

## **CREATING EFFECTIVE BUSINESS INTERNSHIPS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Internships offered through schools of business can provide significant learning opportunities and are potentially beneficial for both the student and the organization. However, organizations may be missing opportunities not only to improve the learning experience for the student, but to also develop high-potential applicants and develop a systematic approach to recruiting, retaining, and developing high-performance employees as part of a strategic approach to manage human resources. This paper addresses areas of improvement that can help organizations realize the full potential of internships. Experiential learning theory, benefits and challenges of internships, and student preparation are addressed, and the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria Framework is also provided to support internships. Discussion, implications, and future research recommendations are followed by conclusions.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Internships supported by schools of business are universally perceived as beneficial, providing students with hands-on experience in the workplace. Internships have demonstrated their value to students and are also valued by the institutions of higher learning, faculty, and the organization hosting the intern (Weibel, 2010). O'Neill (2010) suggests that internships are usually successful regardless of student outcomes because at a minimum the internship may help the student determine what they don't want to do, particularly if the student is not clear about interests or goals. For students that have a clear vision of what they want to do, the internship can provide a high impact learning experience and meaningful work (O'Neill, 2010). The author has worked with numerous student interns and discovered that even though the intern may have a clear vision and a list of goals they wish to accomplish, the organization may have other ideas. Too often student interns have been relegated to accomplishing simple tasks for the organization not necessarily related to the intended educational experience or the goals of the internship, and interns may receive little or no feedback during the internship process from on-site supervisors. In other instances the student intern does not obtain an understanding of how the job or position contributes to organizational goals and thus misses an opportunity to obtain a basic

understanding of the business environment. As a result of these and other events, the student intern may not have a satisfactory experience.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) provides the SHRM Guide for organizing an internship program and offers samples of different forms, discusses establishing processes, and provides supporting documentation to enable effective internship programs (Kluttz & Salvetti, n.d.). However, organizations may not understand the need for a systematic approach to internships as suggested by the Baldrige framework (NIST, 2013), which is necessary to take full advantage of talent, recruiting opportunities, and developing future employees. Organizations need to ensure an effective process that serves all stakeholders if the full benefit of an internship program can be realized. Literature supporting internships discusses starting programs (e.g., Kluttz & Salvetti, n.d; Tovey, 2001), how internships are valued by students for future careers (e. g., Knouse & Fontenot, 2008), and how stakeholders benefit (e. g., Weibel, 2010), but little is available to help businesses integrate internships and enhance the alignment of interns with organizational goals to create maximum value for the organization. As a result, not all organizational benefits can be realized; some research is also dated, which may not reflect current issues and challenges.

This paper offers a framework for using the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence (NIST, 2013) as an approach to align efforts focused on internships with the intent of maximizing the benefits for organizations. This alignment may assist in not only improving organizational outcomes relative to the internship program but also may enhance the student experience as well as the organizational experience, and establish a foundation for attracting high potential interns in the future (Tovey, 2001). Definitions are discussed, including types internships. Theory supporting internships is provided, followed by issues, benefits and challenges with recommendations for organizations. A structure for effective internships is offered for organizations to consider based on the Malcolm Baldrige Framework (NIST, 2013), followed by a discussion of implications, future research and conclusions.

## **BACKGROUND**

Internships have evolved in the last few decades. The traditional view of an internship is defined as an unpaid internship taken for college credit and an experience that "...integrates career related experience into an undergraduate education through participation in planned, supervised work" (O'Neill, 2010, para. 17) in organizations and is more carefully defined by the United States Department of Labor relevant to wages and guidelines (2010). The traditional view of an academic internship is further explained by Rothman (2007) who emphasizes that organizations who host these interns are receiving educated students who benefit from professional experience in a supportive learning environment and should be primarily focused on providing learning opportunities for students in an organizational context. In return, schools of business administration offer credit for internships taken as academic courses (Rothman, 2007).

The US Department of Labor (2010) provided a definition and parameters for internship programs under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) that follows these parameters, including

that training would be similar to that given in an educational environment; the experiences for the benefit of the intern while working under close supervision of existing staff; and that the employer and intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages, among other criteria. Generally speaking, the internship is viewed as an extension of the educational experience, as a college or university will usually exercise oversight and provides educational credit.

However, different types of internships and programs available may include but are not limited to paid and unpaid internships, where individuals may be hired for summer jobs or temporary positions in organizations, and service learning, such as class projects and collaborations. Summer internships, or those offered by different organizations also at other times during the year, provide work experience opportunities for those awarded the internships but often work for little or no salary. Service learning may be conducted through the classroom instead of as an internship program (e.g., Tovey, 2001). These examples of other types include internships that may not part of a program at a university or college.

The focus of this paper is primarily on traditional, academic internships as discussed by Rothman (2007) and O'Neill (2010) for the purpose of demonstrating the systems approach and potential impact on multiple stakeholders as explained by the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria (2013). Different aspects of this framework may apply in other internship situations, however, in a more limited way. As an example, companies who hire summer interns for limited time periods through established human resources processes would only represent a limited aspect of the Baldrige Framework. For the purposes of this paper, internships are considered to be part of or directly related to the educational program in a post-secondary institution, for the benefit of the student, and focusing on undergraduate business programs. The organization hosting an intern for the purpose of an internship will be referred to as a host organization.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theory Supporting Internships**

The theoretical bases for internships offered by this paper can be found in multiple theories; for the purposes of this paper, Kolb's experiential learning or ELT (e.g., McCarthy, 2010; Akella, 2010) was chosen as the primary focus because of the hands-on experience offered by internships. Indeed, internships are highly valued specifically for this reason whether the internships are for undergraduate or graduate students (Anonymous, 1994). Experiential learning theory (ELT) is an approach offering a perspective that combines experience, cognition, perception, behavior, and affirms knowledge is created through the integration of the four areas; the process of creating knowledge covers all areas and there is no required sequence. Experiential learning enhances the marketability of undergraduates in entry-level positions as well as enhancing career preparation (Gault, Leach, & Duey, 2010).

One area that is not often noted in business or in internships relates to the inter-subjective experience as found in critical theory (Herzog, 2010) and communication as experienced by at

least two people in an organizational setting. Herzog explains about the development of a reality that emerges from at least two people who share a space. Without this shared understanding there can hardly be a shared reality. Such experiences are based in the social construction and relate to defining and promoting a positive image through conversation, observation and symbols, and in other areas generally through these inter-subjective experiences. This combination of ELT and dialectics when coupled with hermeneutics, which focuses on interpretation and understanding of inter-subjective experiences (Herzog, 2010), plays a powerful role for interns as they are not only learning about the business, but learning how to function effectively within the context of an organization and with other employees.

There are different motivational theories that may also apply; McClelland's need theory (Dowling, 1972), which emphasizes achievement as one of the elements is also included with this paper because achievement can be perceived in different ways for all internship stakeholders, including students, employers and hosting organizations, faculty and postsecondary institutions. Moghaddam's research (2011) acknowledges need theory and determines that motivation appears to be higher for students who have yet to complete internship programs as compared to those who have already served in an intern role. In addition, those who had yet to complete internships had significantly higher expectations than did those who had already experienced the outcomes. Internships were noted as most effective when they focused on meaningful activities including providing services of value to the hosting organizations, and the need for achievement was a strong indicator for students who had yet to complete an internship.

## **KEY ISSUES**

Rothman (2007) notes that student interns typically encounter problems such as doing menial tasks, vague directions, oversight and responsibilities, and a lack of information on expectations. Student interns should not be treated like temporary or part-time employees (Rothman, 2007); this is supported by guidelines provided by the United States Department of Labor (2010). Because the intent of an internship is to provide an educational experience, organizations need to make commitment to provide this experience. In addition, providing a job description, supervisor or mentor and specific directions, providing professional tasks as well as the rationale behind the assignment, including job structure, directions and oversight, and providing better training and orientation for the internship. It is also necessary for the organization to provide clear expectations for the student intern, feedback during the internship process, a list of responsibilities and clarity and detail in communication (Rothman, 2007).

Tasks should be professional tasks, not something temporary or that which part-time or full-time help can accomplish; Beneen and Rousseau (2010) differentiated internship tasks from simple skill exercises that employees could easily manage. Hosting organizations and supervisors should not assume that interns have working knowledge relative to organizational culture, routines and other aspects of work that those with experience take for granted. A lack of work or poor planning can be avoided by a clearly-defined internship program with a specified overall purpose, mission, and goal set. This is where the emphasis on ELT emerges: student interns understand the context in which they work, why their work is important and contributes to the

overall success of the organization and as noted in interaction with others in the learning that follows. Jusoh, Simun, and Chong (2011) note the implications and the importance of the role played by employers in addressing expectations of recent graduates, and found communication and motivation significantly related to job satisfaction. In addition, exposing students to the entire organization instead of simply the unit or department of the internship can provide a significant learning opportunity to understand the larger context of not only the organization but how business functions in general. For host organizations, this is a clear indication of the need to address the multiple aspects of the internship experience and focus on job satisfaction as a way to increase motivation.

## **BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF INTERNSHIPS**

Internships are considered highly beneficial in the field of business (Anonymous, 1994) for numerous reasons including the experiential learning that takes place in an organizational setting. Businesses have also taken advantage of the opportunity to host interns from colleges and universities, using internships to identify potential full-time employees following graduation. Internships are noted for enhancing employment opportunities and providing job experience. Internships are seen as beneficial for both the student and the host organization because internships provide recruiting channels for organizations and placement avenues for students (Anonymous, 1994).

The importance of providing workplace experience for students has been well established and supports the ELT approach (e. g., Knouse & Fontenot, 2008; Weibel, 2010; Brooks & Green, 1998) and the inter-subjective experience as noted by Herzog (2010). Internships can benefit not only the student by providing hands-on experience, higher starting salaries and increased job satisfaction (Weibel, 2010), internships can also benefit the organization by providing the first choice of potential employees with work experience, part-time help, and the creation of a network to colleges and thus exposure to new ideas (Weibel, 2010). Overall, this may help in reducing costs related to recruitment and hiring. Organizations who host interns can provide feedback to the intern and the educational program in higher education not only on knowledge and skills of the interns, but also can assist in developing partnerships, providing individuals to serve on advisory boards, and further enhance their relationships with the community.

Different challenges were noted for hosting organizations such as screening potential interns and matching interns with appropriate opportunities; assigning appropriate tasks; follow-up which could include feedback and evaluation for the intern, and overall coordination internally and with stakeholders. O'Neill (2010) and Beenen and Rousseau (2010) and others cited the importance of screening as well as reviewing the intentions of the hiring organization. For example, Beenen and Rousseau (2010) further explained the need to know the difference between seeking an intern with the capacity to learn and perform, and to place the intern in an appropriate position which will help professional development as opposed to seeking an intern employer who values existing skills. Some host organizations, according to Beenen and Rousseau (2010), bring student interns in to accomplish tasks based on the skills the interns may already have; this would be inappropriate. Since the focus should be on providing learning experiences for the

intern, organizations should focus on providing new experiences rather than accepting an intern who could fill an immediate need for a skill set; this also needs to be in alignment with the guidelines of a nonpaid internship based on the requirements of the US Department of Labor (2010). Bennen and Rousseau (2010) noted employers should structure roles to challenge the interns' skills. While this may make the internship more difficult, clear goals, guidance and supported activities will assist in helping interns complete work products. Lord, Sumrall and Sambandam (2011) explain how personal qualities can be a strong influence on the performance of the intern and thus have a large effect on the organization's satisfaction with the program. Demonstrations of maturity, initiative and responsibility are necessary so screening for such attributes would be beneficial in matching students with internship assignments. However, interns should not be overqualified because this could result in dissatisfaction with the internship experience. Interns want to use the skills they have developed and want opportunities to demonstrate achievement (Lord et al., 2011).

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR HOST ORGANIZATIONS FROM INTERNS**

Student perceptions of internships have also changed (Cannon & Arnold, 1998), and hosting organizations need to be aware of the shift in expectations. Students now see internships as a pathway to gaining a competitive edge instead of a continuance of a learning experience that supports their education. This view is supported by Knouse, Tanner, and Harris (1999) who note that students who complete undergraduate internships find jobs more quickly. However, both of these studies are not current. More recent research with those in student intern programs such as Rothman (2007) and Moghddam (2011) provide more current information students expect to learn from the internship experience.

Moghaddam's research (2011) determined that students found the exit interviews and feedback on student performance least effective; this indicates the need for improving feedback on student performance by the on-site supervisor. Instead, students valued timely and immediate feedback on their performance while on the job, as providing feedback after the internship did not allow interns to focus on improvements while on the job. Rothman (2007), in a content analysis of 345 interns discussing how to improve the experience for future interns, noted how much interns appreciated and valued the learning opportunities provided, including the transition experience from education to a job.

Improvements suggested for internships were named, including but not limited to the need for more structure on the part of the host organization for the internship itself. Some of the suggestions for improvements included more effective training programs for interns, better orientations, and clearer expectations. Some interns mentioned a lack of work or poor planning on work assignments and providing a schedule that lists specific responsibilities. Interns also requested that employers communicate with greater detail and clarity when giving directions, not only about the work but in general how to do things better. More direct contact, mentoring and guidance is needed instead of simply task delegation to the interns (Moghaddam, 2011).

Critical elements considered necessary for a successful internship included making supervisors available, providing feedback, and challenging assignments with explicit expectations along with clarity on exactly what is to be accomplished. Overall exposure to the larger organization will also provide job and work context for the student intern. Organizations, according to Rothman (2007), should also remember that these interns are essentially volunteering their time in exchange for experience and thus are deserving of respect. Interns should also provide feedback to the host organization, including what the employer can change to make improvements for the next internship.

Verney, Holovial, and Winter (2009) believe the evaluation by the internship employer is a valuable tool to assess student learning as well as to provide information for internship program review and revisions. It would be a mistake to assume that university education assist in students gaining skills necessary to succeed (Verney et al., 2009), therefore learning goals for the internship must be specified and assessed to determine goal accomplishment. Clearly, how to function in an organizational culture, develop working relationships and demonstrate appropriate behavior, when learning on the job, demonstrates the application of ELT and the importance of learning in context (Herzog, 2010). The potential for success of students in internships is also clearly demonstrated with the example provided by Gault et al. (2010). Hewlett-Packard recruited a record number of 70% of its workforce from a single pool of interns. This example not only addressed the importance of qualified intern candidates, it also represented how an employee or may reduce the costs of hiring; in addition, those who had served as interns were compensated to a greater extent than those who had not served as interns.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING INTERNS**

Gault et al. (2010), in their research on the value of the internship experience relative to employee compensation, noted career preparation skills that were significant including "...oral and written communication, problem solving, analytical skills, computer applications and leadership/teamwork skills" (p. 79). Intern supervisors in host organizations, as part of the same research, identified 10 career preparation skills: "...reliability; consistency of performance; eagerness to learn new skills; timeliness; effectively prioritizing tasks; demonstrating initiative/self-motivation; exhibiting ethical behavior and accepting criticism constructively" (Gault et al., 2010, p. 79). Their research determined that employability is best when assessed by the quality of the offer to graduates instead of by the graduate employment rate. This information included metrics such as what employers were willing to offer interns plus different predictors to assess intern performance.

With appropriate preparation, students should have more realistic expectations relative to the workplace; especially those students who do not have previous work experience. For example, specific orientation courses prior to participating in a college business internship can provide insights relative to acceptable workplace behavior, appropriate attire and what constitutes appropriate interaction with business employees at the internship site. Preparation should also include an orientation toward working with others, as teamwork and group work is typically found in organizations. At Eastern Carolina University, this need is met with a three-hour

semester course, which also requires the completion of 140 hours on the job plus other requirements such as a portfolio and other assignments (Tovey, 2001). Research with organizations who hosted internships for students at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (Brooks and Greene, 1998) indicates organizations want interns who already have communication skills, technical and computer skills, the ability to work with teams, professional maturity, and knowledge of subject matter. Tovey (2001) and Cannon and Arnold (1998) concur, as student preparation may best be accomplished by requiring a class that is provided as a prerequisite to an internship. This class would address expectations, behaviors, requirements, and generally provide an overall orientation from the perspective of the college or university and serve as an effective method to manage internship expectations.

Some organizations are also looking for prior experience (Brooks & Green, 1998). The level of satisfaction with the interns' skills and organizations are highest for prior experience and teamwork, followed by professional maturity, knowledge of subject matter, technical and computer skills, and was lowest in communication skills. O'Neill (2010) emphasizes the need to match the internship with career development goals as well as learning goals and the importance for the intern candidate to know the difference. Verney et al. (2009) and Morrison, Graden and Barnett (2009) explained the importance of effective measures for internships, and the need to have a variety of perspectives, data, and assessments to support student learning, career goals, and academic requirements. From the perspective of the host organization, assessing student interns should include the same types of assessments given to regular employees such as evaluations, ongoing feedback, and other methods used by the host organization, but these need to be more frequent because of the short duration of the internship. McDonald, Rodriguez and Prior-Miller (2009) highlight the critical need for reliable assessment methods to provide accurate information for all stakeholders; for the host organization reliable assessments from internships supervisors, observations, and other organizational measures or surveys can provide a foundation for improving the design of internships, improving student satisfaction and thereby providing a good experience as well as a good reputation as a host organization. When shared with those who manage the internship programs in education, more effective placement and a closer match to student goals can also enhance intern and host organization satisfaction.

## **STRUCTURING EFFECTIVE INTERNSHIPS**

Hergert (2009) notes how students obtain a higher value from internships that had been integrated into the academic program of study and were structured appropriately. Onley (n.d.) explains the need for specific content for any internship, including adequate supervision that includes training and orientation on organizational rules such as attire, behavior, ethical expectations and technology use. As previously noted, Rothman (2007) discusses how students express the need for more effective orientation and preparation from the organization. This is a clear call to review, redesign, and establish effective internship structures in host organizations. In addition, organizations also need formal processes to gather feedback from the intern about the experience as well as a critique of the work completed at the hosting organization. Periodic feedback and a formal evaluation of the internship should be provided to both the intern and the academic supervisor with the intent of improving the experience of the internship, and to provide

the necessary feedback to support the development of appropriate business skills for the intern. The hosting organization, through the work supervisor, should also provide a written evaluation, the intern may also provide feedback to the organization and the academic supervisor to be used as input for the internship program, the academic program, work tasks, and the overall intern experience. Standard approaches to gathering data at the end of the internship often include an exit interview frequently conducted by the work supervisor and a written evaluation for us as from the student. The student intern should be asked not only to provide opinions often in the form of the survey on the internship experience, but also to provide a review of the internship process in terms of a program assessment, as this will help the host organization conduct reviews which may support process improvement efforts.

Such an approach can be applied to internship programs using the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence (NIST, 2013). The Baldrige Criteria represents a 360° approach to support alignment throughout the organization which can intern maximize opportunities for organizations as well as interns who could be future employees

## **A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS**

To be effective, an internship should be integrated into the organization instead of treated as an "add-on" component for a single department, a single individual in the organization, or as only the responsibility of human resources. Thurston (2000) advocates a systematic approach for teaching business students; although this may be challenging because of the focus on individual learning, the author notes when students learn to think beyond a linear approach, this can improve complex decision-making. An effective internship, which includes experience in all aspects of the organization as determined by the Baldrige Criteria (NIST, 2013), may provide a higher-quality experience for the intern and the organization; this may also support opportunities for additional engagement by the interns as well as providing a more complete business perspective.

The Criteria for Performance Excellence (NIST, 2013) is comprised of seven categories in the Performance Excellence Framework that represent a systems' perspective: Leadership (category 1); Strategic Planning (category 2); Customer Focus (category 3); Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management (category 4), Workforce Focus (category 5), Operations Focus (category 6); and Results (category 7). The Criteria provide a systems perspective by demonstrating the linkage and interdependencies among all categories. The model presented here uses the Baldrige Criteria as an initiating structure to consider when establishing internships in organizations. The intent is to assist organizations in developing or improving internship programs by proposing a structure that integrates the internship effect more effectively into the organization which in turn may enhance the benefits for the organization derived from hosting college and university (for credit) internships. This also includes information on alignment and how the categories work together. Further development of appropriate internship program plans by any organization is required as organizational needs, environmental changes, and hiring requirements must address organizational and market needs. In all cases, the information offered here provides starting points and areas to consider but cannot provide specific information to

organizations on how to run internship programs; thorough development and implementation of any internship program must rely on organizational priorities, strategic goals, and the organization's mission, vision, and values.

## **Leadership**

When establishing or implementing internship programs, organizational leadership not only needs to be aware of the program, but should fully support the effort. Human resources staff (HR) are usually involved in and aware of the internships but organizations may vary on how the internships are managed and how candidates are selected. At a minimum, top management and HR should be involved with internships as they represent potential future recruits. Onley (n.d.) noted that employers are looking at students often as potential job candidates. In addition, colleges and universities will have requirements that must be addressed, and federal, state, and local laws must be followed. The importance of providing an orientation for the intern is essentially the same as providing orientation for new employees; information on policies, procedures, expectations, organizational goals, ethical expectations, behavior expectations, and necessary paperwork are parts of a typical on-boarding process.

Multiple reporting responsibilities will be present. At a minimum, the on-site organizational manager who will be supervising the intern will be managing daily activities, while the academic supervisor, who is often a faculty member, will be tracking academic requirements of the internship. The intern should have a clear understanding of reporting responsibilities and the different expectations for the on-site supervisor in the organization as well as academic oversight.

Questions the organization may ask to determine the readiness of a future or existing internship program could include: Are accommodations available to support an orientation for interns, and are accommodations made for workspace and all necessary equipment? Is leadership aware of and supportive of the internship program? Are clear lines of responsibility designated for organizational supervision of the internship, and is there an open line of communication with the academic supervisor, the organizational supervisor, and the intern? Are plans prepared to provide ongoing feedback for the intern, a complete evaluation at the end of the internship, and data collection for multiple perspectives that may be shared with other stakeholders?

## **Strategic Planning**

Internships should be included as part of the organizational strategic plan and integrated throughout the organization as part of the strategic human resources plan. For example, if employees are needed with specific knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) for positions which need to be filled now or in the future, internships may serve an important role in not only short term human resources planning, but in longer-term strategic planning for the organization. By

projecting workforce needs, internships can be developed in these areas to meet future organizational needs. Without advance planning to address future skills needed in the workforce, it is challenging to meet organizational goals if required KSAs are not available. The need for strategic planning is clearly addressed by the Baldrige Criteria (NIST, 2013). Two views of strategic planning should include short-term and long-term horizons; action plans should be developed and deployed to enable the organization to meet necessary goals and objectives. Through internships, employers may benefit twofold; not only do they have students to develop organizational specific KSAs; employers may also be able to screen the interns for potential full-time employment upon completion of the internship. This approach may offer distinct advantages related to the reduction of recruitment costs, assessing abilities and interest in working at the organization, determining culture fit and the ability to work with others as well as assessing job competencies.

Questions to be asked relative to internships and strategic planning may include the following: Are internships considered in both are long and short-term strategies? Do we have key strategic objectives developed relative to future human resource needs, training and development, necessary to meet business goals and organizational sustainability? Have we developed action plans to address internships, and have they been implemented? Are resources appropriately allocated with workforce plans and performance measures to support internships? Are internships developing KSAs necessary to meet organizational goals now and in the future?

## **Customer Focus**

There is often confusion that develops as a result of trying to determine who the customer is; some situations—such as internships—usually have multiple constituencies that must be served, frequently referred to as stakeholders in the Baldrige Criteria. For internships, there are numerous stakeholders who may be defined at different times as customers depending on the perspective. For example, a stakeholder could be the employer who offers the internship; and another stakeholder could be viewed as the student who is looking for the right organization to complete an internship. The college or university may also be a stakeholder, and the employee who eventually hires the student after graduation is also a stakeholder. This means that there are multiple customer or stakeholder perspectives that should be engaged in determining value, performance level and outcomes as described by the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria (NIST, 2013) while balancing the various needs of stakeholders (Moghaddam, 2011; NIST, 2013). For the internship itself, this would suggest feedback is necessary from the various stakeholder groups and those involved such as, but not limited to, the on-site supervisor of the internship, the student, and the faculty member managing the internship.

In the Criteria (NIST, 2013), customer engagement is included in this category; this includes, but is not limited to, identifying customer and market requirements, providing information and support for customers, market segmentation and how data is used to identify opportunities, market product offerings, and focus on the customer. This also includes building customer relationships and complaint management. For the organization, efforts in this area may include defining the types of internships and different areas of KSAs needed by the organization,

working with colleges and universities to identify potential candidates, and providing information on the structure and content of internships offered. By developing close relationships with colleges and universities, organizations may influence curriculum and program development, profile and select appropriate individuals for the work and the culture of the organization, and provide feedback to other stakeholders for purposes of improvement and innovation.

Questions the organization may use to determine readiness could include: Have all potential customers related to student interns been identified, and are there approaches in place to obtain performance feedback? Have internship responsibilities been designed to enhance intern satisfaction and engagement? Is there a mechanism through which dissatisfaction and complaints can be received, managed, and addressed? Are processes in place to support and further develop relationships with all stakeholders who impact student internships? Is appropriate support available for interns to assist them in professional development and personal development? Is the internship work challenging yet appropriate for the capabilities of the individual?

### **Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management**

Measurement, analysis, and knowledge management relative to internships may include the individual intern as well as tracking multiple interns over time periods. For example, interns should be evaluated by the on-site supervisor and provided ongoing performance feedback so they have the opportunity to improve performance and make changes as needed. Providing midterm feedback is a positive influence on internship behavior and serves as a basis of comparison for results at the end of the internship; providing midterm feedback and a final feedback allows corrections at midcourse and provides the basis for comparison at the end of the internship (McDonough, Rodriguez, & Prior-Miller, 2004). Both the internship supervisor for the organization and the faculty member should determine appropriate forms of measurement and use these (such as midterm feedback and evaluation as well as final feedback and evaluation) As a final evaluation, determining the difference between midterm and final can provide a clearer picture of student capabilities as well as effectiveness of the chosen measures; a midterm evaluation also allows for feedback which could improve or enhance performance before the final evaluation. Employees working with the intern may also provide input to assist the internship supervisor as needed and may provide insight into the overall fit with organizational culture, work habits, and effective working relationships established with other employees. As always, all feedback must be documented.

Appropriate questions for employers hosting interns may include the following: Have we provided an orientation? Are processes in place to monitor and assess the progress of the intern? Do these processes enable us to use the information we gather to improve our internship program and processes, and to share this information with the academic supervisor? Do these approaches include a way to assess internship satisfaction and engagement as well as dissatisfaction? What organizational support is available for the intern? Are our evaluations effective in contributing to the professional development of the intern? Is the intern used effectively or only assigned to menial tasks? Is the supervision of the internship providing support and direction? Are we

working appropriately with the college or university to build relationships and enhance the experience for the student and to assist our organization in meeting its goals?

Knowledge management would include, at a minimum, retaining organizational knowledge learned from hosting internships in terms of needed skills and competencies, effective processes, appropriate policies and procedures, and using this information to improve the program. Human resources must be current with all levels of legal requirements and be in compliance with college and university requirements; this can be facilitated in part with assistance from the postsecondary institution. Knowledge about processes, policies, procedures and other requirements should be maintained and updated regularly with the assistance of human resources and shared with all employees, not just those involved directly with the internships. As part of a well-informed workforce, all employees should understand the value of internships the organizational goals related to internships as well as how they fit into the strategic plan.

Relevant questions for the hosting organization can include: Are we collecting and analyzing information about what our organization needs? Are we reviewing past records of internships for performance, skills and competencies to determine if changes or improvements are appropriate for the work we assigned and the internship position? Are we providing accurate information to the college or university and the intern to further develop the intern, the curriculum, and the student's program? Finally, organizations should always assess their own evaluation processes and how they handle knowledge management to make sure these are effective to help the organization meet its goals and provide a satisfying internship experience.

### **Workforce Focus**

The focus of this category is on assessing workforce capability, determining capacity needs and developing an environment for the workforce that supports high performance. In addition, how the organization manages, engages and develops the workforce can reach full potential when it is in alignment with the overall mission, strategy and action plans. How the workforce is organized to accomplish organizational goals, how employees are prepared for change management (e. g., continuity, workforce reductions) as well as the workforce environment, policies and benefits are considered in this category. For organizations, this includes recruiting, hiring, placing and retaining the workforce; assessing workforce capability and capacity including skills, competencies and staffing levels. This also may include the capacity of the workforce for change, the workplace environment, policies, and benefits. Internships are an opportunity for organizations to select students for internship positions who may become future employees. The ability to observe skill development and competencies may be extremely beneficial in terms of cost savings for recruiting and finding employees who are appropriate match for the culture, with the necessary commitment and attitude to contribute to a high-performance organization. Employees who are well matched with organizations also may reduce the potential of turnover.

Questions organizations may need to ask would include the following: How can we effectively support and provide a good working environment for the interns as well as other employees? How can we use internships to meet our recruiting, hiring and placement needs, and how can we

reduce retention concerns and at the same time bring in diverse ideas and cultures who work well with our customers?

The second area related to workforce focus is workforce engagement, which includes such areas as workforce satisfaction, organizational culture, performance management and how workforce engagement is determined relative to retention, absenteeism, safety and productivity. Workforce and leader development would include learning systems not only for core competencies, long and short-term goals, and organizational performance which includes a customer focus, but also ethics knowledge transfer and attainment of new knowledge necessary for the job. Measures of effectiveness could assist in determining effectiveness of policies and practices.

The organization would need to address questions such as: How do we transfer knowledge to new workforce members and reinforce new knowledge and skills on the job? How can we determine the level of engagement, intern and workforce satisfaction? How do we foster a culture that includes open communication and high performance work? How do we correlate this information with our business results? Do our learning systems support our strategic plans, ethical businesses practices, customer focus, and learning and development needs for both short-term and long-term plans?

## **Work Systems**

How organizations design, manage, and improve work systems and processes should also include the internships; this would include delivering value to the customer, contributing to sustainability, and achieving organizational goals. The internship program itself should be the result of thoughtful design that will contribute value not only to the intern but to the organization as well. Sustainability would be relevant to the internship program in terms of sustainability for the program itself, such as how effective the program is for the organization and how it is managed, as well as contributing to the sustainability of the organization. As such, the importance of internships to an organization becomes clearer as the program takes on importance as an element of the strategic plan related to areas such as organizational goals, recruitment, and retention. Design concepts should include the potential for innovation and change as well as identifying core competencies; the selection of processes to work within the system could include both the internal and external processes. Design concepts must also include work system requirements, which would include input from all stakeholders involved in the internship process as appropriate. Implementing the system would include management and methods of improvement to deliver value, success and sustainability. Cost control would also be an element, as some programs and processes may not support organizational sustainability. Implementation is most effective when relevant areas of the workforce are involved, supervision is trained, affective and appropriate, and on-going review and improvement are part of the system design.

Questions the organization could ask would include the following: Have all stakeholders provided input to appropriate internship work responsibilities and design? Are the responsibilities assigned to the intern achievable but challenging? Is the focus on education, not

simply job functions that need to be accomplished? Have methods been developed or adopted to determine the effectiveness of the internship process, and do we have a system in place to support continuous improvement of the program? Have cost control and sustainability been considered? Are the managers and supervisors who will be working with the interns prepared, trained, and appropriate, and is a mentor or supervisor specifically assigned to the intern? Is the work we have assigned to the intern appropriately supporting learning and personal development and aligned with organizational goals as well as the intern's goals?

## **Results**

This category examines performance outcomes and improvements. Key performance and process effectiveness should be summarized to provide results; these results should include information that directly serves the customers, informs strategy, and supports operations. Results should relate directly to key measures, which are indicators for the accomplishment of organizational strategy, action plans, and goals including strengthening core organizational competencies. The stakeholders who can benefit from these results would include the student completing the internship, as this is an indication of performance and capability; the college or university because this is an indication of program success, alignment with the appropriate skills and competencies, and curriculum preparation; the organization itself, as a potential future employer for the intern, customers and any other stakeholders who deal with products and services provided by the organization. Questions the organization may ask to assess readiness could include: How do we know we are measuring the right information? Can we provide indirect measures as well as direct measures? Do our performance, process effectiveness, and efficiency results help us attain our strategies, objectives, and goals? Do our interns derive satisfaction, and gain knowledge and competencies from the internship? Do we share this information with our stakeholders to support innovation and continuous improvement? Do we use this information to support our strategic planning, customer focus, measurement, analysis and knowledge management, workforce focus, and operations focus?

## **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

Research has already confirmed the improved marketability of students who have completed internships and positive student perceptions about internships (Gault et al, 2010), and realized significant advantages in terms of obtaining full-time job offers and higher pay. Improvements may be realized by business but academia and business must be willing to work more closely to make improvements in internships. Outdated research (e. g., Brooks & Greene, 1998), while still relevant, needs to be made more current, as recent information on skills and competencies needed in organizations is critical to prepare students to be collaborators and contributors.

In addition, student perceptions have changed (Cannon & Arnold, 1998; Rothman, 2007) and have likely evolved further since this research is not current. Students now see internships as a way to become more competitive in the job market instead of simply being simply an extension

of an educational program as in years past (Cannon & Arnold, 1998; Knouse et al., 1999). It is especially important to look at current student perceptions, as the economic downturn in the US, which began in approximately 2008, has negatively impacted jobs. Providing a broader review of the organization, as suggested by Rothman (2007) when students are exposed not only to the organization but to business and industry, may become a critical factor in preparing students for future leadership positions. This broader approach to business and leadership may be realized by application of the Baldrige Framework (NIST, 2013).

Many possible implications may exist for organizations that are considering establishing or refining internship programs. An example is provided by Degraevl (2011) for internships for small businesses; internship programs may assist in overcoming a lack of resources in terms of structure and process, people and skills; internships may help in overcoming a lack of critical capabilities including people management, adapting to change, and knowing how to develop strategy as well as to implement action plans and avoiding groupthink by bringing in the fresh perspective of an intern. The small business may benefit in decision-making with the assistance of the intern by questioning standard managerial and strategic practices, which can enable a change in strategy as well as management practices.

Organizations providing an investment in time and effort to improve internship outcomes may realize short-term benefits (e. g., additional help, teamwork, fresh ideas) and long-term benefits (e. g., recruiting, retention, new talent, organizational reputation). However, mutually beneficial outcomes and efforts on internships may be wasted unless learning goals are specified and then assessed for goal accomplishment by the organizational supervisor (Verney et al., 2009).

Lord et al. (2011) connect satisfaction research to internships, saying that the hosting organization should be careful and not create dissatisfaction with interns because a dissatisfied intern may complain to the college or university and thus jeopardize the relationship with the hosting organization. Dissatisfaction could occur when an intern is satisfied with their role or task but also when they are dissatisfied with the firm, or satisfied with the firm and dissatisfied with the role or task. Intern job satisfaction plays an important role not only for the intern's career, but also for the reputation of the hosting organization as well as the future of the organization's relationship with the college or university (Lord et al., 2011). In the long term, dissatisfied interns could contribute to a negative perception of an organization's reputation thereby reducing the number of students who may be interested in internships or it could reduce the quality of interns attracted to the program. Students who have positive experiences may generate goodwill on campus and through the college or university.

The need for practical application of concepts is also clear. Templeton, Updyke, and Bennett (2012), after evaluation of research results, found that although students could discuss theory, they failed to demonstrate their understanding of the application of such concepts to the workplace and that students had limited understanding of workplace social issues. This speaks to the need for experience in the work environment to understand culture, relationships, and how to work effectively with others; these can be discussed in classrooms but are not likely realized without immersion in a business context. This also emphasizes again the need for more focus on social integration as Herzog (2010) proposes. Engaging student interns through mentorship, working relationships and other demonstrations of interpersonal engagement could help students

understand and further develop their ability to interact effectively and participate in social construction through conversation, observation, symbols and dialectics. Without the interaction with others in a business context, the internship structure and processes cannot be effective.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH**

Many potential opportunities to study internships can be developed through schools of business to assist organizations in developing programs for students. As determined by the dates on research supporting this paper, more current information is needed. Students expect to be more competitive by engaging in internships; it is clear perceptions have changed and remain dynamic, thus creating a need for ongoing research. Job responsibilities and expectations are constantly changing, and globalization may have an impact on all aspects of the business world. However, research is recommended as a beginning step to determine the different types of structures currently in organizations that support internships and internship programs. Updates to some of research as cited in this paper would be in order as well as further exploration into the numerous processes involved in organizational internships and internship programs. Longitudinal studies—which may track student careers, expectations, and opportunities which result from internships—may provide a more realistic perspective of the benefits derived from these programs. Research is also suggested to determine information about the relationships between colleges and universities and organizations who host internships related to multiple aspects such as placement, elements of relationships, data from interns hired as employees, and longitudinal information on the careers of interns who became employees.

## **CONCLUSION**

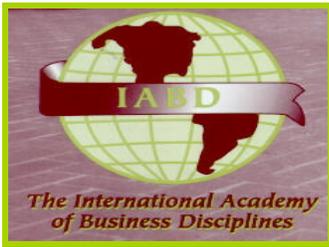
Organizations need well-prepared business graduates, and colleges of business who strive to improve the quality and competitiveness of their graduates. While efforts to improve internships by further refining structure and processes can help, this is not enough. Engaged and involved student interns who are brought into internship positions by organizations interested in enhancing their educational experience can help create this engagement and motivate student interns with rewarding work experiences. Organizations must include key measures that align with organizational goals for these interns so feedback can be obtained, analyzed and used for improvements in internship programs. At the same time, the goal alignment of internship programs for the organization may assist in developing future employees, recruiting, and assisting in strategic planning for future recruiting needs. Measures of success for the organization and the student intern should include student performance and student satisfaction, and the organization should provide feedback to the student interns relative to skills and abilities demonstrated in the workplace. If organizations are working with schools of business to accommodate interns, methods of improving student preparation should be considered as part of continuous improvement.

Organizations may miss opportunities to reduce hiring costs and improve the reputation of the organization (as well as job satisfaction), and also miss the chance to engage employees in active support of the internships and internship programs. One of the key aspects of developing business students and future business leaders may be provided through on-the-job learning and application of ELT and different aspects of social construction; establishing good working relationships with student interns can improve job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement with the organization. The intern can also benefit the organization itself. Most importantly, perhaps, is the need for business students to apply learned concepts in a business context as identified by Templeton, et al. (2012). To do this, host organizations may need more focus on developing social learning and interaction in the work environment so future business leaders know when, how, and why concepts are applied, as well as appropriate applications. As the goal is to provide interns with an enhanced educational experience by exposure to business, this comprehensive work experience can provide an introduction to the business and practices, the context and the environment of the business world as well as the business itself and overall better preparation for future leaders.

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