



## Internship Experience @ Nishith Desai Associates (NDA), Mumbai: Exceptional Work, People; Tech Equipped Offices, Rs. 5000 Stipend PM

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### Nishith Desai Associates, Mumbai: Internship Experience

#### **Name of the organization. City**

Nishith Desai Associates, Mumbai

#### **How big was the office? Team strength**

“ *Worth mentioning is the technology available in both offices - everything from video phones for senior associates to touch screen TVs and incredibly high end video conferencing technology.* ”

I worked in both the NP and BKC offices of Nishith Desai.

The NP office is incredibly old school, but sprawling. It is located in the famous Mittal Court building, and is spread out across 3 floors including 1 floor for office space, 1 floor for the pantry and 1 floor for the (amazingly well made) conference room.

The BKC office is in the new age Maker Maxity building. It's not the biggest office (mostly because NDA is more of a quality rather than quantity firm), but it is very swanky. Worth mentioning is the *technology available in both offices* – everything from video phones for senior associates to touch screen TVs and incredibly high end video conferencing technology.

In short, the Nishith Desai Associates' offices will blow you away!

NDA's team strength is about 60-70 in total (not sure of the exact number), inclusive of Founder/Proprietor Mr. Nishith M. Desai and all partners.

Although they are spread out across the 2 Mumbai offices, the Bangalore, Delhi, Singapore and Silicon Valley offices, people keep travelling a lot and keep working from different places from what I could see.

This is especially the case in Mumbai with a handful of people who keep alternating between NP and BKC.

### **Application procedure. Internship contact details**

I had applied through my college placement cell. Individual applicants should send their application to [internship@nishithdesai.com](mailto:internship@nishithdesai.com) NDA's internship application procedure is no cakewalk since they have a grueling technical interview once you are shortlisted.

The quality of NDA's associates is well evidenced by these interviews as you are asked a wide range of questions from all practices. Even if you apply for a specialized practice area, NDA expects you to be well versed with the basics in every field of law since I was told that NDA looks for holistic knowledge in its interns.

### **Duration in weeks. No. of days/week. Timings**

4 weeks in total. 6 days a week (except for the last week of the month when Saturday is a holiday).

Timings are from 9 AM (sharp) to around 7-8 PM (depending on workload. There is no fixed time that you are expected to stay till, but work generally keeps you in office till at least 7)

### **Accommodation: how, where, how was it?**

I stayed in Seva Niketan, this hostel in Byculla. It was decently well connected to both NDA offices and it is dirt cheap compared to other options in Mumbai. So well, any law student's dream I shall imagine! Check out this [Legally India](#) post if you want details on Seva Niketan.

P.S: Don't count on good food here. I ended up eating outside almost every day!

### **First impression. First day, formalities etc.**



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*everywhere (even outstation offices) 15 minutes from when I sat down at my desk!*

I was a bit nervous on my first day of internship because Nishith Desai Associates is such a big firm and the general swankiness of the firm and all the associates intimidated me a bit. Ms. Deanne D'souza, who heads HR, welcomed me, made me feel at home and showed me how an internship works in NDA.

I was assigned to the tax team - so she introduced me to the team and put me in a cubicle in their general area. The best thing about NDA is that they give all interns personal @nishitdesai.com email IDs during the internship stint.

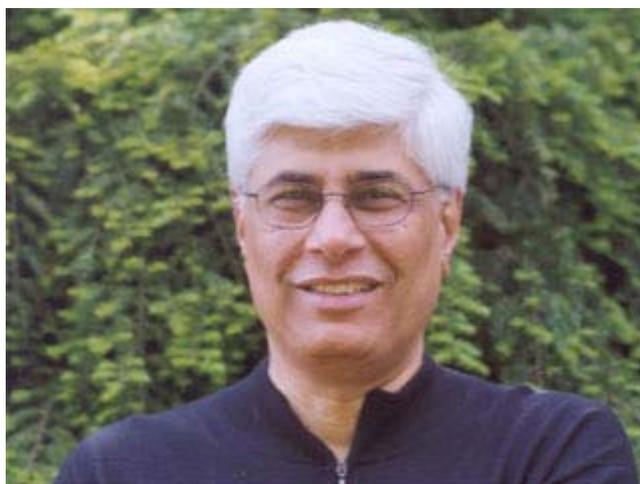
Moreover, your whole desktop is based on your username and password and you have your own personal desktop that you can access on ANY NDA computer. I found this extremely cool!

As for formalities, Deanne sends you details of your mentor (I'll get to this), your work sheet format and your work statement format on your first day.

Every Nishith Desai' intern is assigned a relatively senior member of the firm as their mentor – basically your go-to person for everything from work to recruitment possibilities.

Other than that, you are instructed that you should fill in your worksheet based on their format in an excel sheet and send it to Deanne and your mentor at the end of every week. Your work statement is a more precise account of your holistic experience at the internship that you mail at the end of your internship.

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**Main tasks**



“ Also, every intern is mandatorily made to attend the *Continuing Education (CE) sessions* that they have every morning at 9 AM. A few firm members make presentations on a legal topic in vogue at the moment, followed by discussions.

My Nishith Desai Associates' internship managed to keep me very busy during my 4 weeks there. The level at which I was involved in tasks progressed every week (because of my decent reviews I'm assuming).

I started off working on *NDA Hotlines* (the legal update released by NDA whenever something new came up in any of their practice area fields) and did everything from drafting applications to doing important research for client based memos.

One thing that is to be emphasized is *NDA's international clientele* which made for some very interesting work, especially for the tax and funds teams. I was very happy with the sort of work that was given to me because I was doing research for famous and recognizable ongoing issues and this was some thrill knowing that I might have added my two cents worth.

Another thing I need to stress on is the incredible focus that Nishith Desai Associates' has on research based assignments. I was made to work on everything from knowledge documents for the firm to full fledged journal articles. I can safely say that anyone's research/drafting skills can only improve in the 4 weeks here.

Only thing is, it is a bit tricky managing your research work with your client-based work because both are equally important for interns!

Also, every intern at Nishith Desai Associates is mandatorily made to attend the *Continuing Education (CE) sessions* that they have every morning at 9 AM. A few firm members make presentations on a legal topic in vogue at the moment, followed by discussions.

Although listening to a discussion first thing in the morning sounds like a daunting task (especially for those already disillusioned by their law schools), it is incredibly informative and helps you keep updated.

### **Work environment, people**

“ The lack of a rigid senior-junior divide also means that everyone from the partners to the freshers are extremely chilled out. As long as you aren't wasting your time or their time for no good reason, it is absolutely fine to have a friendly chat with partners even.

The work environment at Nishith Desai Associates is excellent.

The management structure that Mr. Nishith Desai has created is one based on trust, and this is something unseen in most other firms. There is no organized hierarchy and interns are given an incredible amount of freedom during work hours.

This works in a way because the firm's trust makes you feel responsible and you end up not goofing around and finishing your work first.

The lack of a rigid senior-junior divide also means that everyone from the partners to the freshers are extremely chilled out. As long as you aren't wasting your time or their time for no good reason, it is absolutely fine to have a friendly chat with partners even.

I need to emphasize here that I had worked mostly with the tax team and the level of competencies within the team are incredible, especially among the senior associates. It's of no wonder that they boast of the top tax team in India perhaps.

The Senior Associates at Nishith Desai are a pool of knowledge that you can only gain from.

### **Best things?**

The quality of the work, how well everyone at the firm treats you (my mentor in particular was amazingly sweet), the absolute focus on research-based work, the daily CE updates and umpteen more things

### **Bad things?**

“ *Another small issue is the extremely technical internship interviews.*

Well, I have absolutely nothing negative to cite from my own experience, but in order to be objective, I could come up with a few tiny issues.

I think it might just be difficult for an intern to really make ground in the firm. Accepted, people are very nice to you, but it's a big firm and people are busy. In case you are a bit reserved, you might end up like a tiny fish stuck in an ocean. There were people who interned with me who were left without as much quality work as I got because they never showed their hunger for more work.

Once you do get that break though with one really good review, your fortunes will change immediately.

Another small issue is the *extremely technical internship interviews*. However well rounded your knowledge is in a subject, some people are stifled by the prospect of technical questions thrown at them over the phone and owing to different reasons (perhaps confidence issues?), I know very competent students who have under-

performed during the interview.

Thus, there is a risk that you might not make the cut if those 15-20 minutes don't work in your favour.

Another tiny issue is that since *interns at Nishith Desai are given cubicles* (at least in the NP office), it is very difficult to spot out other interns and socialize, especially since even the interns are always elbow deep in work.

### **What did you do to chill? Co-interns, colleagues**

Nothing much during work hours, sadly. I was too involved in my work to even take extensive lunch breaks. But yes, used to meet other interns for lunch/dinner at Status (this restaurant in NP) once in a while. Plus, NP is an amazing place for short eats, I used to pop out for something like a toast or a dosa once in a while – the street food is awesome!

### **Stipend/ month**

Rs. 5000/-

### **Anything else you'd like to tell**

Nishith Desai Associates has a work environment like no other firm I've interned at before. I don't know if it will be everyone's cup of tea, but I sure loved it! I'd suggest trying the internship there since there is word among law students (especially NDA followers) that once you intern and make an impression at NDA, you don't look elsewhere!

### **Biggest lessons**

All said and done, the quality of your work is what gets you ahead in life. If your work has the quality to stand out in a crowd of top level law school students, you will make it in any firm, let alone NDA.

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The Nishith Desai website is [here](#).

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