



Cultivating Internship Program Success

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The preparation needed to ensure the success of an internship program is well worth the effort. The following actions will create the foundation for organizations and interns alike to make the most of the internship experience. *Intern Toolkit supports each of these needs with tools, tips, templates, and training materials.*

1) Buy-in: Gaining full commitment from all relevant personnel, especially senior management, is absolutely critical to success. This may involve everything from committing proper resources to setting expectations that the intern(s) are credible additions to the organizational team who will do meaningful work.

2) Program Manager: Someone must own responsibility for all aspects of the internship program. This person should be fully qualified to supervise and be innately motivated to do his/her best for the organization and interns alike. It is important to empower program managers with enough time to properly manage the program.

3) Work Inventory: Take a full inventory of substantive work. Solicit input from managers and consult sources for project ideas. Projects may include any number of things that have been relegated to the company "backburner."

4) Resource Commitment: Determine the amount of adequate work space with access to computers and other technological tools. Set a budget for the program for such things as recruitment, compensation, and/or rewards and incentives. Consider having a virtual program if space and resources are limited.

5) Headcount: Define the headcount by analyzing project needs from the work inventory against the resource commitment and available time to run the program. Remember that having interns can help a company gain time. Be sure to consider that fall and spring semester interns have less availability, while summer interns are more likely to work full-time.



6) Job Description(s): Each internship position may require different qualifications, such as when interns report to different departments. It is critical to define specific responsibilities for each position to both set accurate expectations and focus recruiting efforts.

7) Program Materials: Organize program materials for ease of use, such as in a ringed-binder or intern manual. Interns can use their binders for work assignments throughout the internship.

8) Create Structure: Interns need a clear sense of guidance and structure, which can reduce the anxiety of working in a new environment. Interns should have a regular forum for asking questions, voicing concerns, and receiving candid feedback. In addition, management control devices such as schedules, work plans, and timelines should be used to supervise interns.

9) Develop a Training Program: The best internships go beyond "on-the-job-training" to include an orientation and professional development activities.

10) Pursue Continuous Improvement: Use performance measurement and feedback tools to yield the insights needed to improve the program.

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