

Internship Report

[REDACTED]
MSc. Master Elective ID5010

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Description of the application process

My internship application process started with emailing back and forth. I have always been dreaming about working in the aviation industry, especially at KLM. Thus, I made an application to an internship position at KLM but my application was rejected because of project timing. However, my motivation to work at KLM caught the attention of the lady receiving my application, so she shared my contact information with one of her colleagues looking for an intern. In this way, I applied to the internship position in flight team.

First, I had a video interview with [REDACTED] (product strategy manager) about my motivation to work in flight team at KLM and my skills needed for the internship. During the video interview, both parties introduced themselves and discussed the details of the internship. At the end of the interview, he mentioned that they will decide to invite me another interview after reviewing all candidates' interviews. Two weeks after the video interview, I had another interview with two product strategy managers from the flight team at KLM headquarters. In this interview, they asked me competency and behavioral questions to make me proof that I have certain skills necessary for the internship position. I tried to answer the questions by giving real-life examples. They rounded the interview out by indicating that they will call me to say their final decision. After a week, I got a call from them and learned the good news. Before my internship starts, I presented all the necessary documents to the company, signed the contract and enrolled the internship elective.

Description of the company

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines is the flag carrier airline of the Netherlands. KLM is headquartered in Amstelveen, with its hub at nearby Amsterdam Airport Schiphol. It is part of the Air France–KLM group, and a member of the Sky Team airline alliance. KLM operates scheduled passenger and cargo services to 145 destinations. KLM incorporate several different departments into its structure. One of those departments where I did my internship is Customer Experience which is responsible for improving the customer journey (figure 1).

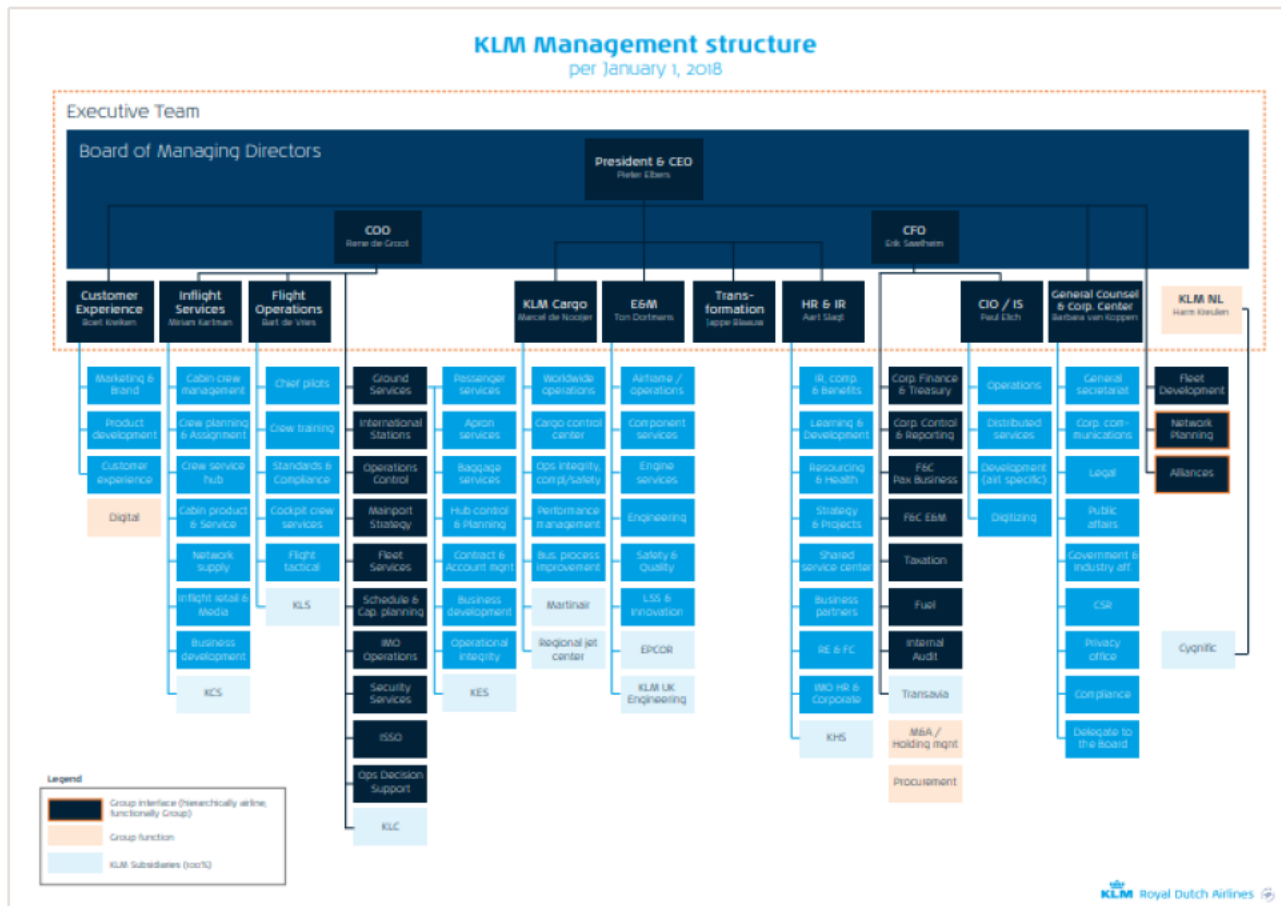


Figure 1: Customer experience department is one of the departments included in KLM Dutch Airlines

Internship goals and assignment

The main goal of my internship was to support the flight team in the topics, like customer experience during the flight, including crew/service, food & beverage, seats, cabin interior, in-flight entertainment, etc. Thus, a particular internship assignment was not given to me. As an intern my role was helping the team with developing new concepts, conducting user researches and boosting the way that they use for design thinking/doing in product and service design. My scope of work was varied from small tasks to bigger projects.

Personal learning goals and behavior

The main personal goal of my internship was to gain hands-on experience in general because I didn't have any work experience. I wanted to expand my understanding and knowledge of how my academic learning applies in a real-world setting. However, there were, of course, several specific skills that I want to gain or refine. For example:

- 1# To better analyze quantitative data, statistical data and determine how to use this knowledge in the product development process**
- 2# To better design new systems, products or services and evaluate them**
- 3# To find and research information from various sources or people that can be helpful**
- 4# To experience how design and research theory applies in real life**
- 5# To coordinate events involving groups of people**
- 6# To better demonstrate the ability to perform certain job functions previously unknown**
- 7# To better plan and organize a project**
- 8# To gain a better understanding of the specific skills and personal characteristics needed to be successful in professional life**
- 9# To assume responsibility for a particular duty**
- 10# To make decisions or alternatives within a certain situation**

Description of the tasks performed during the internship

1. Doing Benchmark and Trend Analysis for Evaluation of “Anytime For You” Catering Service

For evaluation of a catering service available in long-haul business class flights, a benchmark study was given to me as a first task. I started my research by looking at similar services provided by competitors in the aviation industry. I noticed emerging trends in the industry based on my findings, so I also check if there are some other examples of these trends in other industries. Moreover, I visited KLM Catering Services to see the whole catering process. After gaining insight into raising trends, I presented my findings and suggestions for the further development of the service.

Also, I involved in the preparation of a session for development of the same service. In the session, I presented my knowledge on how to cluster and visualize the data coming from different sources.

ACHIEVED LEARNING GOALS: 3#, 5#, 6#, 9#

2. Visualizing Medium Haul Flight Vision

Another task given to me was visualizing the new medium haul flight vision in a way that all KLM employees from different departments can understand it and transfer it into practice. After receiving data to be visualized, I set the requirements for the outcome. I looked for examples infographics where similar kind of data is shown simply. I asked my team for feedback after creating a draft visualization. Based on their feedback, I improved the visualization and shared it with my team.

ACHIEVED LEARNING GOALS: 2#

3. Testing and Evaluating the New Onboard Connectivity Concept

I involved in different stages of onboard connectivity project. First, I involved usability research phase of the project. I designed two different questionnaires for different focus groups together with three colleagues. Challenging part of the research was getting credible insights from different passenger groups having completely different experience with the concept.

During questionnaire development, I had to be in touch with a colleague from Air France. This situation allowed me to learn how to better communicate with people having a different professional background. After the usability test of the concept, I analyzed the qualitative and quantitative data together with the team. Although I had quite a bit experience with analyzing qualitative data, I didn't have any change to analyses quantitative data before. Therefore, this stage of the project was a great opportunity for me to learn statistical data and determine how to use the information in evaluating a concept. Furthermore, I took an opportunity to learn Microsoft Excel more and present statistical data in a meaningful way. In the next phases of the project, I attended the meetings with stakeholders about technical feasibility and adaptation of the concept. These meetings allowed me to gain insights on specific skills needed to be successful in professional life and to better demonstrate the ability to perform certain job functions previously unknown.

ACHIEVED LEARNING GOALS: 1#, 3#, 5#, 6#, 7#, 8#, 9#, 10#

4. Generating Service Design Ideas for Integration of the New Business Class Seat Features to the Cabin

The service design project named integration of new business class seat features to the cabin was the only project that I planned and organized by myself during my internship. Thus, it helped me to achieve almost all of my personal learning goals. I started working on the project immediately after the briefing.

As a first step of the project, I created a mind map on the project topic to identify potential product integration problems more or less and have an idea about how to approach the problem. I chose a couple of areas that can be the most problematic and made a research plan involving different methods. For the research stage, I wanted to try user research methods that I had the least experience to improve my user research skills more.

I started with benchmarking to find out how other airlines integrate similar seat features to their cabins and find examples of the use of similar product features in other industries. I found so many inspirational examples for the project from the benchmark that I did. Then, I continued my research with interviewing with KLM business class cabin attendants to learn how things work in business class cabin from their perspective. I designed the interview guide in a way that participants can sensitize the research topic step by step. Data collected from the interviews were analyzed and insights gained from it were used to develop the next research setup.

For the next step of my research, I aimed to understand passenger mindset and their future needs from business class cabin. Thus, I used a generative research method which hasn't been tried before so that I can develop my generative user research skills. I made the research plan through the knowledge that I gained from Convivial Toolbox written Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders and Pieter Jan Stappers. The generative research has been done with 7 business class passengers in KLM Crown Lounge (figure2).



Figure 2: Participants created their collages to tell their business class experience

After analysis of the generative research, I created a use case diagram to see the whole picture again. In the same line with the use case diagram, I generated a couple of service design ideas and shared them with my project mentors. However, I realized that I need to understand more passengers' experience in the cabin after discussing my initial service design ideas with my mentors. Therefore, I conducted another set of interviews with business class passengers. For the interviews, I got one of my colleague's help because I needed an airport access permission to do the interviews by myself. As conducting this project, I also learnt how to find people that can be helpful to achieve a certain goal. After the interviews, I combined all of my insights gained from different researches and framed the design problem. Finally, I came up with a service design idea and presented my work to my team in my last week at KLM.

ACHIEVED LEARNING GOALS: 1#, 2#, 3#, 4#, 7#, 8#, 9#, 10#

5. Moderating a Co-creation Session about Staff Motivation

I had an opportunity to work with another department at KLM during my internship. I moderated a co-creation session that a couple of KLM employees from different departments joined. The aim of the co-creation session was to learn how to motivate the cabin crew about take the initiative about a certain problem during the boarding by letting know what effort other departments put for the same problem. The outcome of the session was expected to be a graphical user interface. In order to achieve this goal, I planned the session in a way that participants can reflect their needs visually with the help of some materials prepared by me.

The session began with brainstorming, then the participants designed their GUI and shared their designs with each other (figure 3 and 4). The session was quite successful in terms of getting insights about user needs. It was also a pretty good experience for me since it was the first time that I coordinate an event involving different groups of people by myself.

After the session, I presented the outcome of the session to colleagues working in X station and designed draft of the GUI. I also helped the colleagues at X station with my design skills during the development of GUI.



Figure 3: Participants created their collages with the help of triggering materials.



Figure 4: Participants voted for the most appreciated features of designs.

ACHIEVED LEARNING GOALS: 1#, 2#, 4#, 5#, 6#

6. Designing, Testing and Evaluating a Product for Long Haul Flights

Another project that I worked on was aiming to develop an inflight product for use of economy class travelers. When I involved in the project, several versions of the product were developed and tested. I was informed on project objective and learnings from previous prototype tests during the project briefing.

I began working on the project by setting design requirements based on learnings from the previous prototype tests. I designed a new version of the product and got feedback on it from my project mentor. After finalizing the new design, I prepared a set of questions aiming to evaluate the usability of the product.

I tested the prototype with randomly selected KLM passengers together with my project mentor (figure 5). Outcomes of the test were also analyzed by us and they were reflected on the new version of the design. For the new design, I also asked for feedback from different colleagues to get feedback faster. Next prototype test was done by us in the same way. However, the design couldn't be finalized as the company decided to focus another project serving at the same purpose. While working on this project, I could find an opportunity to better design new products and evaluate them.



Figure 5: The prototype test was done at gates in Schiphol.

ACHIEVED LEARNING GOALS: 1#, 2#, 7#, 8#, 9#

7. Analyzing Emerging Service Trends for Unaccompanied Minors

I did desk research on the topic of unaccompanied minors onboard. The aim of the research was to find out emerging trends in UM services offered by other airlines and how future parenting can affect the UM services. I started my research by looking through the UM services offered by different airlines and customer reviews on it. After learning potential parent's expectations from the service, I continued my research on how those expectations can be different in the future. I tried to create a future scenario for the service by comparing different generations' understanding of parenting. At the end of my research, I presented my findings to my project mentor.

ACHIEVED LEARNING GOALS: 1#, 3#, 6#

8. Doing Media Research on Emotional Support Animals Onboard

Another desk research done during my internship was on the topic called emotional support animals onboard. Since it is also an ethical topic, I am asked to do a research focusing on how media reflect this topic. Despite I had quite a bit of experience in doing desk research, it was the first time for me to do a media research. This task allowed me to learn a new desk research technique. I presented my findings to my project mentor as I did before.

ACHIEVED LEARNING GOALS: 1#, 3#, 6#

9. Conducting User Research about KLM Crown Lounge

In the last weeks of my internship, I did a user research about KLM crown lounge. The objective of the research was to find tipping point of the lounge experience by interviewing customers. When I involved in the research, a research on a different lounge has been already done. Thus, the same approach was decided to be used at the beginning of the research. However, the approach and interview questions were evolved by me as receiving input from the customers. I updated the interview guide for several to receive more valuable data from customers during the research. I analyzed the outcomes of the interviews by using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis approaches. At the end of the research, I presented my work with my suggestions for future improvements.

ACHIEVED LEARNING GOALS: 1#, 3#, 6#, 9#, 10#

Experiences and insight gained during the internship

I learnt a lot from my internship at KLM. Although my expectation from the internship was just gaining some hands-on experience, doing an internship at KLM benefit me a lot more than what I expected. During my internship, I always had an opportunity to use my academic knowledge in practice. I have always been encouraged by my colleagues to try new methods and reflect my own designer point of view to work. In this way, I could actually see what I enjoy to do as a designer. Now, I feel more confident about my future career since my internship at KLM made me more aware of my skills and competences.

Experiences gained from corporate culture

It was the first time for me to work in a globally known corporate company. During my bachelor education, I did several internships in my home country, Turkey. However, none of them was as big as KLM and they were all Turkish companies. In other words, I didn't experience any sort of cultural difference in my previous internships. Thus, it was challenging for me to understand the corporate culture or the Dutch way of working at first. It was an interesting and great experience for me to work in an almost nonhierarchical environment. Although I struggled a bit as adapting to KLM culture, this great working experience at KLM helped me to improve my soft skills and to gain a better understanding of personal characteristics needed to be successful in professional life.