code a simple as possible. The hand-over included a demo and explanation, of how to edit and maintain the intranet.

Differences between *Adept* and *e-Spirit*

The main difference between *Adept* and *e-Spirit* is in what they provide. While *e-Spirit* has an actual product they sell, which of course also includes support and consulting, *Adept* is specified in consulting.

This leads to them having just a small IT-department with only managing system integration issues.

Regarding the departments and floor plans of the two companies, *Adept* has, at least in the Leeds office, one open- plan office for all the workers. In contrast to that *e-Spirit* usually provides a separate office for every two to four people, depending on the projects they work at. There are a few open- plan offices as well, but the maximum is about 10 persons there.

My general working hours at *Adept* were similar to mine at *e-Spirit*. In total I had to work 8 ½ hours a day, which already included my lunch-break. *Adept* provided me an one hour lunch and at *e-Spirit* I usually take 30 minutes, since I have to work 8 hours daily, by law, in Germany.

In addition to all this, I had to wear smart- casual clothes at *Adept*, which is usually no issue at e-Spirit, if there is no customer meeting.

Differences between England and Germany

There are a few similarities the English and Germans have, for example their sense of humour or the noisy children on busses, in the morning.

The thing I noticed first after arriving in Leeds was how the pedestrians ignored every traffic light.

Which leads me to traffic in Leeds. Going by bus is a lot more comfortable in Germany, you usually can count on the bus arriving according to schedule, or at the latest, 20 minutes after that.

Busses in Leeds take their schedule not that serious and more as a recommendation. With that the busdriver is highly motivated to:

- come late
    - have a smoke outside even though the bus is already late
- leave earlier than expected

With their way of greeting shop assistants or bus drivers in general, the English are a lot politer, than the average Germans.

What shocked me most, while walking through Leeds, was the people's affinity with cropped tops. There are some in Germany, who like wearing these too, but it seems like nearly every woman or girl I saw in the city wore one.
Once there even was a two- year- old sitting next to her mother on the bus,with a cropped top on.

From a German point of view most of the English clothes, especially the combinations of them, seem a odd.

Another point I noticed on the street was how many homeless people there are in the center of Leeds. I would not dare to say: 'Germany does not have that many homeless persons on the street', but one usually does not notice them, since they are in less public places.

Ideas and Inspiration for me

The short stay in England gave me the incentive to deepen my spoken and written English skills. Additionally, my wish to work in England for at least a year, after I finish my apprenticeship, was encouraged.
Walking passed all the charity-shops, on our day trip to York, made me think about picking up my voluntary work, at church, again.

Final conclusion

In my opinion the program was an informative and helpful experience. My work placement gave me the opportunity to have a view into a non IT-company and the way an IT- Specialist works in that case. Since in a smaller company the IT- Specialist does system integration, some of the work I did was outside my field. Which was a nice perspective to explore.

Furthermore, the challenge of handling tasks and answering questions without help was wonderful. The radio always playing in the office had a very calming effect on me.

Apart from that, I had the chance to experience the English lifestyle in every aspect, including buses never being on time and the general politeness when talking to each other.

Getting used to speaking English was a hard task to face. Since in our freetime some of the participants usually met up, there was no actual chance to start thinking in English. But staying with a host family helped a little to solve that issue, even though it gave me a hardship getting to work and sometimes even into the city centre.

All the people I met here were friendly and helpful. If I had the chance, I would do this kind of exchange again.

Placement Experience

Report for Adept Intranet

My work placement at Adept gave me the great opportunity to experience working in England as well as a brief idea of the English lifestyle.

Additionally to this Adept granted me a valuable insight into the work of an IT-specialist in a non- IT-company.

During these three weeks I was assigned to 'make intranet great again' including:

- Updating code to HTML 5

- Change old way of displaying content to a modern web-development one

- Added a gallery with a slideshow

- Several smaller layout and content changes

With this and the daily update on information which should be displayed, my web-developing-skills improved in every possible way.

Furthermore I learned how to read and understand a Network Topology on the basis of the Adept one.