MORE THAN JUST A PAIR OF HANDS: DESIGNING AN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM FOR A WIN-WIN-WIN-WIN

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The Problem/Challenge

- Very few schools require internships
- Only some companies offer internships
- Many internship programs lack structure
- Yet, this is an important training ground for future sensory scientists

Implication: Strategic leadership needed to design internship experiences to grow the future of our profession.

Source: 2008 SSP Conference
In Pursuit of the Facts

- The Interviewees
  - Companies
  - Students/recent grads
  - Academia
  - Recruiters

- The Method
  - Conducted one-on-one phone interviews 20-60 minutes in length

- The Timing
  - July – September 2010
Interviewees
Topics Explored

- Length of internships
- Structure of internships
- Recruiting, interviewing, hiring
- The good, the bad & the ugly
- Example of success
- Recommendations
Educational Requirements

- Options
  - Undergraduates mid program
  - Undergraduates before starting Graduate School
  - Graduates mid program
Length of Internships

- **Range of Responses**
  - Summer (10w, 12w, or 3m)
  - Semester or Two
  - 6 months
  - 9 months
  - 11 months
  - 12 months+
Making a Case for 3 months

- Most attractive for students
- Coordinate recruiting across all R&D disciplines (efficiency) and ability to piggyback
- Affords opportunity to be part of an intern “class”
- Global communication of processes to all interns at once
Making a Case for 6 months+

- First 3 months are training, shadowing, observing, grounding; considered introduction only
- Need to take a project from start to finish to see it through
- Students need time to get exposure to corporate politics and how we adapt
Structure of Internships

- Most common responses
  - Assigned a project
  - Work up to a project
  - Project/intern fit assessment
  - Required to do a presentation at the end of internship
  - Act as a junior sensory scientist
  - Exposure, shadow, do
Recruiting

- Company website
- On-Site campus visits
- Email to specific professors
- Flyers sent to food science departments
- Networking at meetings
- IFT employment bureau
- Word of mouth
- E-Groups and Sensory.org
- Trial and error; multiple venues
Interviewing

- Phone interviews only
- On-site campus interviews
- On-site only if local
Hiring

- Via temp agency
  - Paid hourly wage
- Housing
  - Included/not included
  - Stipend offered
- Other Perks
  - Moving expenses coverage
  - IFT travel stipend
Defining Success

- A great coach/mentor
- Paired with a professional and attended all the same meetings
- Exposure to the business
- Got real responsibility
- Treated like a professional
- Involved and executed start to finish
Why don't more universities require internships?

- Delays graduation
- Professors have limited time
- Number of sensory facilities is down
- Students have different career paths and are not appropriate to force
Why Don’t More Students Seek Out Internships

- Geography
- Hurry to graduate
- Don’t look beyond food
- Don’t realize importance of this type of experience to their career
Why Don’t More Companies Have Internship Programs

- Lack of senior management support
- Lack of budget
- Haven’t proven business case
- No open positions
BUILDING A CASE FOR INTERNSHIPS
What’s in it for Students?

- Real world experience
- Ability to assess if this is what you want to do when you graduate
- Opportunity to add to your resume
- Chance to develop your soft skills
What’s in it for Academia?

- Enriches your program
- Better prepares your students for entry into the workforce
- Reenergizes your students on the importance of sensory fundamentals
What’s in it for Companies?

- Preview new talent
- Bring focused attention on a business when resources are limited
- Opportunity to publish
- Opportunity to get feedback
- New perspectives to old problems
RECOMMENDATIONS
For Students…

- Don’t close your mind off to the possibilities
- Be ready for it!
- Express what you want to learn
- Take initiative
- Come in to learn and not just to get a job
- Remember why you are there
For Academia…

- Don’t overinflate the skills of your students – be realistic
- Let your students know about internship possibilities
- Help students articulate learning goals, and then help select potential internships on the basis of those goals
- Check in regularly with student interns to ensure they understand why are they doing what they are doing
- Give feedback to companies
For Companies…

- **Upfront/Prior**
  - Get HR involved
  - Partner with professors
  - Be specific on what you are looking for
  - Be open to non-us citizen students
  - Interview the same way you would a new full time hire
  - If not in an intern class, help new interns get settled
For Companies…

- During
  - Find the right coach
  - Communicate expectations
  - Identify a meaningful project
  - Check-in frequently
  - Ask for their feedback
  - Treat them like permanent employees
  - Make sure their work gets exposure and treated the same
DO NOT...

- Treat interns as technicians
- Give false hope of job opening
- Assume students have as much experience as you think they do
- Spend your time teaching them sensory
- Give them a mini-thesis experiment
How Can SSP Help?

We have a shared responsibility!

Questions:

- Should we create training opportunities?
- Should we create an Internship network?
- What about case studies?
- What other ideas do you have?
Cathy Brandt  
_Bush Brothers_  
Edgar Chambers  
*Kansas State University*  
Jean-Marc Dessirier  
*Unilever*  
Lauren Dooley  
*Univ of Arkansas Student*  
Veronica Egan  
*Kellogg's*  
Mary Beth Einerson  
*Nestle USA*  
Michele Foley  
*Nestle Nutrition*  
Ayn Gelina  
*Energizer / Schick*  
Gloria Gaskins  
_Bush Brothers_  
Annette Hottenstein  
_McCormick_  
Ursula Lowczyk  
*Conagra*  
Bethia Margoshes  
_P&G_  
Cathy Norris  
_Norris Agency_  
Suzanne Pecore  
*General Mills*  
Lori Rothman  
_Kraft Foods_  
Chris Van Dongen  
_Nestle Nutrition_