



PT WORK Force®

Webinar: Strategies for Successful Internships

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This webinar focused on how to recruit new employees via internships and how to attract interns as well as designing an engaging internship program.

Texas A&M has one of the oldest and largest industrial distribution programs in the country with over 12,000 undergraduates and 350 graduates enrolled. This program is primarily a distance learning course, and most members have had prior experience in around five years. A&M hosts two career fairs in the fall and spring semesters through their student organization, P.A.I.D. (Professional Association for Industrial Distribution.)

Why Build a Talent Pipeline

Over the past 20 years, distribution has changed dramatically. There have been several mergers and acquisitions with big name companies. Candidates who have been in the field for a while may not be as familiar with these changes and, as baby boomers age out of their roles, it is important to find a new generation of talent. It's better to use a succession plan to grow your talent with a cultural fit.

Understanding the Value of Internship Programs

Many companies need to first build their brand to get candidates to apply. Hiring interns allows for one to build a next generation workforce. A ten-week internship program can be an effective low-cost way for employers to find the perfect fit. The program must be engaging however, as students are not summer help. Many students prefer working on projects. While evaluating their work performance, they evaluate your work culture.

Where to Look for Interns

High schools, colleges/universities, community colleges and career fairs are the best places to find prospective interns. Most college students will be looking for an internship at some point during their college years. Students are not required to complete an internship but are encouraged to seek one out. Social media is also a great place to promote your internship programs. Using your established internship programs to showcase it online also gets the word out.

Attractive Employee Proposition

Remember—the candidate may be looking at several internships including yours. Be sure to answer the question, “Why should I work for you?”

- Provide tangible rewards such as compensation, benefits, and development.
- Include intangible rewards such as work/life balance and work culture.
- Set your company apart from the competition by clearly defining your company’s culture.

Develop a Structured and Challenging Internship

Designing an internship program that is engaging is necessary to facilitate future candidates.

- Since the program is typically 10-12 weeks, have rotational activities for interns.
- Typically, include an overall larger project that you would like someone to complete.
- It’s important to include customer and manufacturer visits to introduce interns to their team.

Question and Answer Session

What percentage of students end up going to work for the companies they intern for?

Around 20 percent. These are normally the companies with a good presence on the campus.

How do you get your employees to buy into the value of interns?

What some companies do is let their branch managers know that they’re going to hire interns. If they want an intern, they can submit a project they want to have that intern work on. Those are some of the best ways we have found to get people engaged by having the intern work with them.

To get human resources involved, one of the best things companies can do is to bring HR professionals with a hiring manager to the campus or career fair. Students build relationships with hiring managers. If there's a connection between the student and the hiring manager, it's much more likely that the student will accept an internship offer.

What percentage of your students are willing to relocate out of Texas for full time employment?

About 25 percent of students are accepting jobs out of state. This is usually impacted by company culture.

What are your interns saying about internships?

Students say it's a good experience. We've had to work with some companies to get it to that point. But then again, the student will know at the end of that 10 weeks, whether this is a company they weren't going to work for, or maybe they'll keep looking.