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Framework and Model (English)



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Practice Enterprise Network
PEN WORLDWIDE



ENGAGE

Job Ready – Traineeships
with Practice Enterprise

PR2

Framework & Model



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REAL-WORLD ENTERPRISE SKILLS

Working at a Practice Enterprise is very similar to doing an internship with a real company, as the trainees are given the opportunity to update their professional skills and acquire new ones.

Internship activities follow general business practices for soft skill acquisition, while more specialised tasks may be carried out according to the field of study, internship position and employability goals of the trainee.

In order to participate in a Practice Enterprise internship, the trainee must have received some basic theoretical classroom experience, that is related to the position applied for. Practice Enterprise offers little theoretical instruction since the preferred training method is learning-by-doing, which can closely resemble the activities of a real-world internship.

In order to be effective, this internship method should not be interpreted too broadly. Practice Enterprise trainers must ensure that the work carried out by trainees conforms with general workplace practices and must step in to intervene when required.

Each trainee's learning objectives are set by the trainee and trainer prior to the internship. An individual skill and competency development plan should be devised, which will be used by trainers for personalised internship follow-ups and assessments.

IT Tools

Trainees must work with up-to-date communication tools (social networks, ZOOM, TEAMS, Google Meet, etc.). Software and digital tools are a challenge, as these tools are constantly changing, not to mention the availability, cost and knowledge gap related to implementing such tools in an internship training programme. Training should be aimed at the proper business use of software rather than training in the use of the tools themselves. Technical support should be provided either by the trainers or by the software providers themselves. Trainees require exposure to both the theoretical and practical aspects of the technology in order to ensure proper use in a business capacity.

Business Procedures

Since most operations of Practice Enterprise departments are closely interconnected and carried out in an open-office environment, the trainees have the opportunity to get an overview of the work activities carried out by colleagues specialised in various fields in real enterprises.

Each trainee constitutes an integral part of the general business procedures and activities related to the internship role and position they are taking on within the enterprise.

Specialised Management Methods

Management methods have changed considerably over the years. Today's buzz words are *coaching*, *participative management*, *quality management*, etc. An internship at a Practice Enterprise, which makes use of these specialised management methods, enables trainees to gain knowledge of these new trends as they relate to their field of study and work.

Flexible Internship Framework

Although the Practice Enterprise itself is a highly versatile and adaptable concept, we must keep in mind that internships require individualised learning pathways that can be highly specialised, depending on the context of the real-work position that is being carried out inside the Practice Enterprise. Trainees must have a fixed manager, or trainer, who is there to follow along, guide them and provide ongoing evaluation as their internship progresses and their skills develop.

ACQUISITION OF GENERALISED SOFT SKILLS

Many generalised soft skills are acquired during participation in a Practice Enterprise internship, including organization and leadership, interpersonal communication, and the following key skills:

Teamwork

Almost all Practice Enterprise activities are carried out in teams, which is conducted with the assistance and encouragement of colleagues. While this may be a rather obvious application of the teamwork concept, others represent real challenges.

The teams are usually rather diverse in composition. However, while mixing trainees who differ greatly with respect to competencies, experience, skills, objectives, and motivation certainly encourages a sense of sharing, it also requires considerable understanding and tolerance.

Adaptability

The world of business is changing at an ever-faster pace and trainees must be able to adapt to such changes. This includes increasing digitalisation of the workplace and changing work environments such as remote and home office. Trainees must be resilient to take on the challenges of a more digital business world and be able to adjust to changing circumstances. The Practice Enterprise emphasises such adaptability with its constantly evolving format and its unique work environment.

Initiative

Trainees working in only one department are constantly encouraged to show initiative in expanding their responsibilities. For example, they have to draft numerous forms and other documents, and must implement procedures.

To ensure there is room for all trainees to show their creativity and initiative, the Practice Enterprise internship concept recommends a management philosophy centered on continuous learning. For example, trainers frequently request new trainees to improve documents previously created, or even to rethink business procedures entirely.

Sense of responsibility

Irrespective of the position they occupy at the Practice Enterprise, some trainees are given the opportunity to handle files to which they would not necessarily have access in a real company, given the potential financial impact any errors they make could have. As a result, these trainees develop an acute sense of responsibility.

Self-confidence

Even though Practice Enterprise, in the context of their commercial operations, pay with funds that have no real value for products they never actually receive, the work of each trainee in itself is entirely real. Trainees derive genuine satisfaction from carrying out the duties attached to their position, which considerably increases their self-confidence.

Moreover, when mistakes are made, instead of being reprimanded and made feel guilty, trainees are encouraged to learn from their mistakes through feedback provided by colleagues or trainers. In this context, feedback focuses on positive reinforcement, or failing forward, and not on blame or criticism. The same is true of any other recommendations made to trainees, especially as related to soft skills.

INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME DESIGN QUESTIONS

In designing the programme for an internship for a particular level or field of study, the following questions can help determine the level of specialisation required:

Where does this internship fit into the study curriculum? Does it fit?

- Capstone experience
- Structured learning experience
- International business
- Business management
- In lieu of cooperative education

What pedagogical parameters must be considered?

- Grade level
- Prerequisites
- Hours per week
- Length of time
- Learning objectives

What type of facility and equipment will be needed to represent a real enterprise?

- Physical vs. Online vs. Hybrid work environment
- Workspace layout (open concept, team layout, workstations)
- Digital access and workspaces
- Distance access

What is the minimum/maximum number of trainees?

- Size of facility
- Trainee/station ratio
- Purpose of internship
- Trainee background skills

What type of internship company? How does it fit the pedagogical objectives?

- Wholesale
- Retail
- Service
- Domestic/international

What are training requirements that can differ from traditional training?

- Knowledge of real-world work environments
- Team training
- Facilitating rather than training
- Support for soft skills needs from mentor companies

What is the organization of the enterprise?

- Legal form of business
- Hierarchical structure
- Departmental structure

Who and what role can the mentor enterprise play in creating a realistic internship experience?

- Connection to the real world of work
- Trainer's training
- Analysis of responsibilities and comparison to real-world positions
- Legitimacy of concept with the real-world enterprise connection

INTERNSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Besides specialised responsibilities assigned in the context of commercial trading, trainees in Practice Enterprise internships carry out the same duties as their counterparts working for real companies.

To ensure that work tasks are performed in accordance with real-world business practices, the trainer must be available as much as possible and offer support to all trainees. Mentor companies are another source of expertise, able to provide samples of necessary documents.

Listed below are examples of specific work responsibilities, ordered by position, that would provide trainees with an internship experience that is highly pertinent. This does not mean, however, that no room should be made for other creative initiatives by the internship trainees themselves.

After all, their training and experience enables them to properly carry out most of their assignments. They can carry out new projects, establish new procedures, and modify administrative and promotional documents on an ongoing basis.

By adopting a principle of participative management, trainees gain self-confidence and realise that the fact they're interns doesn't mean they can't contribute to the success of their enterprise.

Human Resources

- Develops and manages HR responsibilities (interviews, position profiles, work descriptions, work contracts, appraisal forms, equality and diversity standards, etc.)
- Devises and implements recruitment strategies
- Devises a salary scale and social benefits
- Develops and implements HR policies and procedures (payroll deductions, preventive measures, production of investigation and accident reports, etc.)

Sales and Market Development

- Conducts market studies and analyzes results
- Develops products, markets, and distribution networks
- Develops sales policies and procedures (prices, credit policies, reimbursement, etc.)
- Sells Practice Enterprise products or services on national or international markets
- Keeps sales statistics ordered by product, client, and country
- Ensures after-sale services

Purchasing

- Develops purchasing policies and procedures
- Sets purchasing objectives in accordance with budget estimates
- Identifies potential suppliers within national and international Practice Enterprise networks
- Prepares calls for tenders and specifications
- Prepares delivery slips, bills of lading, and customs forms
- Ensures the follow-up of orders

Accounting

- Prepares payroll and payments for various invoices
- Prepares the annual budget estimates and pro-forma budgets
- Issues statements of account and manages client and supplier accounts
- Produces monthly bank reconciliations and annual and year-end financial statements
- Develops and implements cost finding, reporting and internal control procedures
- Completes and submits forms related to payroll deduction, compensation, work accidents, pension benefits, sales tax, etc.

Communications and Marketing

- Devises, implements, and evaluates enterprise communication strategies
- Drafts reports, articles, press releases, promotional documents, etc.
- Organizes various promotional commercial events
- Develops an internal communication plan to maintain a friendly work climate
- Designs and produces advertising and administrative tools
- Participates in the design and optimization of the webpage and marketing tools

IT Technician and Programmer

- Designs and updates the enterprise's webpage
- Drafts technical manuals to facilitate the use of IT equipment
- Provides technical support to the users of databases and software
- Takes inventory of, maintains and troubleshoots IT equipment
- Provides training and ongoing support to IT users

Specialised Internship Positions

- While the positions and tasks described above are those found most frequently in Practice Enterprise, other positions and tasks can be created to meet specialised demands depending on the field of study or the type of internship.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT PLANS

A skill development plan is an excellent tool to conduct internship follow-ups. It contains the general objectives the trainee should attain for each tier of Practice Enterprise activity, as well as the specialised objectives determined at the start of their internship.

For general objectives to remain tangible for the trainee throughout their internship, they should be divided into concrete goals. By following short- and medium-term objectives, trainees are constantly aware of the progress made and the challenges still lying ahead, which increases their self-confidence, and which gives the trainers the opportunity to closely monitor the development of each trainee.

Trainees follow their individual skill development plan, with the assistance of the trainers, right from the beginning of their internship at the Practice Enterprise. The plan is used during individual follow-up meetings, which should take place on a routine basis, and can be modified along the way.

INTERNSHIP ASSESSMENT METHODS

Internship assessment can be done in variety of ways. The trainer has to choose appropriate methods to be used in assessment, according to the learning objectives, curriculum and employability objectives. It is preferable to try different methods and blend them.

Peer-to-Peer Assessment

Peer-to-Peer assessment allows trainees to evaluate each other in a professional approach, including soft skills, teamwork, punctuality, presentation skills, self-initiative, reliability.

Evaluation is done in writing from a constructive point of view. The aim is to permit reasoned, truthful feedback, that might be difficult to say out loud without ending in an argument. Peer-to-peer assessment is a tool for the trainer to support his/her own assessment and should not be used as the only evaluation method. This method supports the continuous assessment of the trainees.

Group Assessment

In group assessment trainees evaluate the work of the whole group, as well as themselves as part of the group. Trainees are being encouraged to come up with constructive feedback of the group's work, not forgetting to evaluate themselves and how they have performed professionally and as a member of a team.

Group assessment is done discussing openly, so that everyone has their own time to speak. Critical evaluation of the group and person him/herself is important, thus it is important not to wind up judging other persons. Giving and receiving feedback in a constructive way is a highly important skill in working life.

Continuous Assessment

Continuous assessment is done by the trainer through continuous observation of the trainee's work in the internship environment. This is the most efficient way to assess soft skills and how they evolve during the Practice Enterprise internship. It is also an efficient method to pay attention to possible personal interaction problems that might influence professional efficiency and well-being.

Continuous assessment is basically overseeing all the daily work with a cognitive approach to detect the evolution of different skills of trainees. Peer-to-peer and self-assessment methods support continuous assessment results.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is a good and constructive way to engage the trainee in the evaluation process, and to enable them to learn to observe and evaluate the skills and progress they've gained. Often trainees do not observe the evolution and expansion of their own skills during the internship.

Self-assessment should be divided in two phases: a written questionnaire and a face-to-face discussion with the trainer to go through the questionnaire with trainers' evaluation of the self-assessment. Trainee should have the chance to question the trainers' evaluation and gain reasoning from it. It is not uncommon that some evaluation points change, in either direction, during the discussion.

Knowledge testing

With knowledge testing trainers can identify how a trainee's holistic knowledge has evolved during the internship. Knowledge testing needs more than one point of reference, so it should be done at least two or more times.

In the beginning of the internship, trainees are tested with questions related to business and working life, as well as questions for social skills and applied questions that relate to specific work-based skills depending on the position the trainee during their internship.

Questionnaires should be around the same topics, but different asking for different responses in order to gain versatile answers and to avoid remembering the "correct answers". There might be many correct answers and not only those are evaluated finally, since trainees' knowledge evolution is also very valuable, not just how well he/she understands things.

Portfolio

A Portfolio is a personal digital folder where a trainee saves evidence of work they have done during their internship. This evidence can be evaluated by the trainer and/or trainees themselves as well. The aim of the portfolio is to produce real samples of professional work by the trainee. It can also be used to show potential employers the quality of work by the trainee.