The purpose of my internship was to gain exposure in a different hotel department other than the one I am currently employed and if possible try to get in a prominent luxury hotel chain in order to experience the luxury service environment and culture. I’ve been working full-time for the past four years at an non-union independent own property, The Strand hotel located at 33 west 32 street in midtown Manhattan. I have gained experience in front office operations inclusive of: bellman/doorman, guest service agent, night auditor and reservations. In addition I first started as an intern in the F&B department prior to my hiring as an assistant to the Director of F&B. For my internship I had a very clear and predetermined goal. My intention was to position myself in the housekeeping department of a hotel with preferably union contract employees in order to enhance my industry understanding and management skills. The Carlyle hotel located at 35 East 76 street in the upper east side of Manhattan was the ideal choice that embodied everything I hoped to find. Rosewood Hotels and Resorts, L.L.C. have constantly been rated among the top luxury hotel groups in the world. Even the idea of working at the iconic Carlyle was thrilling.

When the General Manager of the Strand, Mr. John Loizos offered to give me a recommendation letter and personally contact the GM of The Carlyle, Mr. Giovanni Beretta to put in a good word for me I was honored and grateful. Although internships are offered within the company to employees at the Strand or our smaller sister property and in the sales & revenue offices located off-site when I explained my goals and intentions of getting exposure in a luxury service environment and how it will give me a fresh perspective and maybe even new ideas to the company Mr. Loizos agreed and helped. Taking your work serious and being an example among staff members can go a long way and open doors for you. I always try to do my best and push to succeed the highest of working and ethical standards in my job. Willingly taking the responsibility to do extra work and be the first to come and last to leave without counting hours.

Coming from a hard working family restaurant background with entrepreneurial spirit has given me immense advantage and is my most valuable strength.

The first two weeks at the Carlyle I reported to the Director of Operations, Mr. Massimiliano Puglisi who introduced me to the team in the executive office where the Guest Relations department is. I shadowed and helped the Guest Relations representatives and learned how they communicate with existing and future guests. Communication is done through company computers and servers by email for safety reasons due to the high profile patrons the Carlyle attracts. I immediately was told that there is no “No, unfortunately we don’t provide this service” Service requests are taken all in the upmost urgency to complete and guest representatives have the authority to “pull ranks” in any department in order to satisfy a guest. I was told that upon addressing a guest you have to be elegant with a soft spoken voice and always use names and provide a warm smile. We configured rooms went out to buy special products when needed and collaborated with housekeeping and engineering. Having front desk experience helped me a lot because guest relations uses the POS system for all reports, traces, reservation info on guests. OPERA is the industry standard and I was happy to show my knowledge and be extremely useful in handling it. I also realized that I am very good in communicating and addressing guests in a formal and empathetic manner and easily adhered to Rosewood standards of communication. After the second week I requested to be assigned to the housekeeping department and under the supervision of the Director, Mrs. Cecile Epperson. At first I was introduced to all members of the staff and was assigned to follow a Floor Manager and learn his every day routine. In the morning the managers assign floors and responsibilities to Floor Supervisors and then they assign specific rooms and tasks to room attendants and housekeepers. I was surprised at first with the amount of paperwork Floor Supervisors and managers have to fill and reports and emails in the end of their shift. In the afternoon I shadowed the Assistant Director with room inspections and possible inspector arriving rooms and VIP’S. I also learned about how the attendants and housekeepers are given “credits” for every task finished and how to update the system when they give their days report. The experience of managing and supervising employees that have a union contract is very sensitive. Union employees have a high sense of bonding among them and act like a big family. Managers and supervisors that progressed from within to management are the most respected and can use their influence to get things done quicker. As an outsider and a forty year old student that was doing his internship I was first handled with suspicion and distance. The way you look and if you have an overly serious and professionally attitude may become a weakness and make people not trust you. When I realized that I have to get closer and friendlier with employees and started talking and looking the other way at minor misgivings I was more accepted. The work in the housekeeping department is very hands-on and minor typicality’s are easily forgiven. When a manager that gives employees a hard time is working everybody works slower and nobody stays for overtime when there are call-outs (a daily phenomenon) Rada Mraz the Assistant Director told me. I came to understand that this is like a balancing act of cause and causality. You have to abbey to company standards, but without overdoing it and keep in consideration the human factor. And above all communicate with empathy and understanding to all employees while being steady with holding your ground.

In a daily basis I came to be in charge of departures and ran the floors to update the status of the rooms and inform the front desk of any guests who left without passing by the front desk to check out and confirm late departures and their time. The Director, Cecile Epperson tried to make me understand that room inspections are the backbone of a housekeeping manager’s work. After room attendant’s clean rooms a supervisor passes by and makes the final inspection by providing all the finishing touches to make the room impeccable. Then there are three managers that go through again rooms that are flagged as VIP’S, possible inspectors, residents and guests who may have had an issue and be prone to complaints. On top of that the Director and Assistant Director conducted random inspections to see if everybody did their job. Doing these inspections with the two directors where every small detail was taken into account made me realize that I need work with spotting these details and must have a checklist and memorize it.

I was also assigned various projects. A bit too many in my personal opinion because it took time from experiencing the operational aspect of the job. These included: A). Updating and filing the attendance cards for all 2015 B). Updating and filling linen inventory, C). Making a folder with Quality Assurance standards with laminated photos. D). Making an Excel spreadsheet with all runner calls in the pm shift from April to June E). Valet service standard procedures and script cards. F). Bed making training guide with photos and checklist G). Packing/Unpacking training guide with photos and checklist.

These projects of course gave me the opportunity to polish my office skills which are not my strongest suit. I had some difficulties with Excel formulas.

I am very grateful for the chance given to do my internship at The Carlyle hotel. This was a very positive and fruitful experience. Post internship I will continue to work on my housekeeping skills. I already help with inspections at the Strand when time permits it. And when the time comes I will transfer to the housekeeping department which is the obvious next department to go and complete my round in all hotel operations.