A Week in the Life: Tom Wilson, CS&R Senior Manager

Tom joined CS&R in July 2020 after graduating from the Fuqua School of Business at Duke. Prior to his MBA, he served in the US Navy for seven years as a fuel officer, which included rotations in Bahrain and Djibouti.

Tom Wilson, Senior Manager I

His first seven months at CS&R involved managing an artificial intelligence collaboration between MIT and Liberty. He recently rotated to his current project, as detailed below, and enjoys the challenge that comes with working in a new area with a new team. He notes that while there may not be a "typical week" at CS&R, the below "week in the life" can provide an idea of what it is like to be a Senior Manager with the team.

Monday | 7:30AM

Collect thoughts and prepare for the upcoming week

My week starts with a journaling exercise that I use to plan my activities and goals for the next five days. I am currently on a project supporting a Massachusetts-based non-profit looking to build an educational support program for students in foster care. While the majority of CS&R projects tend to be internal to Liberty, there are also opportunities to be staffed on projects that support the philanthropic mission of Liberty Mutual's corporate foundation. We finished phase one of this project – which consisted of conducting market research to identify the best practices of other organizations supporting students in foster care – last week and will now be transitioning now to phase two. As part of the second phase, we will be conducting research to identify how educational programs obtain funding. It is a space that I am completely unfamiliar with, and I am excited for the challenge of working in a new area!

Monday | 1PM

Women in Technology Panel event

After spending most of the morning reading information about the various sources non-profits use to fund their operations, I take a quick 30 minute break from work to listen to a webinar featuring a fellow CS&R group member, as well as my boss from my previous project, speaking at a Women in Technology Panel event. I appreciate Liberty hosting these types of webinars as they have helped me to not only learn more about the complexities of the insurance industry and the different areas of our business, but also meet and network with people across the company.

Tuesday | 10:30 AM

Client touchpoint

We scheduled this quick, 30-minute touchpoint to discuss the activities required for the next phase of our project. The non-profit we are partnering with is supported by several knowledgeable people who have backgrounds in the education industry. Hearing the different approaches suggested by each expert is fascinating. I do not have a major speaking role in this meeting, so I spend the entire time frantically capturing notes to make sure I do not miss anything valuable.

It is interesting to see how our group has been able to add value to the project despite our lack of experience in education. We have the ability to structure and break down complex problems into manageable chunks, and then address each of these smaller questions with detailed analysis / creative solutions. Projects like this give me confidence that I can drive value by applying these problem-solving techniques in many different areas even when I am not a subject matter expert in the project's focus area.

Tuesday | 1 PM

Feedback meeting with project manager

Receiving formal, written feedback every two months is standard in CS&R and has helped me significantly – especially as a career switcher who has not worked in consulting before. Feedback is provided across four categories: Problem Solving, Initiative / Execution, Communication / Client Readiness, and Citizenship. This particular feedback session went really well, and I appreciated my manager providing specific and actionable feedback that I will work to improve over the next two-month period.

Wednesday | 9 AM

Secondary research to learn about non-profit funding streams

As the second phase of this project is just beginning this week, our workload has been a bit lighter than the preceding couple of weeks. Our focus this week is twofold: (1) conducting secondary research via reading websites and reports to learn about how educational support programs are commonly funded and (2) scheduling interviews with education funding experts to ask them questions firsthand. The two focus areas are intentionally structured in sequence:

gaining more knowledge via secondary research will allow our team greater ability to ask thoughtful and valuable questions to experts once we begin our interviews.

This is not a space I have previous exposure to, so it can be a bit challenging to connect all the dots early in the research phase. Looking back, however, I felt the same way in the beginning of the first phase of this project, but now I am shocked at how much I learned. These “I can’t believe how much I learned during this project” moments are frequent at CS&R as most consultants in the group work on ~2 – 4 different projects throughout the year.

Wednesday | 1 PM

Career Development Coach (CDC) check-in

CS&R assigns each consultant a Managing Director to serve as a CDC. Having a senior member of the group to talk about career development, personal development, and just someone to bounce dumb questions off has been immensely valuable as a new member. My CDC and I meet every two weeks with discussion topics varying each meeting. The topic of discussion today was the NCAA basketball tournament (no one ever said it had to be entirely career development related…), the most recent feedback I received from my project manager, and a discussion about my goals for the next quarter. I always come out of these meetings with a clearer perspective on my role within the group and the actions I need to take to further my personal development.

Thursday | 10 AM

CS&R department meeting

The ~45 members of our group meet once a month to discuss recent project findings, give awards, and to align on logistics for the upcoming month. These meetings are always fun – although they are probably more enjoyable in person (since I have heard they are usually accompanied by a nice array of snacks).

Thursday | 6 PM

Finish slides for Friday client meeting

We plan on presenting information gained from the secondary research we conducted this week to our client at tomorrow’s meeting. I put together a couple slides highlighting my findings, but there is still some work to be done to highlight the key implications for our client. I am struggling to connect some of the learnings, but luckily a couple quick changes by my manager helps make the message of the slides clearer. The collaborative nature of our work is one of my favorite things about our group, and tonight was a great example of this collaboration in action.

Friday | 11 AM

Weekly client meeting

I prepared more than usual for the meeting this morning as we are moving to a new phase of research, and I want to ensure I am well versed in the information. One of my favorite things about this project has been the weekly client meetings, as I have had the opportunity to spend significant amounts of time at each meeting presenting our findings to the CEO of the non-profit we are working with. Public speaking / presenting was something I really focused on improving during business school, and I appreciate the significant number of opportunities we have in CS&R to present to senior leaders, both internal and external to Liberty. The meeting went really well and our team feels like we are on a great path for the next phase of the project.

Friday | 2 PM

Weekly retrospective

My project team conducts a weekly retrospective each Friday to reflect upon the week and to game plan for the following week. These sessions are valuable as they give us a forum to suggest improvements and changes to the work process. This meeting tends to be less work focused as we get closer to Friday afternoon, and the topics range from “what are our objectives next week” to “Gen Z vs Millennials: who has better taste in jeans?”. I may not have a strong view of what next week’s objectives should look like, but I do know that I probably need to do some shopping this weekend, apparently for some new jeans…

As I conclude the week, it is a great time to reflect upon the expectations that I had for the group before I joined. I knew that consulting work would be collaborative and engaging, but I don’t think I recognized just to what extent this is the case. Far and away, my favorite part about being a part of CS&R is working alongside my colleagues to test hypotheses and formulate conclusions. It is really fun to come out a of a meeting with a few takeaways / insights and then brainstorm with your colleagues to determine how this information fits into the overall objective of the project. As I continue with the group, I look forward to getting the opportunity to apply this thought process to projects across the insurance value chain. Eventually, I intend to find the part of the business that interests me the most and target jobs within that area for my next position at Liberty.