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Is internship program an answer to some of your business issues?

The article describes the concept of the internship program with the aim to provide the insight into the different factors, which have strong influence on the quality and effectiveness of the internship program. It also summarizes part of the findings of a research project, which was conducted at a specific, multinational corporation. The main goal of the research project was to investigate the role of the internship in the company by using qualitative interviews with both employees and interns. Following this, recommendations were made on how to develop valuable and effective internship program, which will benefit both the company and the intern.

Internship program as a new powerful business strategy!

Investment into development and implementation of an internship program can become a powerful strategy for the future success of the organization. Internship programs might be the answer to some of the business issues, which include the rising of labor costs, gaining new perspectives, and providing opportunities to discover future potential hires. Statistics shows that four out of every five companies, who use internship programs as one of their recruiting strategies, report a good to even excellent return on investment. Internships are building blocks of the career for many students. In several cases, they have become an imbedded necessity for an entry-level job. They can be seen as the source of much practical, professional training and internal experience with the particular organization.

What value does it have for a company?

An employer has an opportunity to evaluate and monitor potential hires in advance and prior to making full-time position offer and commitment. This obviously leads to savings in the company, especially in regard to finances. Employers have reported that if the interns are hired in a permanent job, they adjust faster to their new roles and have a shorter learning process than employees coming externally. Interns can assist the company with the knowledge of the latest strategies and techniques within the field of studying. They are able to perceive things in a different way and come up with new solutions and suggestions based on the academic related background that the company might not be aware of.

What value does it have for students?

Interns will benefit from this program by creating their own professional network, real life experience and, more essentially, they will develop and explore career possibilities. Internship is a great platform for helping students to cultivate soft skills. By stating soft skills, they basically mean interpersonal skills, leadership skills and empathy. There is no more significant place to activate and exercise these skills than the work environment.

Important factors to look at when designing an internship program

1. Learning goals

At the beginning of the internship it is recommended that both supervisor and intern make a list of learning goals that the intern wishes to accomplish and achieve. The concept of creating learning goals serves as the educational and professional roadmap for the intern's time within the organization. It helps to clearly identify the objectives, which the intern wants to complete, and the techniques of how to do it. By creating these goals, the intern can discuss with the supervisor what kind of tasks he/she should get, work on in order to achieve them. The structure should consist of both short term and long-term goals, which needs to be regularly checked and evaluated in order for the process to work.

2. The role of mentor

The role of mentor is proven to be a valuable resource during the whole internship process. A mentor will mainly develop the intern's experience and motivate them to get the most out of their internship. Usually



that position serve as a great reference when deciding whether or not the particular intern would be an excellent candidate to hire as an employee in the future after graduation. They should also be interested in the assisting of personal development. Mentoring is an important role in the profession and it requires the same level of preparation and training, as one would take the new hire in the work. They act as teachers, because they help the intern with learning about the business, its products and, moreover, they explain certain tasks, projects that the intern will be working on during the stay in the organization.

3. Trainings and development

Trainings play a very important part in the internship program, because they build the framework for all the processes and methods that interns will be using during the whole period of the internship. Trainings should have a structure and should be organized in advance. It is necessary that the company provide trainings for the interns at the beginning of their internship because they can receive certain knowledge and develop skills, which they will need in order to work independently. It is also suggested to make sure that the company provides official trainings at the beginning of the internship, because interns do not have knowledge of all the responsibilities, tasks before they start the internship. They only have the theoretical knowledge gained from education, but the internship should build on their practical experience.

Tips for designing an effective internship program

As the first step of designing the internship program, the company must be able to have well defined purpose and the vision of the internship and afterwards can move forward with the design to fulfil that vision. Following the next step, the company should identify intern's responsibilities, tasks, and assign a supervisor/mentor. Moreover, well-designed internship program includes the development of the intern's learning objectives, which are structured in this experience. The whole period of the internship should be supervised by an internal employee at the organization, more specifically, by an employee with the relevant professional background. An internship program provides both personal and professional development and includes the feedback, evaluation and the reflection from the supervisor. Factors such as defining the learning goals and trainings are a very important part of the internship. Therefore,

the company should secure good communication between the intern and the supervisor. According to the findings of this research project, the supervisor's attitude, communication, and relationship have a strong influence on the motivation and satisfaction of the intern.

To conclude, here are some suggested steps for creating the internship program:

1. Start with identifying the purpose of the internship
2. Create a description of the position responsibilities
3. Assign a well qualified supervisor for mentoring an intern
4. Discuss the learning objectives together with the intern
5. Provide both personal and professional development
6. Design regular follow up meetings for feedback and progress

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