Professional Development Research Challenges And Talent Pipeline Panel Discussion

Inspiration for This Session

- "Ensuring the Sensory Professional Pipeline" presentation by Professor John Hayes at 2014 SSP Conference highlighted concern about the number and quality of graduates
- In 2016, several of Dr. Hayes' questions were repeated in a membership survey.
  - Comparison of the 2014 and 2016 results found similar results with no major shift in general make-up of the SSP membership, level of concern, type of educational focus or growth in the sensory field.
- Professional Development Committee discussions related to common challenges across member companies.

Our Panelists

- Colleen Conley
  - Dupont N&H
- Todd Renn
  - PepsiCo
- Ward Spiers
  - Keurig Green Mountain
- Nancy Stettler
  - The Clorox Company

Internships
&
Education

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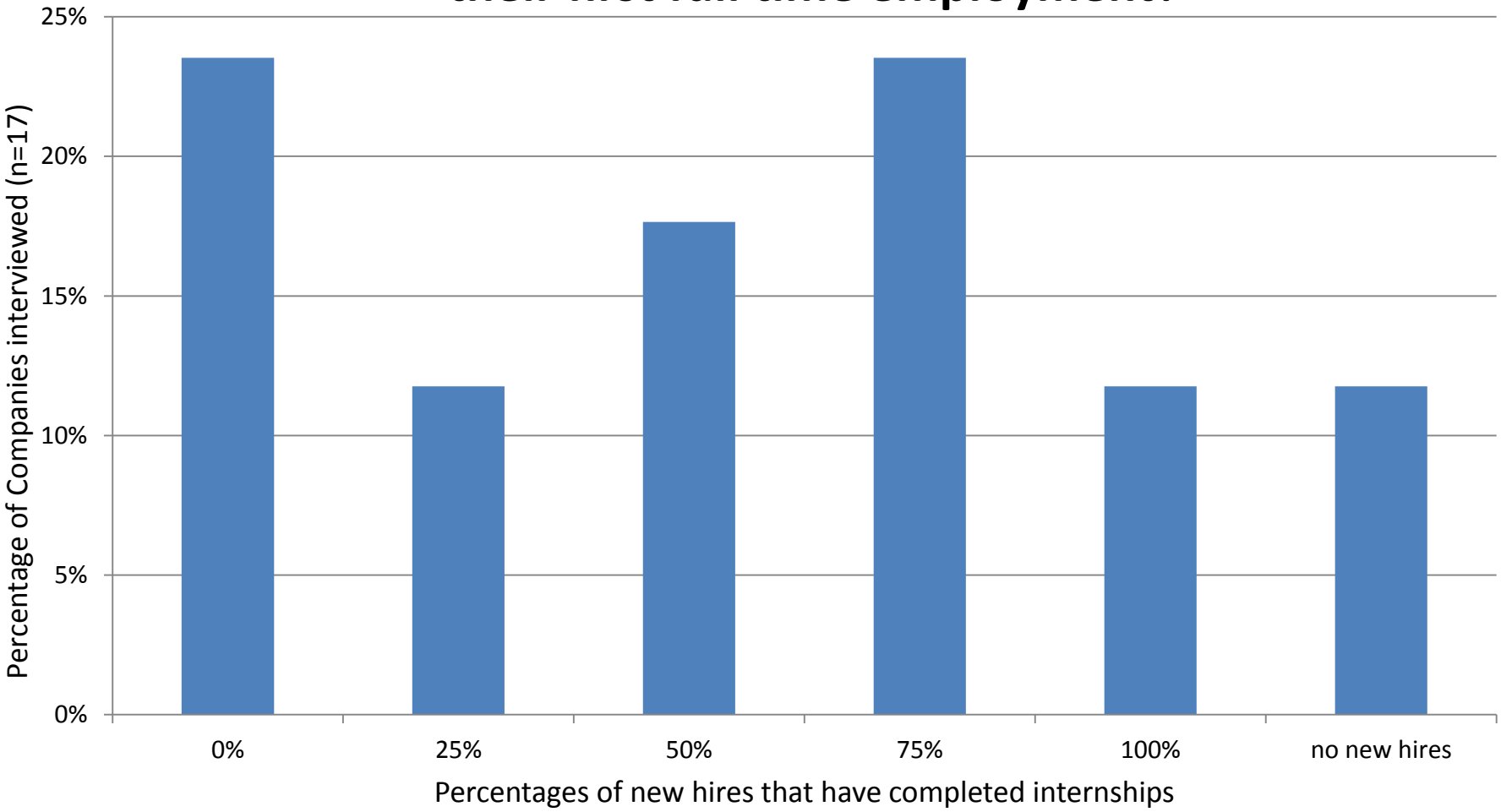
What [estimated] percentage of your new hires in the last five years have completed internships prior to their first full time employment?



How do company's benefit from hiring someone with internship experience?

New Hires come in with:

- Knowledge of business structure and communication
- Industry experience and awareness
- Ready to start on projects with limited guidance
- Helps student know if they want career in Sensory Industry
- Already have a network (if interned with same Company)

The Sensory Experience we offer within our companies

Many companies interviewed reported that they offer Sensory Internships. Ranging from 3-6 months.

Most companies interviewed give Sensory exposure as part of other Internships through

- Sensory as a piece of Intern projects
- Sensory Orientations & Tours
- Participation as sensory panelists
- Cross-Functional Teams
- HR coordination across functions / entire business

Skills of Recent Graduates

Highlights of what is taught well

- Sensory Skills
- Discrimination Testing
- Descriptive Testing

Some have and some do not

- Consumer Testing
- Design of Experiments
- Team Interaction Skills

Gaps that can be taught better

- Understanding how their research supports business

Skills demonstrated by knowledgeable New Hires

- General Sensory and Team Interactions
- Foundation of methods
- Sensory classes help Students 'talk the language'
- Building relationships and trust
- Report writing

Ways Company can help New Hires gain skills

- Mentoring and coaching during on-boarding
  - Presentation skills
  - Communication
  - Holistic Thinking
- Applying Sensory knowledge takes creativity and willingness to take risks and work in a messy world

Improvements for sensory education

- Increase experience and/or course work in
  - All sensory methods
  - Experimental methods in psychology
  - Hands-on Statistics
  - Business writing and communication
  - Designing experiments to solve problems
  - Hypothesis testing
- Increase practical/hands on education!
- **1-2 semesters in sensory is not enough to prepare students for the role they will take in industry.**

Research Challenges



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Types of research that would benefit your organization

The top response to this question was to

conduct RESEARCH-ON-RESEARCH!

Understand latest/different **techniques and methodologies**

- Pros/Cons of ***various techniques***: mobile, digital/consumer immersed, napping, etc.
- Understand how ***methodologies*** challenge/relate to current approaches
- How to define/refine what is currently being done as well as effective ways to ***communicate that internally***

Types of research that would benefit your organization

- Explore ways to understand the ***customer experience*** better/more effectively
- Explore ways to do a better job ***predicting success*** in the marketplace



Types of research that would benefit your organization

- Learn from other industries
- Work with market research departments closer to replicate/conduct similar types of testing
- What can we learn from what we have already gathered



Constraints that prevent you from conducting research you want



Budget, rapid results, & staffing

- **Budget** cost/constraints – and then asked to come up with alternate ways to conduct – that maybe limiting/not correct
- Lack of **time** - need for **rapid** results and in some cases don't have the time to really understand what the results mean
- Lack of **staff** in department

Methods



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Non-Specific Project Research

Most companies were able to complete non-project related research at least 1- 4 times a year

- Majority is research on research
  - **Testing methods**
  - Serving Techniques/Cooking Methods
- Other research areas
  - **Respondents/Demographics**
  - Shelf Life
  - Product/Location Variability
  - Competitive Drivers, Category Research

'Incorrect' Research

Many find themselves using inappropriate methodologies for testing 1-4 times per year

- Why?
  - **Scope of the project was not understood or project objective changed**
  - Cost – trying to save resources
  - Timing – timeline does not allow for proper testing
  - 'I told you so' testing for someone that will not budge or for 'training'
  - Additional, unnecessary questions added because consumers are captive participant

Different Methodologies

- **Methodology depends on objective**
  - More similarity testing completed than difference
- When to use different/new sensory methods?
  - Past methodologies are not appropriate
  - Need to improve our ways-new learning
  - Try new strategies
  - confront new product/project objectives
  - Speed: answers needed quickly

Different Methodologies

- Freedom!
  - Most have organizational freedom to run different methodologies but are constrained with time/money/staff resources
- Shift in Organization's Testing Portfolio
  - Over the past 3 years many companies have seen no change or an increase in the following types of testing
    - Discrimination Testing (external and internal)
    - Quantitative (HUT, CLT, Online)
    - Qualitative (Onsite, Online)
    - Descriptive Analysis (external and internal)
    - Outsources Test Management (D.A. and all types)

Data
&
Communication

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Changes in Presentation of Research Results for PD

Talk First

- Go over the results in person with key team members
- Working session style
- Develop next steps together

Less Formal/More Concise Summary

- Visualization
- Not as much into the data tables as previously

Changes in Presentation of Research Results for Marketing/Management

Top Line

- “So What” of the research
- 1-2 page summary
- Visual, colorful

One Change to Improve Usefulness of the Results You Deliver

- **Business Connection**
  - the bigger picture and business implications
- **“So What”**
  - going beyond just answering the objective
- **Telling a story with the data**
  - a clear and connected story from A to Z
- **Visual representation of the data**

Resources

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Resource Constraints for Sensory and/or Consumer Research

Top Constraints

- Time
- Personnel
- Money

Other Constraints

- Skill
- Internal Support

Resource Budgets

Over Past 5 Years

- Majority increased
- Slightly fewer remained the same
- Very few decreased

Thank You!

- Our Panelists
- Gail Vance Civille
- Professional Development Committee
- Our Interviewers
- Participating Companies

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