

# Internship as a Recruiting Tool

## Bob Langieri



Depending on which survey you read, there are currently between 350,000 and 600,000 IT positions unfilled. The demand continues to grow faster than the supply. And this tight IT job market is not going to go away any time soon. While legacy systems will always exist, the demand for implementing new technology is constantly forcing IT management to acquire new skill sets and hire more people to support the ever-increasing IT infrastructure..

Forward-thinking companies with internship programs view them as an important recruiting tool. The programs give companies an opportunity to evaluate potential new hires at no cost; they also offer a low-risk opportunity to see how a candidate would perform on the job. In addition, the organization gets an opportunity to build a relationship with an eager intern and groom him them in the company culture and mission. As the word gets out that your company has an internship program, it

becomes a great recruiting and publicity tool. Students who are serious about their future careers seek out companies that can offer them an opportunity to get some real-world experience before they graduate. Participation in an internship program is also an impressive achievement for interns to list on their resumes.

Some companies offer college or trade school students an opportunity to participate in a part-time program, gaining actual business experience and earning course

credit at the same time. The intern may or may not get paid while he is working for the sponsor company. When the semester is over, the sponsor company evaluates the intern's performance. The partner school relies on the evaluation to determine the intern's final grade. Some

internship programs are detached from college credits; the focus is on schools coordinating with local businesses to fill summer positions with college students. The company may recruit some of the summer interns when the students graduate the following year.

### Take Off the Blinders


Search firms exist because companies insist on finding IT people who already have all the skills they need. Most managers believe that they don't have the time to train an intern or a trainee. Yet these same managers can afford to look for a skilled person for three or four months. Why not develop a pipeline of potential talent by starting an intern program? An internship program provides a cost-free opportunity to reduce the use of temporary labor and ease the workload of your permanent staff. For example, you can assign the intern to computer operations while you give a member of your existing operations team the opportunity to learn programming. Alternatively, you could use the intern at your PC help desk. Given that many students are PC savvy, they might actually have some PC or development skills that might actually be stronger than those of your current staff. Internship programs also provide an opportunity to bridge the gap between the skills your staff has and those they will need. You will also gain insights as to the IT courses and the skills being taught at the local college. Internship programs also provide an opportunity to test your staff's management skills. Finally, the internship program provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of your company's recruitment screening process.

### What Some Companies Are Doing

One community college in San Diego, California, that offers courses on the IBM AS/400 and is part of the IBM Partners in Education (PIE) program has a full-time person seeking internships for its IT students. In one case, an IBM Business Partner (BP) hired a student intern to work in technical support for the AS/400. Recently, the BP had a client in the Philippines that needed phone support to resolve a problem, but none of the BP staff could speak the native language. Fortunately, the newly hired intern, was fluent in the native language and walked the client through fixing the problem over the telephone. The intern was the hero of the day and was hired shortly thereafter. The BP told one of its customers (a major sporting goods retailer) about the program. The customer tried an intern from the school. That student was also hired permanently after a brief internship. Both companies are now sold on

**"Internship programs can give your company an edge when recruiting top college talent."**

the intern program and have vowed to use the college again when they have needs.

The intern concept can work for you if you let it. For information on a model internship program, go to IBM's Web site at [www-3.ibm.com/employment/us/university/html/hotnews.html](http://www-3.ibm.com/employment/us/university/html/hotnews.html). For colleges in your area that are part of the IBM PIE program, visit IBM's AS/400 University page at [www.as400.ibm.com/education](http://www.as400.ibm.com/education). There is real value in an internship program, and you can take advantage of that value now. You just might find that exceptional new staff member. 

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