Grow Your Own Pool of Potential Job Candidates with Internships

Charleene Burgess, branch manager for Motion Industries in Pasadena, Texas, had to find new employees for her branch to replace those retiring. Billy Hamilton, senior vice president human resources, had been tracking Motion’s need to replace retiring employees across the company and encouraging all managers to start planning on how to fill this need.

Motion Industries began to renew their presence at career fairs at universities with degrees in industrial distribution. During the first visit to the 2015 Texas A&M ID career fair, it was noted that more students were seeking internships than looking for full-time positions. Billy created two internships on the spot, one for Houston and one for Dallas. Charleene was asked to create an internship program and make sure the experience was the same for both students.

Knowing that internships are a great way to start building a pool of potential job candidates, Charleene had to figure out how to put a good program together. At about the same time, she read an email from PT WORK Force about a recruitment resource: the D.I.Y. Guide: Establishing Your Company’s Internship Program. With information on what an internship is, how to find interns and preparing for their first day, Charleene was able to get the internship program underway. “I found a great deal of information and guidance on setting up an internship in that guide,” states Charleene. Charleene also networked with the Houston Electrical League to learn how they run their intern programs. The Houston Electrical League helps member employers in the area find interns by exhibiting at career fairs, interviewing students and funneling matches to member companies.

An internship is a temporary learning experience for the student. Charleene put together a 10-week program to familiarize interns in all areas of the business. Beginning with inside sales, the program had interns moving to the warehouse, inventory, accounting, management and outside sales. “This mix gave our interns a pretty good idea of all of the aspects of the power transmission/motion control distribution business,” reports Charleene.

Many interns have little prior work experience. To help the interns start off on the right foot, Charleene put together a binder of information that included employer responsibilities, evaluation criteria, format of feedback, intern responsibilities and workplace etiquette. “You need to think about this from the student perspective. They may have no work experience so covering things like your social media policy needs to be part of their orientation.”

Each intern was assigned a new employee buddy each week. Charleene commented, “Our employees LOVE getting involved—they come away with a sense of pride in their job, and that leads to more engaged employees.”

Building a successful intern program takes time. Motion Industries hired two interns in 2015, four interns in 2016 and seven in 2017. Last year, there were 45 interns among all U.S. Motion Industries branches. Twenty interns were eventually hired full time.

Get your internship program off and running. Download the D.I.Y. Guide: Establishing Your Company’s Internship Program from ptda.org/intern.

Our thanks to Charleene for sharing her story. How have you used PT WORK Force resources to help with your recruitment and retention efforts? Share your story by emailing foundation@ptda.org.

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