Each issue of the Intern Insider aims to provide an insider’s view of the internship world from the perspective of employers, current School of Management interns and staff. Enjoy our whole series of newsletters online at mgt.buffalo.edu/internships.

Intern to Intern

By Briana Janson

Interning with an up-and-coming company provides students with a unique learning experience. This summer, Eric Popowytsch learned this first hand while interning with Babyganics. The company began about 12 years ago with the goal of creating household products that are all natural and completely safe for babies.

Eric expected a run-of-the-mill internship, but was pleasantly surprised when he was given responsibilities similar to full-time employees. Eric networked to find this internship and had the description approved for credit by the Office of Internships and Experiential Learning. He worked in operations and was exposed to inventory management, backorder processing, and infractions, his primary responsibility. Infractions are charges Babyganics would have to pay for shipping problems. Eric worked on disputing infractions from companies like Toys R Us and stopped the company from losing money each week. Because of this, he felt like his internship “made an impact on the company.” His supervisor, Lori Davis, agreed saying, “Eric took the initiative in helping implement a stronger infraction process to assist our senior coordinator for one of our biggest accounts. We are still using the format he developed.”

Eric was able to contribute to Babyganics because of the inclusive culture of the office, which consists of about 30 employees. He said the best part of the smaller office is that “there were little to no disputes between co-workers or departments, it felt like a family.” Even the founders of the company, Keith Garber and Kevin Schwartz, were available for questions from employees at any level. Eric even had something in common with Kevin, who graduated from UB. It was this environment that allowed Eric to learn about the company as a whole, not just the operations.

Eric was able to gain a unique internship experience because he contributed to the company in a lasting way through his infraction process. Being surrounded by employees that are passionate about what they do also helped to make Eric’s internship experience truly valuable.
Raising Internship Awareness

This September, The Office of Internships and Experiential Learning celebrated the second annual Internship Week. The week began with Internship Day; a collaboration between our office and UB Career Services to dedicate Tuesday September 16th to raising internship awareness. Internship Week ended with an employer panel presented to the students in MGG 300.

An Entire Day Dedicated to Internships

Internship Day consisted of a set of workshops in the Student Union on topics that included scholarships, internship search, internships abroad, employer expectations of interns, and an evening Sophomore Internship Conference at Greiner Hall. Each workshop was about an hour long and offered participants information from faculty, professors, and students.

Participating employers included (from left) Matt Surowiec, GP Strategies, Cynthia Sweet, Connect 123 and Eric Bond, MassMutual Buffalo. These employers participated in the employer expectations panel and discussed their internship programs, in addition to appropriate business attire, expectations for phone calls and e-mails, and intern “pet peeves.”

MGG 300 Employer Internship Panel: Perspectives and Advice

On Thursday, September 18, a panel of interns and their supervisors visited the MGG 300 class to enlighten students about their experiences. Employers included Niagara Frontier Transit Authority, Horizon Health Services and The Synergy Group/Just for Kids/TripleTrack. After providing an overview of their internship programs, supervisors were asked what they look for in an ideal candidate. Lisa Piecki from NFTA said, “proofread your cover letter; be unique.” Danni Brady from Horizon added, “get involved, communicate well and know the company.” Jill VerDow at The Synergy Group/Just for Kids/Triple Track said, “show that you have done research, can multitask, and fit into the culture.” All had some advice to students applying for internships. Lisa said, “Don’t speak negatively about a former employer. Instead, spin a bad experience into a positive one. Watch what is on your voice mail message (no “Yos”; keep it professional. And in my particular case, since this is a marketing internship, show up with something you’ve done—a portfolio, or at least a sample of your work.” Danni encourages students to be prepared. She doesn’t like when she asks the question, “What do you know about our organization?” and is met with hesitation. “Have consistent energy, ask yourself if you will enjoy working in our setting.” Jill adds that she wants to meet the same person that is in the cover letter, see appropriate dress and be able to detect passion and energy.

Next the focus shifted to the students. When asked about their overview of the internship, Nick Kurtz, who did his internship at NFTA said, “it was the most maturing experience I had in college.” Maggie Herdzik at Synergy Group liked that the internship gave her a “taste of everything HR.” Nick Braun at Horizon said, “Meeting with new hires and orienting them to benefits and the environment.” Overall, what did they like best about their internships? Nick K. loved building working relationships with people. He also learned to improve the way he communicates. Maggie has learned to be open to new experiences, “Don’t be afraid to take on every one that you are offered.” And Nick B. liked networking with colleagues and encouraged students to “ask questions, and request to continue on with your internship if it is the right fit for you.”