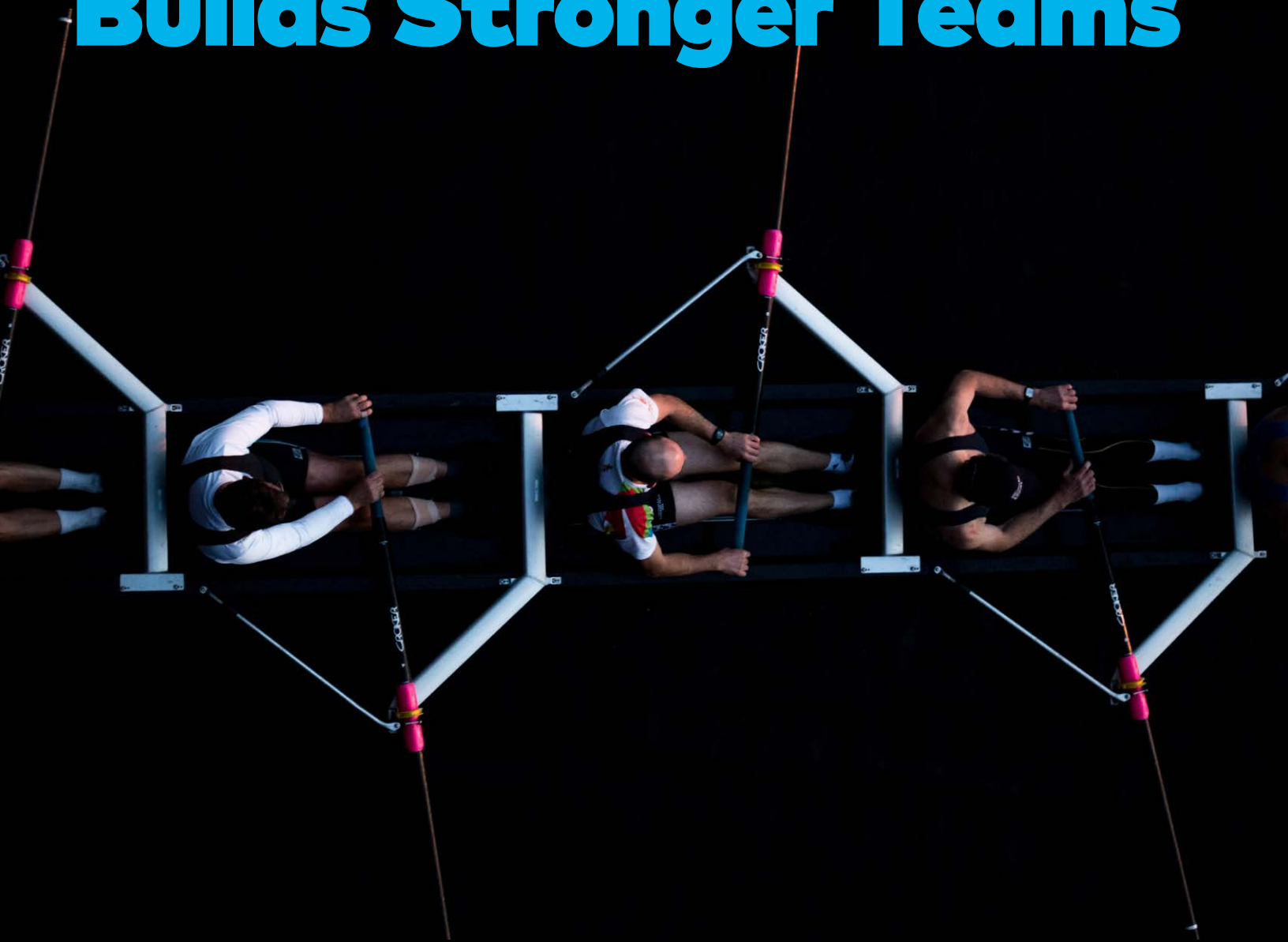


Defining Culture

How Connectivity Builds Stronger Teams



Karan Goyal



Olivia Tracey

Fostering a strong, collaborative working environment with a focus on mentorship and knowledge-sharing is central to InstarAGF's corporate culture and is crucial to our success. Our internship program provides junior analysts firsthand experience in the private capital sector and the resources to thrive as their careers progress. Since 2015, three outstanding individuals who interned with InstarAGF have joined as full-time members of our investment team.

Defining Culture

This summer, we adapted our internship program to address the challenges of COVID-19 and the requirement to physically distance and work remotely. We caught up with InstarAGF's current interns Olivia Tracey, currently studying at the University of Toronto, and Karan Goyal, a commerce student at Queen's University, to hear about their experience.

Karan, Olivia, both of your programs are rooted in finance, but with a few significant differences. What drew you to pursue those studies?

Olivia Tracey: I knew I really liked math and science but didn't know which career path to take after high school. I decided on the engineering science program at the University of Toronto because of the focus on theory, and when I was able to specialize, I chose the Math, Statistics, and Finance option because it allowed me to apply my love for math to a more business-related industry.

Karan Goyal: My path to the commerce program came as a result of my interest in entrepreneurship and investing during high school. Selling tech accessories and designer shoes through classified ads and mainstream e-commerce websites, I was immediately drawn to learning about new businesses, identifying trends and following the news.

What has it been like to start a job during COVID-19? Have you found it easier or more difficult as you've become more integrated into the projects?

OT: The onboarding and training sessions were really helpful during the first week, allowing us to start learning about the job while also meeting members of the team, both formally and informally. In terms of the projects, I was surprised that I wasn't made to feel like an intern, but instead a part of the team, joining calls and meetings from day one.

KG: Starting a job during COVID-19 is definitely a different experience, but the many onboarding sessions and

continuous engagement have made it nearly identical to an in-person internship. From the beginning, I was welcomed to take part in discussions, asked my opinion, and really given a chance to add value to projects. The group has been great about continually keeping us connected to the team, and weekly Friday video calls after work allow us to get to know each other on a social level.

Looking back at some of your other internship experiences, would you say that the pandemic has fundamentally shaped or changed the value from this program? If so, in what ways?

OT: Onboarding at a distance is a unique experience, for sure, but InstarAGF has done a great job in making the experience extremely valuable. I have been a part of a variety of teams and tasks which allowed me to expand my knowledge of finance and the infrastructure industry, and mentors to support me along the way. While it can be a bit of a challenge, I've found these connections and resources incredibly important. Having people around is motivating and engaging, so during quarantine I've noticed feeling more integrated with the team the more calls and outreach I've done over the course of the day.

KG: Forming meaningful individual connections is much more difficult without the organic opportunities to have small talk, coffee breaks, or lunch meetings. Setting time aside for a virtual social call can make it feel less informal, but an important priority if you want the same value that you would get working together in an office. The aspect that has been slightly different from past internships is the heightened importance of communication. Especially when working remotely, there is a learning curve to adapt to a new style of constant communication with senior leaders on project status and work capacity.

What are some of your top takeaways from your internship with InstarAGF? Is there anything you learned that you weren't expecting?

OT: When first starting a job, you don't quite know what you're in for, but I quickly discovered that I would get to try out a lot of different things here. Each area of the job presented different tasks and challenges, and I've learned a lot from each one. Coming from an engineering background, a lot of these processes were new to me, but the diversity of experience is incredibly valuable to take with me in my career. The deal process has been one of my favourite parts of the job, it's exciting to see a deal unfold from start to finish. The senior members of the team made themselves available to offer advice, share experiences, or just to chat. This was a really unique aspect and gave a familial aspect to the work.

KG: I was able to witness a deal process in the final due-diligence phase, gaining exposure to many management calls, advisory board calls, and internal investment committee meetings which gave great insight into the complexity and key action items that go into a deal. One aspect of working in private equity that was new to me was asset management, which I enjoyed a lot. Often, private equity is seen as just buying companies, but in reality, assets must be managed well afterwards, too.

Lastly, what advice would you give to other students considering an internship?

OT: Do not shy away from opportunities outside of "traditional" career paths. This is the time to learn what you enjoy and what you are passionate about, and the only way to do that is by pushing your boundaries.

KG: Pursue internships in your desired industry during their university career. It is an amazing way to build upon the theoretical knowledge you're learning in school and apply it in practice.