DYLAN PATT

LINKEDIN



INTERVIEW DONE BY AMANDA LECK

Dylan pursued a dual specialisation in operations and finance at National University of Singapore. He is now an operations analyst at Cumberland (DRW), seamlessly combining his operational skills with a desire to learn more about cryptocurrency. This unique role in crypto asset operations allows him to excel professionally while pursuing his passion. His prior experience as an operations analyst at Goldman Sachs adds to his more than one year of experience in the operations field.

WHAT SPARKED YOUR INTEREST IN CRYPTO ASSET OPERATIONS AND LED YOU TO PURSUE A CAREER IN THIS FIELD?

At NUS, I was initially interested in specialising in operations, but my interest shifted towards finance after taking one of the core finance mods FIN3701 taught by Prof Ruth. I decided to combine my interests in both banking and operations, which led me to my internship at Goldman Sachs, where I worked as an Operations Analyst. I enjoyed working in an environment that challenged and stimulated me, but more importantly it exposed me to the wider ecosystem in finance. This interest in operations, as well as my curiosity about Crypto, led me to explore opportunities in both areas at DRW currently.

WHAT IS A DAY IN THE LIFE OF YOUR JOB LIKE?

In my role, I am responsible for monitoring counterparty requests, conducting investigations into operational systems, and provide support to our Sales & Trading team. Risk monitoring is also an important part of the job.

As a member of the operations team, I see our role as being the gatekeepers of risks, ensuring efficiency, accuracy, and effectiveness in our work. I regularly attend catch ups with colleagues to discuss career development and improvement areas, and meet with my head to provide updates on my work. I have also been blessed with a wonderful team that also host regular meetings to discuss improvements and generate new ideas. Working at a global company has exposed me to different working styles and cultures, which has been a valuable experience for me.

WHAT ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS AND CHALLENGES THAT YOU FACE IN YOUR JOB? HOW DO YOU MITIGATE THOSE CHALLENGES?

While there are certainly challenges in my role as an Operations Analyst, I see them as opportunities for growth and innovation. One of the biggest challenges is maintaining a high level of accuracy and efficiency, which requires close attention to detail and constant improvement of our processes. However, my team is skilled at mitigating these risks by finding new ways to automate our processes and reduce

the need for manual touchpoints. We are always striving to innovate and automate more tasks to make our work more efficient and effective. Despite the challenges, I see these efforts as a highlight of my job, as they allow me to continuously learn and improve my skills.

WHAT INTERESTS YOU ABOUT THE SECTOR? WHAT ARE SOME KEY TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS SECTOR/INDUSTRY?

Over the past year, the crypto industry has been abuzz with activity, both positive and negative. It has been a significant year for many, reminiscent of 2008 when several key industry players were removed from the market. The primary trend in crypto at the moment is the focus on oversight. We need to ensure that strict risk-management and control measures are put in place to prevent incidents like FTX and Luna from happening again. As operations professionals, we play a crucial role in supporting these control and risk-management initiatives.

WHAT ARE SOME HARD AND SOFT SKILLS THAT ARE IMPORTANT FOR THIS ROLE?

Some soft skills that would be important would be not being afraid to make mistakes, asking questions and teamwork. As a fresh graduate, as you would want to grasp everything, there would be an initial tendency to jump straight into it. However, it is better to ask as many questions as you can in the simplest form, as well as consider the upstream and downstream processes that would be affected by what you do. These questions can lead to a greater appreciation of your work, as well as lead to greater projects and bigger things. Perhaps, one could approach their mentor in the company or a colleague with suggestions and hindsight of areas for improvement of certain issues.

In the workplace, there is a tendency to stick within your comfort zone. However, to ensure personal growth as a professional in your career, it would be good to expand your horizons and try to understand the point of view of another member of the team or individuals in the company, as well as what matters to them. Only when one gets down and puts in the hours on a daily basis will there be growth and results. I feel that this concept of getting things dirty also comes with consistency, where one strives to be the best that they can be, of being able to understand everything that is given. Another skill that I feel would be beneficial would be teamwork. Working in a globally-based team, I have come to understand the different perspectives of different colleagues worldwide and drew a lot of knowledge from them. I would also say that experience is the best teacher, where listening to the opinions and views of different colleagues globally as well as within my own team would add to personal growth the most, coupled with maintaining the consistency of learning constantly.

For hard skills, understanding the financial ecosystem would be of utmost importance. Knowing the direct people being affected near you would be helpful, as well as familiarizing yourself with new terms and knowledge which are constantly introduced. Also, as there is a trend towards technical automation and coding nowadays, equipping yourself with this knowledge would allow you to value-add to every company that you join.

HOW WAS YOUR CAMPUS LIFE AND HOW DID IT PREPARE YOU FOR YOUR WORK NOW? (CCA, PROJECTS, CURRICULUM, INTERNSHIPS OR OTHERS)

During my first two years, I resided at Tembusu College and was an active member of the sports committee, where I helped to organise and plan events for sports events. As the captain of the IFG Touch Rugby team, I learned valuable leadership skills that helped to shape my communication ability, especially during the pandemic when maintaining relationships with people became more challenging. Campus life provided me with opportunities to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds and fields of study, which prepared me for working in the workplace, where collaboration with different people is a constant. Ultimately, my experiences in campus life taught me the importance of effective communication and teamwork.

WHAT SKILLS AND PROGRAMMES DO YOU THINK WILL HELP CURRENT NUS BUSINESS STUDENTS HOPING TO FOLLOW IN YOUR FOOTSTEPS?

NUS Business School has a plethora of solid programs and opportunities to learn skills that are extremely transferable to the workforce. I would personally split the skills you learn into two main branches - your technical, 'hard' skills and your business, 'soft' skills. Your technicals can be, at least at an academic level, mastered through your school modules and projects, but to take it a step further, I would encourage you to see how the work you does as an actual real-life project with potential outcomes: whether you're doing a financial analysis of a company, entering a negotiation for a project or even if you're conducting a study on an unfamiliar industry. In terms of how your more professional/interpersonal skills go, as cliche as this is - a blend of teamwork, empathy, courage and determination was what I found helped me the most in my university years and I still try my best to incorporate these in my life today. Teamwork to work together well, empathy to remember that nobody is perfect, courage to take leaps that make you uncomfortable and determination to follow through when times are hard. In terms of programmes - I have to admit that I wished I had attended more of them! What I wished I did more of would be case competitions - the best part of that is that there will be a case competition for everything that interests you. Do you like marketing? There's one for that. Are you keen on supply chains? There's one for you too. Other than case competitions, stock pitches and forums are also great opportunities for you to learn about the industry that you're interested in and practise some of the hard/soft skills above. One of the case competitions that I really enjoyed was the Dragonfly stock pitch which I did with a friend of mine where we were blessed to be finalists!

WHAT IS ONE PIECE OF ADVICE THAT YOU WOULD GIVE TO FRESH GRADUATES LOOKING TO PURSUE A CAREER IN CRYPTO ASSET OPERATIONS?

One thing that I wish that someone had told me previously is that it is okay to be unsure at first of what you want to do. It is difficult for one to decide quickly and one should not put immense pressure on themselves to not know immediately. After I took a python related module I decided that I did not want it as a full-time career but I wanted to retain the skill

learnt in my future career. I found the skills from HR extremely useful and I wanted them to permeate into my future career itself. Personally, I loved following the life cycle of things and decided on operations. I only discovered what I wanted to do after stepping out of my comfort zone. While things may seem daunting sometimes, do not be afraid to try something difficult as there is no harm in trying.

Another thing would be the idea of first principles thinking. It breaks down everything you do into different parts, which is what I wished someone had told me. It involves asking questions and breaking them down by asking 'why' and 'how until you finish it and have no other way to explain it further. It makes you sure of the context of what you are doing. This is important as only by knowing the full depths of the issue can you continue to address any problems in an efficient and effective way. Another piece of advice would be to attempt difficult modules. University is a time when you can learn things and have space to learn safely. For many difficult modules, you can have a myriad of knowledge and takeaways extracted and learnt as compared to basic modules.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF CRYPTO ASSETS EVOLVING IN THE FUTURE, AND WHAT NEW DEVELOPMENTS OR TRENDS DO YOU THINK WILL SHAPE THE INDUSTRY IN YEARS TO COME?

After this period of uncertainty in Crypto as a whole, in the near future, I can see the industry bouncing back in the future. More regulatory guidelines are put in place as well as risk guidelines. Will be more secure in the future, hopefully, to see more stability and make the asset class a lot more legitimate. Different use cases - my hope for crypto.