design an
INTERNSHIP

Creating a valuable experience for employers and students.

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GUIDELINES

Employers work to arrange internship positions that combine genuine usefulness for the company with education-in-action for the student employee.

The benefits to the employer in this partnership are perhaps obvious. Savings in training costs and efficiency of recruitment are two significant and primary advantages. Other benefits include increased utilization of personnel, reduced labor costs, correct match of company with student, increased productivity, improved ties to the university, and enhanced company visibility and reputation on campus.

GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYERS:

The internship should provide learning experiences in the area that supplements the student's major area of study. Companies often alter entry-level career positions to meet the time stipulations for the intern. It is important that the student is able to recognize achievements and complete his or her projects.

1. The supervision of the student should be ongoing, consistent and positive.

2. The position should be relatively secure so as to provide the student with employment for the agreed upon period.

3. The employer may opt to have the student present his/her project to other managers or employees within the department, which causes the student to reflect on his/her experiences and, at the same time, to enhance his/her communication skills.

4. It is helpful for the student intern to be evaluated.

5. The employer should be open to the Office of Career Management staff visiting the place of employment to discuss the work experience with the student and/or the appropriate management individual(s). This would be at a mutually convenient time and arranged in advance of the actual visit. Either party in the partnership can initiate the visit.

6. The employer and immediate supervisor of the student are the representatives of the company and have the responsibility of informing the student-employee of company rules and regulations regarding such matters as hours of work, holidays, paydays, and so on. Furthermore, it is expected that the employers will provide student-employees with the guidance toward productive adjustment that other valued employees might receive.

7. In the rare event that problems should arise that go beyond the scope of the immediate supervisor, the Office of Career Management should be notified immediately.

8. While students are often hired for pre-recruitment purposes, they should not be subject to contractual job agreements for full-time career positions. Students should be informed that offers of employment are open-ended agreements. To be specific, employers are not obligated to make job offers at completion of the work periods, and likewise, students are not obligated to accept, should the employer make an offer. This information is taken with permission from the National Cooperative Education Association.

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BENCHMARKS

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Internship assignments are an educational strategy integrating classroom studies with work-based learning related to the student's academic curriculum and/or career goals. It is based upon a working relationship between the college, employing organization and student. At the work site students engage in a series of assignments, documented in a learning agreement, that are subsequently evaluated.

There are numerous advantages to all involved, but a particular advantage of cooperative education for the employing organization is that it provides a low-cost opportunity to observe a candidate's performance before extending an offer for permanent employment. A successful employer-based cooperative education program has the following benchmarks:

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT. Student employment programs, such as internships, can be directly linked to the long-term hiring goals of the organization. The goals and objectives for the student employment program within the human resource division should be clearly identified. Support for the program is demonstrated through provision of appropriate staffing, sufficient operation budgets and crosscompany involvement.

STRONG PROGRAM PROCESSES AND GUIDELINES. The program is managed using well-defined systems and processes. These include: a strategic plan with clearly identified goals and objectives; an effective recruitment plan; methods to ensure quality work assignments; orientation and training programs for student employees and supervisors; systems to monitor work progress; effective data collection and continuous quality improvement measures; and evaluation processes to measure student outcomes and impact on the company's productivity.

QUALITY WORK ASSIGNMENTS. Careful planning should be given to ensure that the work assignments offered to internship student employees provide meaningful learning opportunities and experience. Each work assignment should have: a position description; selection criteria; an established salary and benefit policy; a learning plan; assigned supervision; ongoing evaluation and assessment; and interesting and challenging projects.

ESTABLISHED UNIVERSITY AND STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS. Effective recruitment plans are built upon well established and maintained relationships between the company and targeted campuses. Strategies to identify targeted campuses, to market and promote the company's employment opportunities and to develop on-campus relationships with all constituencies help to establish and maintain the company's recruitment plan. When such relationships are established, the Office of Career Management staff become important partners through whom potential candidates can be identified and initially screened.

ORIENTATION AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS. Student employment programs should include support programs, such as relocation and housing assistance, general orientation to the company, sponsored social activities, and mentoring programs.

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FIVE-STEP PLAN

→ STEP 1
WHEN YOU HIRE THE STUDENT EXPLAIN:

- → Equipment provided by company
- → Equipment provided by student
- → Standards for appearance
- → Salary, Benefits, overtime pay
- → Starting date and ending date
- → Use of car

→ STEP 2
CONSIDER PROVIDING THE FOLLOWING TO STUDENTS RELOCATING TO YOUR AREA:

- → Special features of area
- → Where to live, shop, etc.
- → Estimated housing cost
- → Special events
- → Social activities, opportunities
- → Public transportation/parking cost
- → Cultural/social "musts"

→ STEP 3
WHEN THE STUDENT BEGINS WORK:

- → Introduce student to office personnel, including "key players"
- → Identify person who will assign work and supervise the student
- → Explain chain of command
- → Identify a "mentor" for the student
- → Explain office policy, including adherence to work hours, overtime, time sheets, and sick leave
- → Include student in departmental activities
- → Assign meaningful and challenging work
- → Establish a learning plan with student. Identify at least three specific and measurable learning objectives to be mastered during the work period
- → Tell student what is needed, why needed, when needed, and format expected
- → Explain how student work will be evaluated, by whom, and when

→ STEP 4
SCHEDULE SEVERAL INTERMEDIATE REVIEWS THROUGHOUT THE WORK PERIOD TO:

- → Monitor student's general performance
- → Measure progress toward meeting learning objectives
- → Make adjustments to learning plan and assignments as needed

→ STEP 5
NEAR THE CONCLUSION OF EACH WORK PERIOD, MEET WITH STUDENT TO:

- → Review work period with a formal evaluation
- → Review and evaluate student's learning objectives
- → Identify skills developed during work period and skills needing development
- → Suggest academic courses that could be helpful

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MONITORING

If your company has hired students as part of its long-term human resource strategy, your challenge is to help them develop the skills and gain the experience that will meet the organization's future needs. R. R. Donnelly & Sons has used the following sequence of skills to determine the progress:

LEVEL ONE SKILLS

Students should be able to:

➡ Identify the basics of the business through training, orientation, or observation
➡ Define the functions and purpose of their departments
➡ Identify internal resources and procedures
➡ Identify and operate all necessary equipment
➡ Adjust to the work environment
➡ Translate occupational terminology
➡ Exercise initiative in work assignments

LEVEL TWO SKILLS

Students should be able to:

➡ Apply academic knowledge to the work situation
➡ Work independently without continual guidance
➡ Exercise problem-solving skills
➡ Function as contributing members of a project team

LEVEL THREE SKILLS

Students should be able to:

➡ Identify creative solutions to problem solving
➡ Exhibit growing self-confidence in daily tasks
➡ Communicate in a professional manner both in writing and speaking
➡ Travel for company business under company policy

LEVEL FOUR SKILLS

Students should be able to:

➡ Investigate and define project requirements
➡ Contribute to the design and development of new systems
➡ Recommend suggestions for improvement of departmental procedures
➡ Develop professional techniques (e.g., effective time management, assertiveness, etc.)

LEVEL FIVE SKILLS

Students should be able to:

➡ Coordinate activities associated with a project (e.g., meetings, deliveries, etc.)
➡ Move a project through from start to finish
➡ Provide guidance to less experienced workers
➡ Deal with outside sources as a company representative

STRATEGIES

The following ideas were suggested as ways to measure the effectiveness of student employment programs or are indicators of program quality and success.

→ **Plan and implement** a 360 degree assessment to receive feedback from surveys and other assessment tools from customers: students, supervisors, college administrators, and recruiters, etc.

→ **Review student evaluations** to measure work-based learning and enrichment opportunities from the student's perspective. Are the work assignments challenging? Do the students believe that they are participating in value-added learning experiences? Do the students believe that the work experience is enhancing classroom learning? Does the student believe that the company is a "good place to work?"

→ **Analyze "Performance Factors"** - are the results as measured through student work accomplishments and outputs meeting the company business plan (emphasis on results and not activities). To measure, the work assignments must produce results that fit within a well-defined operational plan, that meet the goals and objectives of the organization and that produce quantifiable results.

→ **Measure cost effectiveness -** do the results/outputs justify the costs involved in managing student employment programs?

→ **Measure and evaluate internal support.** Are sufficient dollars provided to support, maintain and/or expand the student employment programs? Is the program expanding because of increased and new business for student employees from business divisions? Is there repeat business - business divisions requesting replacement or additional candidates through the student employment programs?

→ **Measure program participation and retention rates.** How many student employees are converted to full-time employment. Does your program receive referrals from former or current students? Do student employees seek a second work term with the company?

→ **Undertake a formal benchmarking project.** How does your student employment program measure up against the competition?

→ **Gauge impact** on the college curriculum as a result of involvement in the business-education partnership formed through the student employment program. Do faculty seek input from employers and make changes to the curriculum based upon feedback from employers? Do students contribute to the classroom and inform the curriculum as a result of lessons learned at work? Is the college or university more receptive to involvement of business in curriculum development?

→ **Other measures of success** can also include external acknowledgment of program quality and success through receipt of such awards as Employer of the Year awards, ISO 9000, Malcolm Baldridge, etc., and internal recognition.

Continuous evaluation and assessment is critical to developing, maintaining and expanding student employment programs to meet the short and long term staffing needs of the company. Strategic use of the evaluation outcomes can be used as effective public relation tools to promote the program internally and externally.

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ASSESSING QUALITY

As managers assess the quality of a company's internship program, they must ask many important questions.

FOR EXAMPLE:

➔ Do students have easy access to someone who can answer questions?

➔ Are students assigned a mentor?

➔ Does the supervisor establish learning objectives, thoroughly explain the project and periodically review student progress?

➔ Does the supervisor involve the student, discuss assignments, discuss performance expectations?

➔ Does the supervisor establish learning objectives, thoroughly explain the project and periodically review student progress?

➔ Are there student orientation programs?

➔ Have supervisors demonstrated the ability to develop people?

➔ Does the supervisor regularly spend time with the student?

➔ Is the supervisor willing to listen to suggestions and ideas?

➔ Is the supervisor periodically reviewed for effectiveness?

➔ Are supervisors evaluated by the students?

➔ When reviewing supervisors, is consideration given to the quality of the assignments?

➔ Does each student have a documented learning plan and set of performance criteria?

➔ Does each assignment include specific, measurable goals, objectives, and criteria to be accomplished and learned?

➔ Are students entrusted with responsibility in their work yet monitored closely enough to assure that they have enough work?

➔ Do supervisors evaluate student work performance to determine potential for the next assignment?

➔ Is the student evaluation process similar to that used for full-time employees?

➔ Are specific ratings thoroughly explained to the students?

➔ Is the student's work quality and quantity evaluated?

➔ Does the evaluation identify skills needing development?