

# INTERM INTERN TOOLKIT

Guidebook for INTERMS to  
support Internship SME's



## Index

About VIP@Work .....	3
Who is this Guidebook for? .....	3
Your Role as a Business Advisor/Intermediary (INTERM) .....	4
Understanding and Interpreting the Needs of SME's .....	6
Benefits for SME's to become Intern Employers .....	8
Challenges for SME's to become Intern Employers .....	9
Roles and Responsibilities of those involved in Internships .....	10
First Steps for Intermediary/Business Advisors support SME's to be Intern Employers .....	13

## About VIP@Work

VIP@Work focuses on vocational internship placements by building the capacity of business support organisations to develop support structures which facilitate Small and Medium-sized Enterprises to become internship employers. The project is funded under the Erasmus+ programme, Key Action 2: Strategic Partnerships for vocational education and training (VET).

## Who is this Guidebook for?

Small business owners need help, especially if they're new to starting and growing a business or are looking at ways of expanding. Often times that is where the Intermediary Bodies and Business Advisors come in. They are on the frontline in the provision of advisory services to SMEs across Europe.

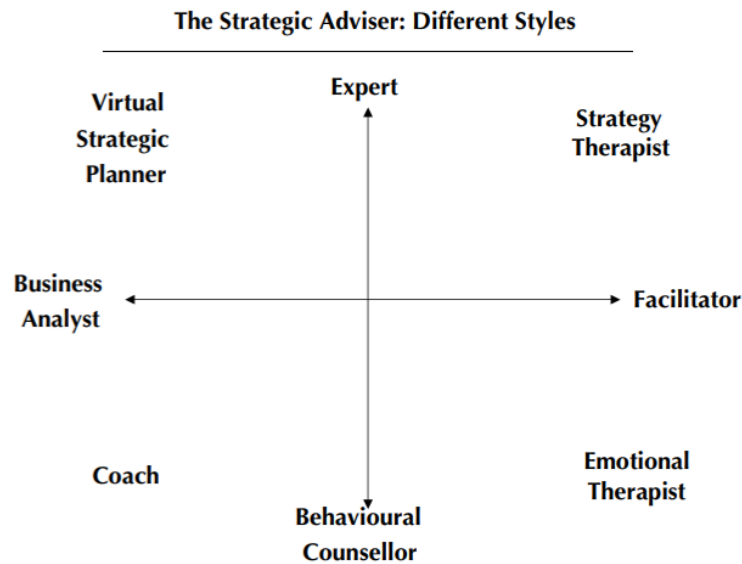
If you provide business development advice, support and/or training to SME's then this guidebook is for you.

## Your Role as a Business Advisor/Intermediary (INTERM)

Your Role as a Business Advisor/Intermediary (INTERM) involves you working with your SME clients on strategy, planning and problem solving with a view to developing and increasing their business skills and knowledge.

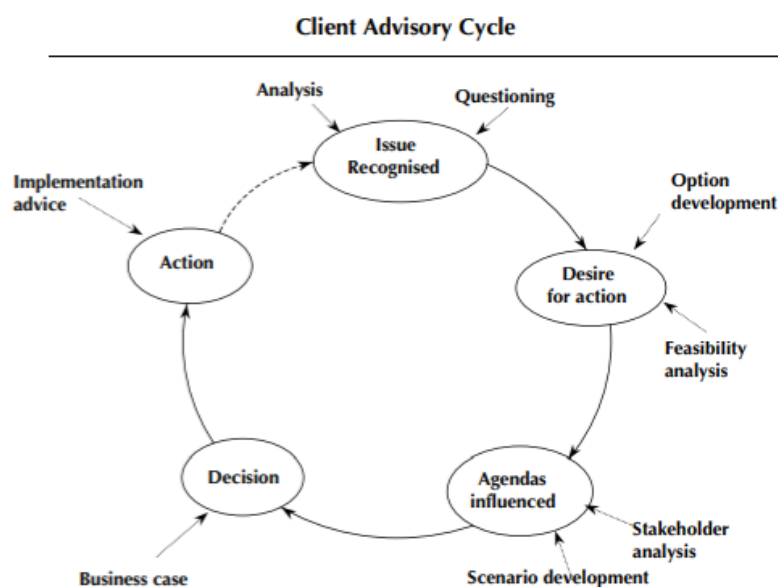


Business advice topics can range from designing a business model or marketing plan, to determining which marketing techniques to use and how to use them. You'll often help clients learn how to plan and implement projects by giving advice, teaching skills, and doing brainstorms to produce practical results and enhance your clients' strategic thinking. In this way, your role can be very varied as can your style.



Whatever your style, the end goal is usually the same. You want to:

1. **ISSUES RECOGNISED:** Help your clients to interpret strategic issues
2. **DESIRE FOR ACTION:** Support them to move them into action
3. **AGENDAS INFLUENCED:** Facilitating their thinking/strategy away, days/workshops
4. **DECISION:** Guide them through the decision process of a new phase(s) of development and growth
5. **ACTION:** Help them to implement change always with a focus on higher value-creating activities



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cpaireland.ie/docs/default-source/media-and-publications/accountancy-plus/in-practice/how-to-be-strategic-advisor-to-sme-part-1.pdf?sfvrsn=2>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cpaireland.ie/docs/default-source/media-and-publications/accountancy-plus/in-practice/how-to-be-strategic-advisor-to-sme-part-1.pdf?sfvrsn=2>



## Understanding and Interpreting the Needs of SME's

“Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the engine of the European economy. They are an essential source of jobs, create entrepreneurial spirit and innovation in the EU and are thus crucial for fostering competitiveness and employment.” Günter Verheugen <sup>3</sup>



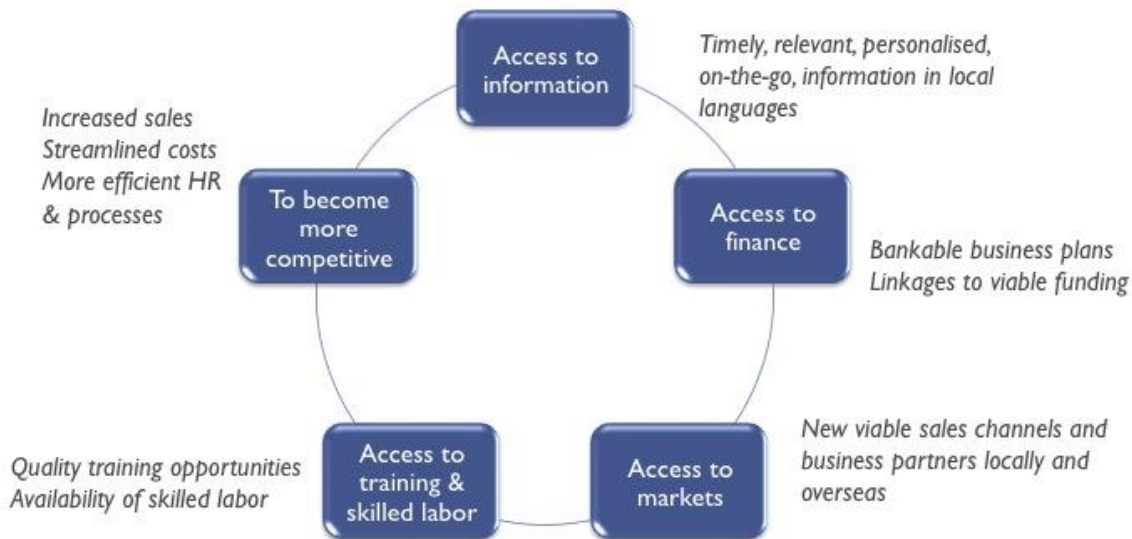
We live in rapidly changing times, especially for businesses. Consider that, in a single generation, businesses have had to adapt to entirely new marketing channels (web and social), decide how to invest in and utilize new technologies, and compete on a global stage — things that were barely imaginable to our parents' and grandparents' generations. <sup>4</sup>

Despite this change, the fundamental needs of SME's remains across all sectors remains the same:

<sup>3</sup>[www.thegff.com/Articles/96272/Global\\_Futures\\_and/Reports/Opportunities\\_Challenges\\_Small.aspx](http://www.thegff.com/Articles/96272/Global_Futures_and/Reports/Opportunities_Challenges_Small.aspx)

<sup>4</sup><https://www.hiscox.co.uk/business-blog/the-10-biggest-challenges-businesses-face-today-and-need-consultants-for/>

## What do SMEs need?



Having looked at what SME's need, let's consider what motivates the people behind the SME's. You will know from your work as a INTERM that most entrepreneurs are motivated to start their own businesses by some or all of the follow factors - the desire to control their own destiny, to pursue an idea, to take advantage of an opportunity in the marketplace and to gain the financial rewards that entrepreneurship can bring. What most excites them about running their businesses today are the opportunities which present themselves every day.

If you ask any SME owner with growth/development plans, they will say that recruiting and retaining talent is high on the agenda and that one of the things that frustrates them the most is being limited by a lack of resources at their disposal to capitalize on market opportunities. This is where the potential of an Internship programme comes in.

## Benefits for SME's to become Intern Employers

An internship is a work-based learning experience (typically for university students and graduates) which provides them with the opportunity to gain the practical experience, knowledge and skills needed to facilitate successful transition into the job market in their professional field. Unlike traineeships, interns cannot displace regular employees. Employment upon completion of an internship is not guaranteed.<sup>5</sup>

Internships are proven to be very beneficial for SME's and businesses, the table below outlines some of the main benefits.

Commercial Benefits Achieved (Based on 7 years of research & evaluation) <sup>6</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.
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.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fue.es/50545212/00545901060.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.dreaminternship.com.au/host-companies/benefits-value-hc/>



## Challenges for SME's to become Intern Employers

### **Interns lack Experience**

Prospective interns often have little if any experience, so assessing their likelihood of success in the workplace on the basis of college/school work can be difficult.



### **Employers lack Resources**

Interns require supervision and even micromanaging. This can be difficult in an SME setting and can lead to managers being frustrated and overwhelmed with the idea of hiring an intern.

### **Hiring the wrong Intern**

The biggest problem is often hiring the wrong person. Great interns have the potential to become employees, and oftentimes businesses struggle to find the right Intern for their organisation.

## Roles and Responsibilities of those involved in Internships

### **Role of Vocational Education Institutions:**

- To offer students the opportunity of acquiring the personal and professional skills required by the job market, thus increasing their employability and employment readiness.
- To attain a closer alignment between higher education and employers with regards to graduate employment and professional development, strengthening cooperation with both the private, public and non-governmental sectors.
- To proactively respond to societal demands beyond its traditional role as research and teaching institutions.
- To contribute to regional economic development (better employees, more effective companies, healthier economy).



**Role of Businesses:**

- To reduce the existing skill shortage amongst recent graduates.
- To improve student and graduate recruitment strategies (talent search) and promote early career development policies (talent management).
- To strengthen the commitment and visibility of business engagement in internships as part of a sound human capital development strategy.
- To benefit from a net profit on the investment made, either during the internship or soon after by employing a fully trained worker.
- To strengthen cooperation with Higher Education Institutions, playing an active role in the design and implementation of E2E learning experiences.
- To enrich Corporate Social Responsibility strategies and actions.
- To increase diversity in the workplace.

**Role of Interns:**

- To apply the knowledge acquired in the classroom in a real work environment.
- To discover, confirm or rule out an interest in a particular career.
- To acquire the skills and competences demanded by employers.
- To gain practical and professional experience in a given field.
- To improve employability and prospects of an easier transition to regular employment.
- To build a broader professional network.

**Role of Business Support Organisations:**

- To serve as the principle motor or catalyst for the achievement of the above mentioned objectives for higher education institutions, host organisations, students and graduates.
- To facilitate the development of effective internship schemes in all phases of their life-cycle (from design through evaluation and follow-up), relieving higher education institutions and host organisations of responsibility for tasks such as: day-to-day operations, legal, administrative and financial management; programme marketing and promotion; recruitment, selection, validation and engagement of host organisations; candidate recruitment, short-listing and pre-selection, programme monitoring and measurement of impact, etc.
- To become a key observatory for youth employability and employment readiness trends, providing useful information to policy makers and stakeholders.
- Further to these general objectives, other more specific goals may be set regarding special needs, such as: a specific business sector, a particular company, students or graduates with a specific academic profile, students with special needs, mobility, gender equality, etc.<sup>7</sup>



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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.fue.es/50545212/00545901060.pdf>

## First Steps for Intermediary/Business Advisors support SME's to be Intern Employers

### **Understanding the worries of SME business owners**

Every business owner has worries about their business. For the SME business owner, those worries are typically concerned with time management, finding the right staff and cash flow. Running an SME can be exhausting. Owner-managers shoulder the lion's share of the decision-making, problem-solving and trouble-shooting within their business, and on a bad day, they know exactly how Sisyphus felt trying to push a boulder uphill.<sup>8</sup> By understanding their worries, you the Business Advisor place yourself in the best position to help and the best position to show them how an internship may be key to alleviating some of their worries.

### **Help Change Mind-Sets**

SME's face a number of real and perceived barriers to becoming an Intern Employer. They may feel that the managing an intern will take up too much of their time or that they will be a drain on already tight company resources. Your job is to convince them of the benefits of hiring an intern. For example, instead of being a drain, the intern will bring new energy, ideas and a fresh perspective.

### **Develop SME capabilities and capacity to become an Intern Employer**

Time management is often one of an SME owners biggest concerns, They worry that time is already too tight and that they simply don't have any spare time to set up and manage an internship. This is where you the Business Advisor comes in, anything you can do to make the process easier is a bonus. Focus on strategic actions and practical resources that will develop the capability and capacity for the SME owner to become an Intern Employer.

### **Facilitate networks and links between SME's, Education Providers and other key Stakeholders.**

Many key players need to be involved for a Vocational Education Internship to run smoothly. At the most basic level, a partnership needs to form between the intern, the intern employer and the intern's education provider. Sometimes mismatches can occur in the convening of these partnerships. This is where your role as a business advisor again becomes invaluable as you become the missing link between the spheres of industry/work and education. For more guidance on facilitating networks, please see our VIP@work Guide - How to create Internship Partnerships.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/work/the-business-worries-that-give-sme-owners-sleepless-nights-1.3568023>