

Internship – first step in personal development

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ABSTRACT

Personal development usually follows recruitment. What would you say if you would have a chance to start this process earlier and make sure you recruit right person at the same time?

In case you think this sounds like a good idea this presentation might give you an opportunity to get some information on internship programmes run by Quanticate.

Although this presentation is focused on programming, representatives from other departments might also find it useful.

Interns are usually students or graduates full of energy and readiness to change the world. It provides additional challenges and opportunities at the same time.

Some companies use Interns to perform simple tasks or use them as cheap resource to review existing processes and support teams working on improvement initiatives.

It means they learn something and help company but not necessarily develop skills they would need in a day to day work. Within Quanticate we use approach focused on training and personal development.

Quanticate successfully running internship programs in multiple locations and is willing to share experience in the following areas:

- Pay or not to pay,
- Candidates selection,
- Oversight and implications for existing staff,
- Internship programme vs. personal development,
- Recruitment

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a brief summary of Quanticate's experience in the area of programming internships in various countries and can be used as a set of discussion points and recommendations. Quanticate is running internship/training programs in order to build specific pharmaceutical knowledge and experience among inexperienced candidates who are new to industry in order to recruit best talents. This paper is based on Quanticate experience with programming internships but most of the areas are universal and could be easily applied to other departments as well. This paper is going to cover main areas and discussion points for a presentation.

PAY OR NOT TO PAY

Internship programs could be free of charge, a company can pay interns or interns could pay company for a training received during internships. An option we choose depends on country specific standards, quality of training and mainly on the ultimate goal from the company perspective.

Obviously the option when company is paying interns is most beneficial for candidates and we would see more applications and potentially better candidates. On the other hand there is a temptation to use interns to do work which is not always focused on acquiring skills relevant to future work.

In case candidates supply and quality is not a big issue free option is a fair compromise of company and candidates needs. It's not going to attract candidates who are looking for a paid summer work but are ready to invest own time in order to get experience they see as valuable.

With plenty of people seeking an opportunity to start career some companies create separate training units where candidates are actually charged for the education. This option is clearly focused on personal development but can cost a lot of money in some cases effectively rejecting people with good skills and potential simply based on the fact they can't afford it.

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CANDIDATES SELECTION

In order to select candidates for internship we have to find them first. This could be done the same way as recruitment sourcing with and exception of agencies and other more expensive methods – we are looking for a relatively inexperienced people after all. With students constituting main part of interns some special methods should be deployed which we might not use in normal recruitment process.

Simple truth is - the better people we get the quicker they learn and less oversight require.

Once we find suitable candidates we have to select those who stand highest chances of going through recruitment process later on. At this point I've assumed recruitment is our ultimate goal for an internship.

Phone interviews, tests, questionnaires and other methods we normally use for recruitment will work in this case as well as long as they are adjusted to a relatively inexperienced people. Some skills are easier to develop than others and this has to be taken into account as part of the selection. English language skills for example might be harder to develop for certain people than programming skills.

Country specific situation is a big driving factor as well. Countries where SAS[®] programming is part of curriculum or large pool of candidates with those skills is available will be treated differently compared to countries where learning SAS is actually a first step in personal development of a SAS programmer.

As long as we are clear what skills constitute our main entry criteria, what skills we want to develop as part of the internship and provide sufficient pool of candidates selection becomes quick and easy task.

OVERSIGHT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EXISTING STAFF

Once candidates are selected somebody has to take care about them and this usually means existing staff. It also means some non billable time commitments. Non billable time can be significantly reduced once we have well structured training materials, assessment tests and tools and proper candidates selected. In an extreme scenario it might become a guided self learning process for interns.

Internship is also an opportunity for new line managers to take a real life experience managing staff. It's a personal development for existing staff as well. Appointing future line managers as a first or second point of contact for interns gives unique chance to understand how interns learn and behave over longer period of time. This is something hard to observe during short interview and minimize a chance of recruiting technically skilled but unsuitable candidate later on. Students could be challenging in a positive way since they come open minded and can ask questions around topics we tend to treat as standard. This has a positive effect on people around them and give existing staff an opportunity to show their expertise.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME VS. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

We have come to the key part of this paper where we define what the internship is all about. Internship is about personal development for interns and existing staff. Some companies run internship programs for marketing purposes or use interns as a low cost resource to perform simple tasks which are not going to help them learn any useful skills. At Quanticate we believe that time invested at this stage will benefit in future. Very often, once candidate is recruited, there is a pressure to make them billable as soon as possible and unfortunately this means less time for personal development. When we think about all the great training courses, industry standards, example projects and other training materials we have within company and not enough time to do everything in parallel to project work we wish to have a break for an internship.

This is what we do at Quanticate – don't require hands on project work but give opportunity to learn instead. It's obviously beneficial to get people working on a real life project but this would usually come with less complex tasks and less personal development.

RECRUITMENT

This is an ultimate goal of internship for Quanticate – recruitment of well trained candidates who work well with the team. Interview process is the same as for any external candidates but the fact we have additional information makes it easier. We involve future Line Managers at this stage again which gives them possibility of taking confident decisions / recommendations backed by the experience coming from the internship.

CONCLUSION

Internship is a great opportunity for personal development for interns and existing staff. When managed properly won't require a lot of time and results in greater savings coming from our future employees. We always ask interns a question "What would you change in internship?" and typical answers we hear is "Nothing really – it was great and very different from other internships". This is something everybody would like to hear.

More specific Quanticate experience will be shared as part of the PHUSE presentation.

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