

**Former placements – In their own words**

**Stephanie –Placement, then Project Manager.**

I was studying for a Masters in Translation (English/German into French) in France. I needed to do a five month work placement to complete my Masters. I sent my application to Atlas Translations and completed a translation test. They accepted my application and I moved to London in April 1998. I had never worked in a professional environment before and I remember being very shy and nervous during my first week. My supervisor really looked after me, taking the time to explain how things were working in the company.

As a trainee, I got the chance to be trusted with many different tasks, from small translation jobs to audio transcription work, credit control, contacting Atlas’ suppliers and clients. I remember speaking on the phone to some of my fellow students who were doing work placements in other companies. They were saying how they were given non-important, repetitive and often boring tasks. And I remember feeling quite lucky at Atlas, as I was challenged with many different things and trusted with important work.

During my time as a trainee, my supervisor gave me the opportunity to manage small projects for their clients. I discovered that I enjoyed much more working as a Project Manager than as a translator. It was a fantastic eye-opener which allowed me to pursue a career in Project Management for ten years.

On a more personal level, the staff at Atlas Translations became my friends and we socialised outside the office. For a young French girl, fresh out of university, in a totally foreign environment, far away from home, friends and family, this was wonderful. With my colleagues, I discovered and came to love London where I lived for ten years.

After completing my work placement in August 1998, I went back to France and graduated. Just a month later, Clare Suttie contacted me as they were hiring a new Project Manager and wanted to offer me the position. It did not take me long to accept her offer!

Working at Atlas Translations as a Project Manager has proven to be a very important time in my career. At some point, I helped a client with subtitling requirements. I got the opportunity to spend a couple of days in our supplier’s office to learn about the technical requirements of subtitling.

After about two years at Atlas Translations, I joined a company developing a subtitling program. They actually hired me due to my subtitling experience gained at Atlas Translations. Unfortunately, they suffered from the economy in 2001 and were forced to let me go. But less than a month later, I was hired by the subtitling company whom had been my supplier at Atlas Translations! Small world…

I continued working in the subtitling industry for the next 7 years. However, in 2008, following my love for nature and animals, I had the opportunity to move to the North of Sweden to work as a dog handler and a sled dog guide for a tour guide company. Today, I run my own company, working as a sled dog guide in the winter and as a freelance translator in the summer.

**Kate – Placement and Team Leader**

In 2006, after graduating with languages foreign qualifications from several European Universities, I still wasn’t 100% sure what kind of career I wanted. Although I knew that I was interested in translation, having studied it as part of my course.

I decided that a work placement would be a great way of finding out more about the industry and seeing if it was for the place for me, so I applied to Atlas’ Graduate Programme and was over the moon to be accepted.

It was definitely a leap of faith because spending three months working without pay was not easily affordable. However, looking back, it is easily the best investment I ever made!

It was like a crash course in the reality of working in the translation industry. Clare and her team were lovely: they gave me a warm welcome and explained everything patiently. There was a *lot* to learn. During my time there, I found out about how an agency operates, how to handle clients and how to manage resources. I was assigned some really interesting (if slightly daunting) projects, which really helped to build my confidence and make the transition from being a student to working in business. I was subsequently promoted to WP Team Leader and have never looked back.

Clare’s support extended much further than those initial three months. She recommended me for my first job as a Production Co-ordinator for a subtitling company, where I made some amazing contacts and further experience in the post production industry and account management roles. I have stayed in good contact with Clare and all of the Project Managers who were on her team during my placement since, and they are always there to offer advice and help me out.

I spent a couple of years working in PM roles both in and out of the translation industry – doing bits of translating, proofreading and copywriting (for Atlas) in my spare time - but the thought of freelancing was increasingly at the forefront of my mind. I decided to complete my CIoL Diploma in Translation qualification while working and, in January 2009, I sat the exams. When I found out I had passed in April, I contacted Atlas straight away.

Over the past three years I have built a freelance career, working mainly as a Translator for agencies and direct clients. Again, without the tens of recommendations Clare and Anna have written for me in this time, I don’t know if it would have been possible, because unless you have a credible, well-known company to support you, very few people are willing to take a chance.

I now run my own small agency and, despite the warnings to the contrary from some in the field when I started out, I seem to be making a living doing what I love! I recently came back from three months in Colombia where I volunteered as a translator for an NGO. Yet again this was a golden opportunity, which allowed me to travel, meet some amazing people and gain a new specialism. My advice to anyone considering a career in translation would be to complete a work placement with a well-reputed agency that has a structured programme for graduates, just like Atlas. Of course, there are other ways into the industry but for me, this one was perfect!

**Gilles – Placement, then Project Manager, then Senior Project Manager**

I started a three month Work Placement at Atlas in May 2009 and wanted to join the company because I was impressed at the wide range of services offered in so many languages but also because I could see that Atlas was continuously training students.

The Welcome Pack I was provided with gave me some background about the company, an overview of my main tasks and served as a guide all along the scheme. From the first week I was integrated to the team, could do interesting work and participate in staff meetings.

During this work experience I had the opportunity to work independently on various projects, as a team with the other Work Placements or hand in hand with the Project Managers helping them with their daily tasks. I particularly appreciated that we were given the chance to deal directly with the clients and the contractors based worldwide, answering the phone and getting used to so many accents and managing some projects from start to finish on our own. The workload and tasks we were given evolved with time which made the placement always interesting and challenging and helped us further develop our skills in a friendly and international environment.

I consider my experience as a Work Placement very rewarding, the management was always open to suggestions, considering the scheme a two way exchange and offered explanations when needed or requested. Unfortunately from time to time we would make a mistake but it was not a big deal: we were at Atlas to learn!

Thanks to this work experience I gained an overall understanding of the translation industry while improving my English, had the chance to do some translation and proofreading work and was introduced to other aspects any office work involves which made me more employable.

Without any doubt this Work Placement was a bridge between my studies and the professional world and I was proud to be employed by Atlas as a Project Manager and then Senior Project Manager as a result of this experience.

**Valeria – Placement**

Smile, you're an intern! Interning (or being a work placement) is tough. No doubt about it!I firmly believe in such an experience to gain professional skills and insight into the sector one wishes to tap into and work in as an 'adult'. Learn first, get paid later - that's what I think works best.When I first started learning English I was 11 - not a particularly very young age, but the Italian public schooling system didn't cater for younger learners back in the days - I knew I had to be an interpreter. Whatever that was!I went on with this conviction over the years and embarked on a tough journey to become an interpreter. I attended the last leg of my studies at well-known SSLMT in Forlì, Italy, where simultaneous and consecutive interpreting were on my daily agenda. I fully believe that to learn a language well, you need to live in the country, though. So, after a successful Erasmus period in Spain, it was England's turn. I left on a summer’s day in 2006 with a bag full of hope and a place to work, at Atlas. I was going to be a WP - a work placement. My internship was rather long - my EU-funded Leonardo Programme required 22 weeks of proven work - and that was my good fortune, really.I'd always been very busy studying and the only work I had before that was in a clothes shop (working hours were mental, but at least it was not too taxing on my brain) so I was thrilled I could work in a REAL office for such a long time.First shock: taking calls. Let's say it was hard to understand people's accents on the phone, and Clare, my boss, wanted every WP to note down who had called and take a message - rightly so! Easily said… but practice makes perfect, doesn't it? I was also in charge of the admin work and although I was worried at first that I wouldn't get any translation experience at Atlas... I'm thankful for that! Invoicing, database updating, money chasing, bank payments, follow-up calls, classification, reorganisation of folders, creation of templates, even setting up computers and LAN networks… The list goes on. I would soon become a Team Leader, supervising new interns and showing them the way I carefully learnt over the months. And one of the best things of the job was being offered a position - and also knowing that some of the folders still are labelled according to my system :) Clare was demanding but firm, straightforward but caring, and helpful - and above always ready to get hands-on and explain something again. Of course, you had to perform!The things I learnt there are now the baseline of my business, and to be honest, you don't get told these things at uni. Having an organised mind-set does help, but these 5 months truly are golden for me.That place will always be part of a special memory for me - and a useful legacy that made my current business work so smoothly. My tip to all translators- and freelancers-to-be (of any trade): get out there and secure yourself a placement. It pays off.Thanks Atlas!

**Stacey – Placement – then Project and Communications Manager**

I had been trying to get involved with Atlas Translations by way of freelance translation, job opportunities and placements for three years. I was aware that the placement scheme is VERY popular, especially during the summer and was absolutely delighted when I had a telephone interview when working in Africa, which confirmed my space in 2011. It's understandable, therefore, that I was nervous when I arrived at Atlas!

There was absolutely no need; I was put at ease immediately by friendly staff, a cosy office, cups of tea a-plenty and information galore! I was expecting there to be a lot more staff in a busy, tense office and I was impressed to find that Atlas Translations managed to have such a significant presence in the translation community with so few staff. The office worked (and continues to do so, no doubt!) like clockwork and everything was incredibly efficient thanks to clear, concise communication. My colleagues were really approachable and there was a good buzz from the word go. I was followed closely by a Project Manager who was at hand whenever I needed questions answered (which was very often!). The staff kept calm at all times and always seemed grateful for my interest and eagerness to help.

There was a Staff Handbook and lots of other hard-copy documents (pricing list, explanation of services, etc.) for me to consult which meant that if any of the staff were busy I could look up information of my own accord. I felt that I had an important involvement in the business of the company and felt that I really was part of the team. I felt so comfortable that my colleagues thought I had been there longer than I had after just the first week, and within three I was taken on as part of the team, going out of the office to represent the company and bidding for tenders!

I am currently working as an in-house translator for a French leading video-game company and plan to launch myself into freelance translation/project management in the near future.

My placement at Atlas was my golden gate into the profession of translation and I recognise that I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for the experience I gained there. I look back fondly on my placement at Atlas, as well as my time employed there and often even wish I could turn back time and relive those days!

Thank you again for the amazing opportunity!

Other feedback we’ve been delighted to receive over recent years:

**Alina:** “*Three months have flown by so quickly and I am now at the end of my placement. It’s been amazing and I’ve learnt a lot, more than I had expected to. I’ve enjoyed my time at Atlas – the tasks were varied and interesting, but we also had fun together. Everyone has been really supportive and made me feel part of this wonderful team. On the one hand, it seems I only started yesterday, but on the other hand, it’s like I’ve been here since… well, forever. It’s been a pleasure coming to work every day knowing that it will not be the same as the previous one and there will be new tasks and challenges. I’ve learnt how much work there is behind a project and how important it is to deliver high-quality translations, by checking everything thoroughly.*

*Without this placement I would not have gained the knowledge and the confidence to set up my own business. The advice and guidance Clare has given me have been invaluable.*

*I am going to miss everyone here at Atlas, as well as the beautiful town of St Albans, but I will definitely come back for a visit (or a few) in the future”.*

**Giulia:** *“The past three months at Atlas have been amazing! I can’t believe my placement is now over.*

*I have learnt a lot from the team and each staff member has always shown support and trust in my abilities. I am now aware of the hard work hidden behind a translation project and the paramount importance of an agency’s role (from today onwards, I won’t only double check my work, I will double double double check it!) I am confident that my experience at Atlas will improve my prospects, and strengthen and guide my freelancing career in the right direction.*

*I will always look behind at my time here with a smile”.*

**Goulven**

*“The past three months have gone so fast, and I feel like I moved to the UK just yesterday. My placement at Atlas is now coming to an end, and I would like to thank the whole team for the warm welcome I was given. It has been a pleasure to learn more about freelance translation and to see how a translation agency deals with projects. I now realise the amount of work translation projects may involve. I have learnt many things and everyone has always been keen to support me in my tasks. I will miss the Atlas team and this beautiful town and country, but I’m sure I will be back some day!”*

**Kate**

I had a fantastic time working for Atlas. I loved being part of such a strong team and really appreciated the level of responsibility handed over to me. I particularly enjoyed the translating, proofreading and amending tasks I was asked to do; I also really liked dealing with clients. I got so much out of the placement, and was especially happy to be promoted to Team Leader.

**Marta**

One of the things that made the placement such a worthwhile experience was the wide range of practical things I learned. Things that you don't really learn at university. The majority of my placement was basic project management, plus some administrative and other ad hoc duties. Additionally, I was responsible for the translation of part of the company website from English into Spanish, the co-ordination of company courses and organisation of the Atlas Open Day for suppliers. I further represented the company at three different language events. I learned from every single experience.

**Ilenia**

My experience at Atlas was without any doubt interesting and very worthwhile. Working with the Atlas team was a great experience as they made me feel comfortable from the very first day. They carefully explained to me all the tasks I had to carry out and helped me through them. The placement involved a range of various tasks, from dealing with invoices and administrative work to checking translations carried out by professional translators. I really enjoyed dealing with private clients and professional translators and interpreters.

The three months at Atlas provided me with a better idea of how the translation industry works, and an opportunity not only to develop my professional skills but also to gain the confidence required to start my career in the translation industry.

**Isabel**

Doing an internship at Atlas Translations was an amazing professional experience for me because I learnt how a translation company works and now I have the skills to work as a project manager. Now I feel I'm ready to work as a professional in the translation industry and I believe this wouldn't have been possible without taking the internship at Atlas. My colleagues were all very hard-working and really friendly, so a pleasure to work with. I strongly recommend getting a placement at this company to any translation students or recent translation graduates who want to start building their career – they won't regret being an Atlas member.

**Natalie**

I really enjoyed my placement at Atlas. It's nice to receive the welcome pack on the first day with lots of information so that you can get familiar with everything quite quickly. There is always something to do, which is a good thing, and I have learnt a lot about the translation world – even really simple things such as finding out how you charge clients and how suppliers charge us has been really interesting. The thing that surprised me most was how quickly translators are required to work to meet deadlines. I enjoyed organising the work placement meetings, writing task lists and training work placements on some of the tasks. It was nice to have a bit of responsibility, and it was the right amount for me as I was doing a dissertation at the same time. I also really enjoyed placing translations, especially for unusual projects. I have definitely learnt a lot and have realised that it is a good idea to learn more about the industry before trying to set yourself up as a freelance translator. It has been really worthwhile in that sense. It has helped me to decide what I want to do in the future and also provided me with an insight into the industry and the work of a Project Manager – so thank you!