

VIP@work

vocational internship placements

# INTERM INTERN TOOLKIT

Intern Employer  
Briefing Mentoring Session



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## Introduction

### ***About the Intern Employer Briefing Mentoring Session***

A key role of the business advisor or INTERM is to provide mentoring and training to entrepreneurs and business owners on specialist topics and provide practical frameworks that the SME's can follow to learn and implement new initiatives in their businesses.

In the case of VIP@Work, one of our aims is to provide business advisors/INTERMs with the most up to date information and knowledge about Internships so they can then promote and encourage the SME's they work with to become Intern Employers.

The VIP@Work project understands that our end users – namely SME's, learn in different ways and that while many favour self-directed learning there are a cohort of others who prefer to learn face-to-face from a mentor or expert.

This Intern Employer Briefing Guided Mentoring Session is a valuable tool in our INTERM INTERN TOOLKIT which the business advisors can use to structure their mentoring sessions with the SME's. For best use, this Mentoring Session Guide should be used in conjunction with the VIP@work Internship Planning Workbook where the business owner can plot and chart their organizational needs with regard to internships.

## Mentoring Topic 1: Assessing Need and Understanding

### *Understanding the SME's want/need to become an Intern Employer*

We anticipate two main types of businesses needing advice about Internships:

1. Those who have some knowledge of how Internships work and seek more knowledge to get started and
2. Those who do not know anything about Internships but who have a need/gap in their business that an Intern could fill

In terms of mentoring and support, the needs of these two groups are quite different. Thus, the first step for the INTERM is to assess how much knowledge the business owner has with regard to Internships.

**MENTOR LED DISCUSSION:** This can be assessed by asking a few very basic questions to start an open discussion and ascertain their level of understanding such as:

- **Can you explain in your own words what an Internship is?**
- **What do you think are the benefits of Internships from an employer perspective?**
- **What do you think the challenges might be to successfully hosting an Intern?**

Once the Business Advisor has an idea of the level of understanding of the business owner in question they can then proceed. Should the business owner be part of group 1 and have a good level of understanding, the workshop session can proceed to Workshop 2. If the business owner has a low level of understanding of Internships, it is suggested the business advisor use the following information to provide an overview:

An internship is any carefully monitored meaningful learning experience in which an individual has intentional professional goals and reflects actively on what he or she is accomplishing throughout the experience. Developing an internship program is an excellent strategy for companies who want to invest in their organization's future successes, often leading to discovering future colleagues and leaders.

A typical internship;

- Includes developing intentional learning objective goals that are structured into the experience and supervised by a professional with relevant and related background in the field.
- Promotes academic, career and/or personal development.
- Includes learning objectives, observation, reflection, and evaluation.

- Balances the intern’s learning goals with the organization’s needs.
- Typically lasts three – six months and may be part - time or full - time.
- Involves industry related and soft skill development.
- May be carefully monitored and evaluated for academic credit.
- Provides adequate supervision in a reasonably safe environment with the necessary tools to perform the learning goals agreed upon for the duration of the internship.

An Internship is not:

- Free help.
- Meant to replace an employee.
- More than 20% busy work (filing, covering phone, errands).

Internships are proven to be very beneficial for SME’s and businesses. One of the more significant advantages for SME’s and business owners providing internships is the opportunity for them to select and develop their future talent. They have the opportunity to evaluate and screen potential employees prior to making a full - time position offer, which leads to financial savings. If hired in a permanent position, previous interns assimilate faster to their new roles and have shorter learning curves than external hires.

The table below outlines some more of the main benefits of Internships for the employer.

Commercial Benefits Achieved (Based on 7 years of research & evaluation) <sup>1</sup>	
1. Cost Effective Approach	Internship programs provide significant savings in recruitment costs, effort and potential mistakes.
2. Increased Productivity	Interns are a valuable resource assisting other staff to achieve what otherwise may not be done, ranging from promotion, market research, process maps etc.
3. Broadened Capabilities	Interns possess new knowledge and skills that current employees may not have; technological; investigative skills; insights about the latest academic methodologies.
4. Injected Enthusiasm	Interns add vibrancy, fresh ideas and positive energy that will have a valuable effect on workplace morale, motivation and creativity.
5. Increased Effectiveness	Interns save full-time employees time which enables them to focus their talents on higher level tasks.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dreaminternship.com.au/host-companies/benefits-value-hc/>

6. Secure Future Employment / Talent Advantage	An Internship Program enables businesses to pre-recruit, pre-qualify, and pre-train potential employees. Yield a significant competitive advantage by securing some of the best young talent before they hit the 'open market'.
7. International Network	International and multicultural Interns may be able introduce your company to global technologies and skill sets that you hadn't considered, this can help prepare your company for a multicultural global future.

While there are many, many benefits to becoming an Intern employer, some SME's perceive a number of inhibiting challenges such as:

1. Structural/Organisational – while they see the benefits an Intern can bring, some SME's feel their company does not have the capacity or correct structure in place to become a place of learning. They may feel they or their staff does not have the skills fulfil the required mentor or trainer role an Intern supervisor should. Time may also be an issue, they may be short of staff and might feel too time constrained to have the time to show an Intern the ropes.
2. Some SME's feel constrained by their financial situation and may be unaware of grants and supports available as incentives to encourage business owners to become SME employers.
3. Perceived lack of experience of interns – many SME's perceive that interns who often lack work experience have little to offer a company

The good news is that with the help of the Business Advisor/INTERM most of these perceived challenges can be overcome. Working with the Business Advisor, the SME can:

- design an Internship programme tailored to their needs
- help them to hire the right Intern
- help them to create a culture of learning in their company



**INTERNSHIP PLANNING WORKBOOK EXERCISE:** Business Owners should record in their work book their own understanding of internships and the benefits and/or challenges that they perceive for their business in engaging in an internship programme.

## Mentoring Topic 2. Designing and resourcing an internship

### *Designing an Internship Programme*

Prior to hiring an intern, the business advisor/INTERM needs to work with the employer to help them understand how intern/s will fit within the company's goals and culture. Since organizations vary in age, size, industry, and product, so too will internship activities.

**MENTORING DISCUSSION:** The business advisor/INTERM can ask the following questions to help them/the business owner determine what kind of Internship program will work best for that specific organisation:

- **What does your organization hope to gain from the program?**
- **Is your organization looking to fulfil a need on a specific project?**
- **Will this internship(s) encompass one major project, or entail a variety of small projects?**
- **What are the tools and workspace necessary to provide the student?**
- **What talents, academic background and experience do you want in an intern?**  
(Deciding on qualifications early on will guide the selection of the best candidate.)
- **Who will be primarily responsible for the intern(s)?**
- **Will that person be a mentor/supervisor or both?**

### *Setting up structural partnerships in conjunction with VET and intermediaries*

Internship Partnerships which bring together the key stakeholders interested in fostering internships in vocational education are extremely effective at encouraging the sharing knowledge and best practice and converting this into wider innovation and action plans at regional level.

**MENTORING DISCUSSION:** The business advisor/INTERM can ask the following questions to help them/the business owner determine who in their network is already engaged in the provision of internships and who would be the best for them to partner with:

- **Are you willing to partner with other organisations in the provision of internships?**
- **Does your business have any connections with local vocational education providers?**
- **Are you aware of the vocational providers offering internships programmes?**

### *Accessing Internship and/or Training/Employment Supports*

Business Advisors have a key role to play in helping SME's and business owners access finance and supports. With regard to Internships, business advisors can use our country specific infographics and information as a starting point to get to know what supports are available and how internships are structured in their countries.

**MENTORING DISCUSSION:** The business advisor/INTERM can ask the following questions to help them/the business owner determine what kind of support they need to start offering an internship programme.

- **What type of supports do you think you would need to successfully run an internship programme?**
- **If available would you be interested in availing of government internship supports?**
- **Do you feel equipped and ready to take on your first intern?**
- **Would you like to avail of further training and/or supports?**



**INTERNSHIP PLANNING WORKBOOK EXERCISE:** Business Owners should record their answers to the mentoring questions in their Internship Planning Workbook. These will help guide a future internship agreement which they will make with both their future intern and a designated vocational education provider.

## Mentoring Topic 3: Success factors to effective recruitment

### *Finding the right Intern for you*

Employers are competing to gain a student/interns interest and stand out among the rest. An important first step to ensure the business owner finds the right Intern is to craft an appropriate Internship posting.

**MENTOR LED DISCUSSION:** These are the questions the SME owner should consider BEFORE writing the position description:

- **Why will students want to apply for your opportunity over others in the industry?**
- **Does your opportunity illustrate how it will be a unique experience?**
- **Do you fully define the benefits and incentives your organization can provide?**
- **Writing an internship description is essential to recruiting the right individual.**



**INTERNSHIP PLANNING WORKBOOK EXERCISE:** Write the description in clear, everyday language that will help the student understand the position and your organization culture. If the opportunity offers a broad exposure to many elements in your organization, be sure to state that in the description. Interns appreciate knowing the expectations upfront.

## Mentoring Topic 4: Training and mentoring, key to success

### *How to develop a learning culture in your company*

A learning culture is a collection of organizational conventions, values, practices and processes. These conventions encourage employees and organizations develop knowledge and competence. An organization with a learning culture encourages continuous learning and believes that systems influence each other. Since constant learning elevates an individual as a worker and as a person, it opens opportunities for the establishment to transform continuously for the better.

**Role of an Internship Supervisor and Mentor.** The business advisor/INTERM will have a key role to play in helping the SME/business owner to select the most appropriate person in their organisation to be the Intern mentor/supervisor.

### **Guidance for SME's**

It's recommended that the intern supervisor be an expert in the type of work the intern(s) will be performing to provide the appropriate guidance for the intern's assignments.

An intern supervisor's responsibilities will include:

- Taking part in an intern's application, screening, and interview process
- Conducting intern orientation
- Developing learning goals
- Meeting with an intern regularly to evaluate perform

### **Assigning an Apprentice Trainer/Supervisor - Key competences**

The following key competences are required by the in company trainer/supervisor:-

- The technical qualification for the occupation involved
- Several years of work experience
- The willingness to participate in a train the trainer seminar and a trainer aptitude examination
- The willingness to work as trainer in addition to 'normal' work
- Personal and social competences: interested in training young people
- Provides regular feedback and encouragement

### **Benefits for the Trainer/Supervisor**

The trainer/supervisor will:

- Acquire new skills as a mentor or workplace coach
- Have the satisfaction of passing on their knowledge and skills to others
- Enjoy seeing the apprentice develop their skills
- Develop a workforce of staff who are able to complete delegated tasks
- Build work place relationships and foster a positive work environment

**MENTORING DISCUSSION:** The business advisor/INTERM can ask the following questions to help them/the business owner think about how they can build a learning culture in their company:

- **Do you understand the value of learning and knowledge acquisition to you and your staff?**
- **What type of learning currently takes place in your company?**
- **Do you think it would be beneficial for each individual in your organisation to have a personal learning plan?**
- **Do you or will you in the future make a point of recognising learning and upskilling efforts by your staff?**
- **Do you see potential for peer learning in your organisation?**



**INTERNSHIP PLANNING WORKBOOK EXERCISE:** In their Internship Planning Workbook, business owners can record their thoughts concerned with creating and encouraging a learning culture in their company.

## Check List – is the SME ready to become an Intern Employer?

- The business owner has a good understanding on internships, the benefits and the challenges
- The business owner has a good idea of the role the future intern will play in their organisation
- The business owner knows who they are going to partner with in the delivery of the internship
- The business owner is aware of the supports/internships programmes which they may avail or/sign up to
- The business owner understands what their role will be as an intern employer
- The business owner understands the importance of a learning culture and how they can start fostering one in their company