Using Project-Based Remote Work During COVID-19

Presented by:

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College of Liberal Arts

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Goal

Understand and provide strategies for how remote work can:

- Complete campus recruiting / job search efforts
- Prepare should summer internship programs be canceled or otherwise impacted
- Provide meaningful engagement of students while supporting current employees
Challenges for companies

• Uncertainty about internship programs
  ◦ Ability to host program at all
  ◦ Specific students unable to participate

• Risk to longer-term hiring needs, especially in specific industries

• Current business operations
  ◦ Employees working remotely and not used to it
  ◦ Changes in immediate demands on employees
    ▪ Identification of remote tools
    ▪ Policies and best practices
    ▪ General business operations (e.g. financial services and interest rate)

• Companies may have not completed their intern and full-time hiring
Challenges for colleges and universities

- Career Services operations conducted virtually
  - How to best reach/assist students
  - How to best engage employers
  - How to connect students with employers

- Career fairs and other recruiting events canceled or at risk
  - Difficult to support with students looking for job/internship
  - Ensure students don’t get left behind when things normalize

- Academic programs moved online
  - Student activities canceled
  - How can students use the time effectively
How remote projects address these challenges

• Complete campus recruiting efforts
  ◦ Engage students not through on-site events
  ◦ Interview on steroids

• Prepare should summer internship programs be canceled/refined
  ◦ Prepare for remote programs
  ◦ Insurance to engage those not able to participate (travel)

• Immediate needs of both current employees and students
  ◦ Projects that arise
  ◦ Comfort with remote work
What is remote, project-based work?

- **Short-term**: ranging from 20-40 hours in duration, due in a few days to a few weeks

- **Paid**: fixed fee or hourly (typically $15-20/hour)

- **Professional**: assignments similar to those given to interns or new hires

- **Comprehensive**: used in all industries across all departments (sales, marketing, HR, finance, etc.) and can take place year-round

- **Valued**: provides busy professionals with additional resources
Sample projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sales:</th>
<th>Human Resources:</th>
<th>IT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Lead Generation</td>
<td>• Job Description Review</td>
<td>• Data Analysis</td>
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<td>• Prospect Research</td>
<td>• Candidate Sourcing</td>
<td>• UX Review</td>
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<td>• CRM Cleansing</td>
<td>• Evaluating Competitive Best Practices</td>
<td>• Technical Documentation / Guides</td>
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<tr>
<th>Operations:</th>
<th>Marketing:</th>
<th>Finance:</th>
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<td>• Demand Forecasting</td>
<td>• Content Creation</td>
<td>• Financial Analysis</td>
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<td>• Production Planning</td>
<td>• Social Media Content Calendar</td>
<td>• Financial Modeling</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Inventory Control</td>
<td>• Market Research</td>
<td>• AR Reconciliation</td>
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Complete campus recruiting efforts

Complete "top of funnel" process without going on-site:

- Discover candidates/roles including those outside of expected focus areas
- Opportunity to **mutually assess fit** for companies and students unable to complete the recruiting process

For companies:

- Ask hiring managers serving as campus leads for tasks that need to get done
- Consider other strategic goals (e.g. DEI, geographic, etc.)
- Evaluate job descriptions for existing roles

For colleges and universities:

- Engage employer partners scheduled for on-campus or other events
- Ensure students are aware of these opportunities
Complete campus recruiting efforts

Mutually assess fit through “interviews on steroids”

• See work product / demonstrate capabilities on a value-added project including both hard and soft (core) skills
• Gain a better understanding of fit through authentic engagement on real assignments

For companies:

• Engagement of students in process
• Leverage online tools throughout and following the project
• Request feedback from hiring managers

For colleges and universities:

• Make online learning tools available to employers for this form of engagement
• Communicate to students that they should be offering this to employers
Prepare for summer internship contingencies

"Insurance" in the event that specific students or programs are impacted

- Engage students / companies with geographic proximity should travel be limited
- Build relationships should specific students / programs be unavailable

For companies:
- Offer departments opportunities to accelerate projects that were expected for interns
- Re-engage students who either did not accept roles or were "close"

For colleges and universities:
- Communicate with employers who have offered significant number of internships to your students

It would be extremely unfortunate if we had to cancel our intern program because she has basically dedicated 100% of her time during the last 6 months to hiring them.
Prepare for summer internship contingencies

Readiness for remote summer internships

• Identify needs for effective remote work including tools, policies, etc.
• Provide exposure to remote tools and behaviors to ensure managers and/or students have prior experience

For companies:

• Identify existing employees using remote workers tools and best practices in place
• Offer opportunity to specific departments (e.g. requesting access, staffing constraints, etc.) to identify early adopters

For colleges and universities:

• Offer programming/content to students on remote work
• Suggest that students who have accepted internships or full-time roles to offer this to employers
Respond to current situation

Address immediate needs of employees and students

- **Employees or teams** impacted by COVID-19
- **Students seeking opportunities** given on-campus activities canceled

For companies:

- Identify departments immediately impacted by COVID-19 (e.g. IT, HR, marketing, etc.)
- Suggest employees engage with students at alma mater, clubs, etc. to offer remote work opportunities

For colleges and universities:

- Identify alumni who can provide remote-work experiences to current students
- Student clubs and associations can engage national offices (e.g. AMA) or other supporters
- Encourage faculty to leverage their professional relationships
Respond to current situation

Readiness for additional challenges
• Uncertainty about short and long term implications creates need for additional preparation
• Students concerned about opportunities including those who accepted jobs or internships

For companies:
• Offer opportunities to expected interns and new hires before formal start date
• Proactively prepare for other contingencies

For colleges and universities:
• Use online tools to allow collaboration between students, faculty, alumni, etc.
• Encourage students to engage expected employers to offer immediate support
Benefits for all

Employers are still able to:

• Develop and nurture candidate pipeline  
• Evaluate the work of students  
• Assess fit  
• Respond to immediate needs  
• Offer a flexible staffing solution that can be shortened or expanded as needed

Students can still:

• Gain professional experience  
• Work remotely from wherever they are  
• Connect with employers and be considered for a longer-term opportunities  
• Assess fit  
• Generate income
For Universities

Share these ideas with your employer partners:

• Tell employers what you are hearing from students: they still want internships!
• Equip them with project ideas
• Educate them about remote projects for students
• If we can help, please let us know

For Companies

Your college recruiting does not need to stop:

• Students still want to work for you, and remote projects can help find, assess, nurture, and hire them
• Will create disruption beyond the level of “ghosting” taking place
• Introduce hiring managers across departments to this resource, helping them get immediate support on their short-term assignments
• If we can help, please let us know

...and neither do your internships!
Case Studies & Examples
Build awareness

• Introduce your company to students who may not be considering it
• Build relationships with students attending programs outside of focus schools or majors
• Variety of projects showcases the breadth of opportunities available
• More students engaged, one or more students for each project

Case study: Financial services firm

• Students may not apply because of preconceived notions about the industry
• Only engaging with students from specific programs/schools

Solution: Sales lead generation project

• Engaged students to provide wealth management team support on lead generation
• Conducted research to identify prospects’ key contact and other information
• Wealth management team valued the immediate support
• Created a pipeline of candidates who would otherwise be outside of the pool
Build authentic connections

- Engage real managers by having them interact directly with students completing their projects
- Allow students to experience company culture, through real interactions with company leaders

Case study: Manufacturing company
- Hiring managers were only interested in students with specific backgrounds
- Students did not recognize opportunities available in the industry

Solution: Data analysis project
- Engaged a first-generation student from non-focus school to conduct data analysis tied to supply chain
- Student applied innovative tools from mechanical engineering background to exceed expectations
- Manager requested that HR make an “immediate hire”

https://www.parkerdewey.com/blog/reduce-cost-while-improving-diversity
Assess work quality

- See actual work product for a value-added project that's for your organization
- Identify talent for future roles by assessing hard and soft skills in a professional setting

Case study: CPG company
- Hiring managers were only interested in students with specific backgrounds
- Students did not recognize opportunities available in the industry

Solution: Data analysis project
- Engaged students to compare job descriptions to those of other companies and identify best practices
- Provided insights into competencies such as communication, attention to detail, problem solving, and intellectual curiosity
- Engaged a liberal arts student who was not previously considering roles in HR, ultimately leading to a full-time hire

Engage hiring managers

- Projects possible in all areas of an organization allowing multiple managers to meet students
- More projects provides more support, especially if workload changes due to virus

Case study: Software company
- Hiring managers were only interested in students with specific backgrounds
- Students did not recognize opportunities available in the industry

Solution: Marketing engagement project
- Engaged the marketing department to offer this as an “extra set of hands”
- Marketing department engaged students on tasks such as content creation, industry research, and social media engagement
- Certain students were given additional projects within other areas of marketing

Provide interaction with multiple managers

- Variety of projects helps to **showcase students’ various skills**
- Multiple managers = **multiple perspectives** when evaluating student for future roles
- **Frees up intern supervisor** for other projects
- More opportunities for **student to get to know others** in your organization

**Case study: Venture-backed company**

- Challenges competing for talent versus more well known firms, and was not visiting campuses
- Risk of making bad hire was significant, even for a summer internships

**Solution: Sales research project**

- Was impressed with the student so provided additional opportunities in sales, marketing, and strategy
- Given the small size, ensured mutual fit across departments
- Provided the student with an understanding of how the pieces fit together both within and across departments

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