

YEAR IN REVIEW

Summer 2025, Second Co-op at Delta Air Lines

12 May' 25 – 1 Aug' 25

Taking Flight: Navigating Corporate Realities and Big Data

"Once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return." - Leonardo da Vinci

If my time at Possip was about laying the groundwork and understanding the agility of a startup, my summer at Delta Air Lines was about stepping onto the main stage of a massive, global enterprise. Delta is a titan in the aviation industry, a multinational corporation with over 100,000 employees. Joining the Pilot Learning and Development Analytics team under the Flight Operations department was an entirely new caliber of challenge.

The seeds for this opportunity were planted during the grueling application cycle of Fall 2024. Even though I had already secured my Spring 2025 co-op with Possip, I continued interviewing just to test my skills and gauge my industry standing. My interview with Delta in January was my first successful foray into the traditional application process no networking, no referrals, just a rigorous behavioral interview. I leveraged the skills I was actively building at Possip, linking my ongoing experiences to the problems Delta was trying to solve. Three weeks later, HR called with an offer. Determined to seize the opportunity, I worked closely with my advisor to appeal to the co-op board, successfully rearranging my schedule to accommodate back-to-back co-ops.

Ground Reality

The Transition to In-Person Corporate Life Relocating to a new city, Atlanta, was a formidable undertaking, especially as an international student. My friends proved invaluable, helping me move and settle in. I secured housing through Furnished Finder, renting a room close enough to the office that I ended up walking 4 miles every day for my commute.

The shift from the remote flexibility of Possip to a structured, in-person 9-to-5 environment was a profound adjustment. A corporate office is a different ecosystem entirely; you cannot just step away from your desk for hours or work solely on your own rhythm. I had to quickly learn the nuances of corporate structure: how to communicate formally, how to present myself daily, and how to build connections that would open doors to new projects and collaborations. It was a crash course in professional visibility and relationship-building.

Project Deep Dives

My 13-week rotation was intensely project-driven, requiring me to rapidly adapt to enterprise-scale databases and legacy software to deliver high-impact solutions:

- **Pilot Pay Hours Explanation:** Tasked with decoding the specific training modules that trigger pilot pay, I navigated Delta's complex database network to automate financial reporting. Realizing Excel's limitations with massive datasets, I learned to execute heavy calculations directly in SQL, setting the stage for seamless Teradata integration.

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- **AQP Data Submission to AFS-280:** I reverse-engineered and stabilized a broken, undocumented SAS workflow crucial for FAA regulatory compliance. Troubleshooting this inflexible legacy system reinforced the absolute necessity of rigorous code documentation to ensure business continuity.
- **Pilot Birthday Sentiment Analysis:** I cross-referenced pilot data with enterprise-wide trends, segmenting by generation to gauge sentiment for a new pilot-specific initiative. Successfully pitching these insights to three different audiences was a massive boost to my executive presentation skills.
- **SRT (Safety Round Tables) Reports:** I overhauled a bloated safety reporting system into a streamlined workflow that clearly flags abnormal pilot performance metrics. This project significantly expanded my technical toolkit, exposing me to Power BI and Power Automate to build intuitive, user-friendly dashboards.

Beyond the Desk: Culture, Conferences, and the World Unlocked

The exposure Delta provided went far beyond coding and data extraction. I delivered two major presentations: a "B-Day" proposal presentation and an End of Rotation presentation to the entire team, which allowed me to showcase not just my technical contributions, but who I am as a professional.

And then, there were the perks. Delta granted me standby flight privileges, effectively unlocking the world. The ability to travel and explore during my downtime was the ultimate reward for the hard work, making the grueling 4-mile daily walks and the steep learning curves more than worth it.

Advice to Past-Self for Present and Future Success

- **Master the Art of the 9-to-5:** Technical skills get you the job, but soft skills dictate your success in an in-person corporate environment. Continue to prioritize face-to-face networking, formal communication, and building a reputation as a reliable, approachable collaborator.
- **Patience with Legacy Systems:** Working with tools like SAS can be frustrating when you are used to modern, agile environments. Channel that frustration into reverse-engineering the problem. Every legacy system is an opportunity to learn how massive enterprises historically scaled their operations.

My first rotation at Delta Air Lines tested my skills against the complex realities of a Fortune 500 enterprise. I learned to navigate massive databases, manage legacy software, and effectively communicate data-driven insights to diverse audiences. Securing a strong foundation and lasting friendships for my upcoming 2026 rotations, this summer wasn't just about working for an airline—it was about learning to pilot my own corporate career.