

Summer internships and their benefits



Summer Internship is an integral part of the two year full-time Post Graduate Management Course. It can help a student to gain exposure of the industry and apply the knowledge gained in the first year of MBA to the practical scenarios. The internship provides an opportunity to gain the relevant knowledge and skills required in the field as well as add an important element to the resume. Gaining relevant experience through internships, co ops, service learning, or externships and making professional contacts. There are two best things students can do to prepare themselves for getting a job in their field of specialization after college.

The main objective has been to find out factors contributing towards improving the quality of Summer Internship Project. It has been observed over the past that not much importance has been given to the projects by students, faculty as well as the industry. Research studies have been done over the same issue and we have considered all these relevant studies to form the basis for our literature review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many have touted college student summer business internships as highly beneficial experiences that facilitate transitioning into the real world of business. Indeed, a recent survey revealed that 92% of business schools had some type of internship experience (Coco, 2000). To justify the high participation rate among business schools, educational professions recognize that internships seem to offer many benefits: (a) internships may help students to find jobs, (b) internships may be stepping stones that can be directly translated into full-time jobs, (c) internships may create satisfying

experiences that motivate students to continue along a career path (e. g., “Business Internships,” 1994; Clark, 2003; Divine, Linrud, Miller, & Wilson, 2007), and (d) internships may create realistic expectations about the world of work and help clarify students’ career intentions.

The fundamental question, however, is do these internships actually make a difference? The purpose of this literature review is to analyze the research findings regarding the perception towards summer internships and how beneficial they actually are.

FINDINGS ON PERCEPTION TOWARDS SUMMER INTERNSHIPS AND THEIR BENEFITS

Enhanced Employability

One of the primary benefits of internships for students is that students with internship experience supposedly have an advantage in the job market, which can translate into their being hired more readily for subsequent jobs. Several studies show evidence of this. Knouse, Tanner, and Harris (1999) found that students who had chosen to complete internships were offered jobs more quickly than those who had not opted for internships. The authors raised the question, however, about whether such job offers were due to the internship experience on students’ resumes or due to students with internships being better students (having higher grade point averages [GPAs]) than students without internships; that is, interning students might be more motivated and more effective in finding jobs faster. At least one study (Taylor, 1988) found that the first explanation seemed to be the important factor. Recruiters rated students whose resumes showed evidence

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of internship experience higher than they rated students who did not have such experience.

This advantage of quicker hiring and overall better employability was also found by other researchers (Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000; Taylor, 1988). Although internships were linked to career-oriented employment, Callanan and Benzing did not find that internships improved confidence that students would fit well into the job. An interesting corollary benefit of internships is that even if interns were not immediately hired, companies tended to keep them in the employment pool longer than they kept applicants without internships (Roever, 2000).

Gault et al. (2000) also found that interns could command higher salaries and experienced higher job satisfaction in their subsequent jobs. Taylor (1988) showed that interns who had greater autonomy in their internships had better employment opportunities. Moreover, Molseed, Alsup, and Voyles (2003) found that employers rated problem-solving experiences as perhaps the key skill set in internships that enhances employability.

Additional research has indicated that internships and projects can make students more marketable by helping them develop desired skills, such as critical thinking and written and oral communication, and providing them with the practical experience that many employers seek from new graduates (Maskooki, Rama, & Raghunandan, 1998; Perry, 1989; Raymond, McNabb, & Matthaei, 1993). Specifically, Raymond et al. showed that the ability of students to apply the knowledge gained in the classroom and to solve problems is essential to employers and is most effectively learned through

internships. Additionally, the study found that internships exposed students to ethical issues and global dimensions sometimes not gained through class work.

Realistic Expectations of Interns

Another supposed perception of internships is learning to create a set of realistic expectations for work in the business world. Interestingly, Hall, Stiles, Kuzma, and Elliott (1996) found that employers were more concerned than students were about creating realistic expectations. Students seemed to focus more on compensation for their internships and parlaying their internships into full-time jobs after graduation.

Research by Hall et al. (1996) showed that students and employers differed on many internship expectations, such as appropriate dress, turning internships into permanent jobs, and corollary efforts (e. g., outside reading, oral presentations of experience, and types of grading). Frederickson (2000) found that interns who had accurate perceptions of the organizational culture had more success in their internships.

Satisfaction With the Internship Experience

Many believe that the essence of successful internship experiences is whether students were satisfied with their internships (Clark, 2003). Results are mixed. Beard and Morton (1999) and Cho (2006) found a high level of satisfaction among students, whereas Perlmutter and Fletcher (1996) noted a high failure rate associated with dissatisfaction.

Rothman (2007) found several factors that related to satisfaction with internship experiences: clear tasks, challenging assignments, ongoing feedback, exposure to different parts of the business, and respectful treatment. In addition, Narayanan, Olk, and Fukami (2006) showed that internships were more satisfying when students had a voice in project selection. Moreover, Cook, Parker, and Pettijohn (2004) showed a relatively stable trend of satisfaction with internships over a 10-year period. On the other hand, Bass (2002) found higher job satisfaction among women, especially when internship experiences were congruent with the job.

Internship Prerequisites as Predictors of Internship Success

Many internship programs require completion of a certain level of course work and attainment of a minimum GPA (Clark, 2003). Interestingly, Beard and Morton (1999) found that prior course work and GPA were less important predictors than were students' attitudes toward internships and interning with approved sites. Moreover, Braswell and Cobia (2000) found that career self-efficacy (belief about successful career performance) before internships was the best predictor of an increase in career self-efficacy after internships.

From the employers' viewpoint, focused selection for internships may be more effective than open-ended offers. For example, Pan American Airways first develops intern projects and ascertains the skill mix needed to complete the projects and only then contacts schools and begins evaluating students, through resumes and interviews, who match the desired skill mix (Solomon, 1985).

Mentoring the Intern

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Several studies have shown that internship experiences were more valuable if the interns were mentored at the work site (Callanan & Benzing, 2004, Snyder, 1999). Particularly in international internships, mentors can produce better socialization into the organization, higher levels of learning, and larger numbers of job offers (Feldman, Folks, & Turnley, 1999).

Indicator of final placements

Summer placements indicate how well the final placements will be to a great extent, not only for the second year batch, but for the first year batch also. As an example, the quality and extent of summer placements for the batch of 2010-2012 will become an indicator of the final placements of both the batches of 2009-2011 as well as 2010-2012. The main factor that must be seen here is to convert as many summer internships into PPOs – Pre-Placement Offers, as possible. Niraj Arora, placement coordinator of the Institute of Management, Nirma University, Ahmedabad says, “ Our prime concern is to set the quality standard for the students during the summer internship so that they are converted into PPOs. If the institute is able to secure a decent number of PPOs for a batch, the process of final placements becomes easier, because you have so many fewer students to place that year.”

It is also a pointer to B-schools to know sectors are likely to generate more jobs in the immediate future. “ If a company shows an interest in recruiting a larger number of summer interns than usual, we try and build a steady relationship with that company. A higher number of interns usually mean larger upcoming fulltime openings, new projects or products,” says Sapna

Pokli, Director of IILM Institute for Higher Education, New Delhi. (5 reasons why summer placements are important to b-schools and you by Vasundhara Vyas on 12 November 2010 in summer placements, Summer placements 2010-12)

Feedback from the industry

Many institutes are setting up advisory boards for their curriculum comprising people from enterprises in order to make the courses germane to the industry needs. The feedback from the corporate where a student completes his/her summer internships is often used as an input for curriculum advancements. Even, the feedback of the company also adds to the student's grades and academic assessment. (5 reasons why summer placements are important to b-schools and you by Vasundhara Vyas on 12 November 2010 in summer placements, Summer placements 2010-12)

IMPROVEMENTS TO INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNSHIPS

The research findings have indicated that internships seem to have several effective benefits overall. Internships apparently do make a difference.

Nevertheless, internships can be improved in several ways.

* Active student participation in the process. One important variable is active student participation in the process, whether in the form of an active voice in setting up the intern project (Narayanan et al., 2006) or as freedom in carrying out the project (Taylor, 1988).

* Active employer participation in the process. The more effective internships seemed to be those in which the employer first defined the project and skill

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mix needed and then tried to match student skills with project requirements (Narayanan et al., 2006).

* Clear expectations. Students who had well-defined programs with clear tasks seemed to perform better than those who participated in open-ended programs with less-defined objectives (Rothman, 2007).

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* Clear expectations. Students who had well-defined programs with clear tasks seemed to perform better than those who participated in open-ended programs with less-defined objectives (Rothman, 2007).

* Change prerequisites to reflect the predictors more closely related to intern success. The traditional emphasis on completion of a certain number of courses and attainment of a minimum GPA seems less effective at predicting intern success than evaluation of positive attitude about the project and appropriate skill mix to do well on the internship (Beard & Morton, 1999). Beard and Morton used an 18-item scale to measure positive attitude and skill mix (e. g., relevant college courses, proactive volunteering, internship treated as real job, attitude toward learning and work, quality of internship supervision, and adapting internship toward intern's interests). Measures of career self-efficacy (e. g., confidence that intern will perform well) could also be relevant (Braswell & Cobia, 2000).

* Build mentoring into the internship program

Students who have mentors in their internship programs tend to have better experiences (Callanan & Benzing, 2004; Feldman et al., 1999; Snyder, 1999). Mentors can help students navigate the organization and learn valuable skills for their career aspirations.

* Keeping a journal. Writing about problem solving and other experiences in internships can provide insights and understanding about careers and organizations (Clark, 2003). Moreover, keeping a journal can reveal how expectations change over the duration of the internship. Keeping a journal is also a technique for developing the insight process (Burke & Miller, 1999) and for providing further information about the experience (Alm, 1996).

CONCLUSION

Our review of the research on the perception of internships shows that the internship is a beneficial activity overall. Employability seems to be enhanced, and interns generally experience both work-related and organizational learning. We found, however, that the internship experience can be improved. We recommend that both students and employers become more actively involved in the process; prerequisites and expectations be made clear; and hands-on activities, such as mentoring and journaling, be included.