

A Stakeholder Framework for Designing and Directing Effective Marketing Internships

Jeffrey Hoyle and Sean Goffnett

Purpose – This article explores stakeholder relationships in a marketing internship program to increase understanding of key stakeholder actions and expectations and to present a framework for program design and administration.

Method/Design and Sample – Building on a literature review of work that surrounds internships and stakeholder theory, this paper utilizes a qualitative grounded theory approach to conduct an exploratory stakeholder analysis of key stakeholders to understand relationships in the design and delivery of a marketing internship program.

Results – This study introduces a framework that aims to facilitate a more thorough and inclusive marketing internship program and suggests a more complete delivery approach through continued involvement of key stakeholders. Primary internship stakeholders include students, employers, and university faculty and administration. Secondary internship stakeholders that have a relevant association with a marketing internship program include parents, alumni, industry groups, and accrediting agencies.

Value to Marketing Educators – This paper expands the application of stakeholder analysis to marketing education and establishes a framework for facilitating an inclusive marketing internship program. Results provide a greater understanding of primary internship stakeholders and offer a number of implications for marketing educators.

Keywords – Marketing Internship, Stakeholder Analysis, Experiential Learning, Work-Integrated

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Universities continue to receive a tremendous amount of criticism regarding their level of business connectedness and their ability to prepare graduates to enter the workforce. Universities have addressed this challenge by working with employers to expand curriculum and to introduce internship learning opportunities to close the gap between theory and practice (Alpert, Heaney, & Kuhn, 2009). In the United States (US), approximately 90 percent of colleges now offer for-credit internships or work-integrated learning experiences that facilitate greater connections between universities, employers, and students (Divine, Linrud, Miller, & Wilson, 2007; Wieble, 2010). Research conducted by Young (2010), however, uncovered a critical concern showing many universities do not actively engage marketing majors in the practice of marketing outside the classroom, such as through internship experiences, volunteer opportunities, and research. Mounting research suggests that universities need to understand the relationships and expectations of constituents, like students majoring in marketing, who play a part in learning opportunities outside the classroom, to better design internships that help ensure an authentic learning experience and abundant business connectedness (Brown et al., 1989; Kuh et al., 1991; Penuel et al., 2007; Tinto, 1997).

Internships are a form of experiential learning (Swanson & Tomkovick, 2012) that can provide a favorable setting where students are in many cases paid for their services and experience “the connection of the acquisition of knowledge in the schools with activities, or occupations, carried on in the medium of associated life” (Dewey, 1926, p. 401). Weible and McClure (2011) assert that internships emphasize education over employment, as faculty and employers help students connect the “knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skill development in a professional setting” (NACE, 2011). There is much evidence about the value of internships and experiential learning (Knemeyer and Murphy, 2002; Kolb, 1984; Weible & McClure, 2011), but little evidence on understanding relationships that exist among stakeholders to allow for better cooperation toward achieving the claims and expectations each group has at stake in the internship process (Alpert et al., 2009; Divine et al., 2008).

A stakeholder is any individual or group who can affect or is affected by the activities and achievements of an organization (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997, p. 869). Nutt (2002) describes the importance of key stakeholder relationships and how poor decisions are made when important concerns of a stakeholder are overlooked or ignored. A lapse in planning or poor

judgment can lead to opposition from stakeholders, and is one of the main reasons why projects fail (El-Gohary et al., 2006). Freeman et al (2010) explains how the contemporary business environment consists of various groups and individuals (e.g., suppliers, customers, employees) engaged in relationships that aim to create and exchange value. Instances arise where stakeholder requirements are not fully compatible or in agreement, which creates tension in the relationship and forces certain tradeoffs that, if not properly managed, can destroy value. Doherty (2009) claims that “stakeholders may take the offensive, or be defensive, seeking to protect their ideas, beliefs, and values from perceived threat; or conciliatory, attempting to reconcile their concerns and needs with other stakeholders” (p. 118). Past research indicates a need for greater understanding of stakeholder roles and relationships in managing critical projects to leverage input from each stakeholder to achieve common objectives without negatively influencing each stake (Achterkamp & Vos, 2008). In addition, there has been little research that explores the larger spectrum of influential constituents in programs that involve public-private partnerships (El-Gohary, Osman, & El-Diraby, 2006).

An internship program, by its very nature of connecting multiple constituents, is a case in point where goals, either harmonizing or conflicting, stand to influence student learning, institution integrity, and business performance. However, little has been written about the nature of stakeholder relationships in higher education and what that means for internship programs to be designed with firsthand stakeholder expectations incorporated into internship curriculum (Alpert et al., 2009). Education stakeholders are likely to approach the internship experience from unique positions and perspectives.

Goals of a marketing internship, for example, are likely to vary by stakeholder and are complicated by the fact that “academics and practitioners have been found to disagree somewhat on the skills required in the workplace, with disparity often found between the skills marketing practitioners consider important and what is actually being taught in marketing courses” (Alpert et al., 2009, p. 37). This disagreement or failure highlights the need for “gaining a ‘realist’ perspective on the landscape for [marketing internship] design which considers the concept of ‘stakeholder analysis’ as an instrument which holds the capacity to gain a true picture of the interest groups which might be affected by [marketing internship] design intervention” (Doherty, 2009, p. 115). Education stakeholders stand to gain a broader perspective of the internship through direct collaboration.

Program success is a reflection of stakeholder success. Success from the university’s perspective entails lowering dropout rates and increasing the placement rates of graduates with internships in choice jobs. Success for employers comes through increasing the number of internships they offer, gaining access to talent that is exposed to practical classroom and on-the-job experiences, and getting

(hiring) interns that eventually become employees that positively contribute to operations of the organization. Success for students arises when students are able to apply what they have been taught in the classroom to actual work situations and return to the classroom with new knowledge and understanding, and later getting placed in a career they connect with their studies. The dynamic landscape that surrounds education conceals many natural stakeholders that influence the success or failure of a program in higher education. Thus, to avoid failure and assure success, program originators, instructors, and the like should consider multiple stakeholder relationships through structured analysis.

The purpose of this study is to conceptualize and explore stakeholder relationships in the design of a marketing internship program. By exploring the nature of key internship stakeholder relationships in a single study, an understanding of a broad group of expectations should emerge in terms of what and why each stakeholder risks being part of the internship experience. Expectations might be expressed explicitly in the form of compatible or competing interests between the constituent groups, while other expectations might be expressed implicitly as expressions of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the internship process. Developing a framework of internship stakeholders contributes to the call for reevaluating the internship process with respect to how internship curriculum is designed and delivered (Kuh, et al., 1991). Therefore, this study will explore stakeholder theory and strategic relationships among relevant stakeholders in the design and delivery of a single marketing internship program.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. Who are the key stakeholders in the design and delivery of an undergraduate marketing internship program?
2. What are the expressed attributes (e.g., expectations, contributions, satisfiers) that characterize key stakeholder relationships in a marketing internship program?
3. What are defining characteristics of an undergraduate marketing internship program from a key stakeholder perspective?

The paper provides a review of relevant literature regarding internship and stakeholder concepts. The methodology takes a constructivist grounded theory approach in conducting a stakeholder analysis, which leads into study findings. Discussion highlights a number of resulting implications for educators and stakeholders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review begins by providing a brief description of internships before discussing stakeholder theory. The review examines the

stakeholder analysis process, describes common internship program stakeholders, and makes connections to marketing education.

Internships

In the US, internships provide temporary employment with emphasis toward on-the-job training, whereas cooperative education is a structured method of combining classroom-based education and practical work experience over a longer employment period (Sides & Mrvica, 2007). Differences between internships and cooperative education are explored in detail by Eames and Coll (2010). This study, however, focuses on the internship experience in the US.

Much of the literature on internships discusses the benefits of the experience, while a paucity of literature discusses the internship experience, with its various challenges and benefits to constituents, in relation to program structure and design. Inkster and Ross (1993) suggests that internships progress through six stages and require structure in design to ensure program objectives are met. The six internship stages are: (1) arranging and anticipating, (2) orientation and establishing identity, (3) reconciling expectation with reality, (4) productivity and independence, (5) closure, and (6) re-entry and practical application. Diambra et al. (2004) recommends designing internships that are structured to take into account student feelings and perspectives to minimize uncertainty and worry of not meeting university and employer expectations. Sides and Mrvica (2007) suggest internships be designed to focus on social processes, relationships, goals, and resources. Academicians argue that an effectively designed internship program must allow for integration of knowledge from the classroom to the worksite, with reflection on aspects of the workplace setting. Such integration in program design would include “reflection-on-action, reflection-in-action and reflection-before-action” (Eames & Coll, 2010, p. 191). The internship in the late twentieth century began to be perceived by various constituents, particularly students, employers, and universities, as the crucible where student interns were evaluated by an employer by how they applied what they had learned on campus in actual settings and most times under pressure to perform for the employer to secure a job upon graduation (Gault et al., 2000; Perlin, 2011). A number of constituents who have a stake in the actual design and delivery of an internship program will be described shortly.

Stakeholder Theory

The concept of “stakeholders” emerged in Western society and has become a common term in business

literature since around 1984 (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Freeman et al., 2010; Mitchell et al., 1997). A common definition for stakeholder is essentially a person, group, or organization that has a direct or an indirect stake in an organization because it can affect or be affected by the organization's actions, objectives, and policies (www.businessdictionary.com; Bryson, 2004, p. 22). Freeman's (1984) seminal work on strategic management introduces stakeholder theory that submits that an organization has certain connections and relationships with a variety of constituents, each having a certain degree of relevance in the organization's business where it would benefit the organization to consider the strategic position of significant constituents (i.e., key stakeholders). Relationships can indicate the ability of stakeholders to influence decisions or outcomes based on stakeholder *saliency*, specifically the possession of resources of power, legitimacy, and urgency (Mitchell et al., 1997). A major concern for business is that value can be destroyed when needs and expectations in stakeholder relationships are overlooked (Freeman et al., 2010, Freeman, 2011). Van Der Heijden (2005) describes how organizations utilize key stakeholders' interest and power to craft strategies to achieve success for the individual stakeholders as well as the organization through collaboration and cooperation. Thus, insight that comes from considering multiple stakeholders has as much to do with understanding relationships as it does with understanding the tasks of developing and implementing strategy and ideas (Freeman et al., 2010).

Previous literature has generally categorized stakeholders into two main groups, internal and external (e.g., Freeman, 1984) that are also referred to as primary and secondary stakeholder groups (e.g., Clarkson, 1995; Ireland, 2002; Mitchell et al., 1997). The internal or primary stakeholder, such as an employee or supplier, has a proximal relationship to the organization by having a legitimate stake or interest in contributing directly to the organization's efforts in business. The external or secondary stakeholders, such as community members or political groups, often have a distal connection to the organization and typically do not impart an immediate or direct contribution (Clarkson, 1995; Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Freeman, 2011; Ireland, 2002). Adapted from Donaldson and Peterson (1995) and Ireland (2002), Figure 1 provides a general framework that depicts various primary and secondary business stakeholders.

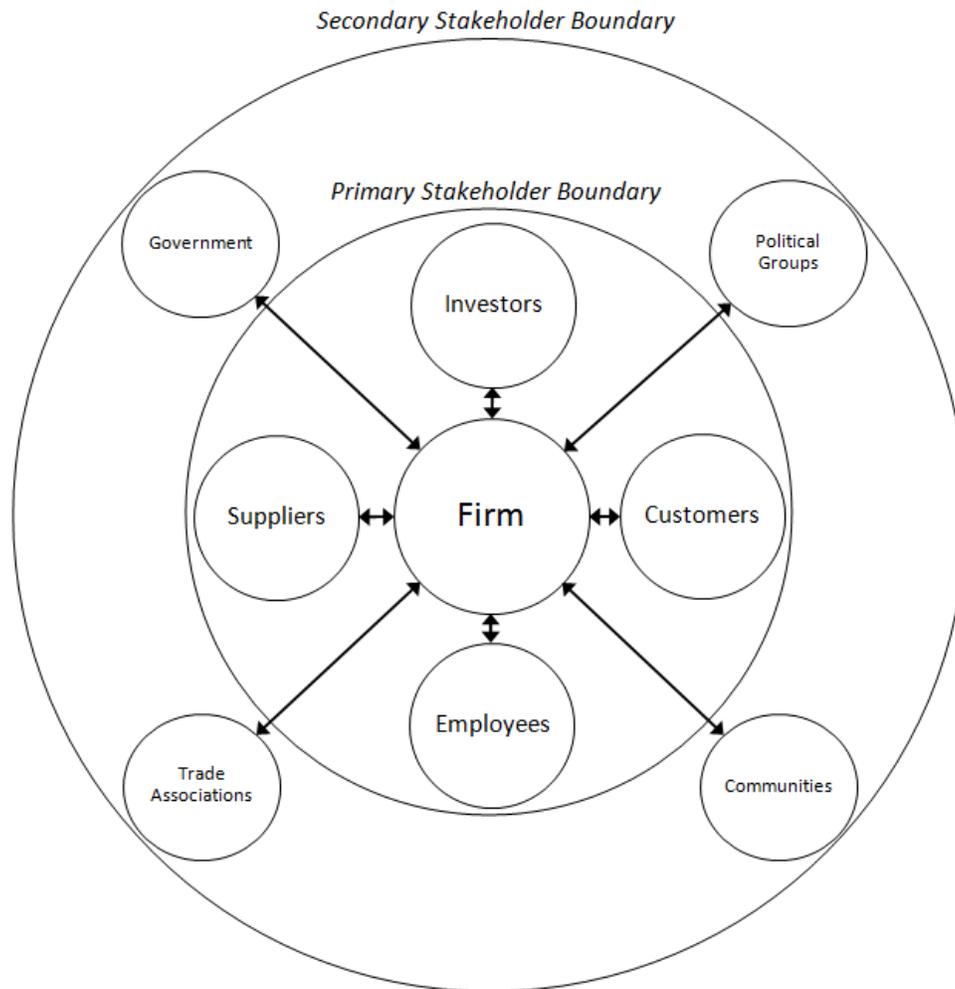


Figure 1. Primary and Secondary Business Stakeholders

Stakeholder Analysis

A stakeholder analysis (SA) is the systematic process of evaluating and understanding an organization and its programs through the relationships and exchanges among relevant stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2010). SA has been applied in different types of organizations; public, private, family-owned, and non-profit (see El-Gohary et al., 2006; Knox & Gruar 2007; Mitchell et al., 2011). SA has also been applied to a number of business phenomenon to explore such things as trust (Greenwood & Van Buren, 2010), corporate culture (Jones et al., 2007), and organizational commitment (Bridges & Harrison,

2003). Through analysis, stakeholders have been shown to affect organizational performance in many ways such as by manipulating (aligning) goals and by withholding (providing) resources (Frooman, 1999; Kassinis & Vafeas, 2006; Ogden & Watson, 1999). Jepsen and Eskerod (2009) analyzed several studies about SA (e.g., Freeman, 1984; Karlsen, 2002; Mitchel et al., 1997) to determine the main steps of the process. The steps to conduct a SA are: 1) identify important stakeholders, 2) characterize the stakeholders (expectations, power), and 3) decide on a strategy to manage stakeholders (p. 336).



Figure 2. Identification of Potential Internship Stakeholders via Brainstorming

INTERNSHIP STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The first step in a SA is to identify stakeholders using methods such as interviews and brainstorming (Achterkamp & Vos, 2008; Jepson & Eskerod, 2009). For this study, an “internship stakeholder” is a person or group who has a stake in an internship program and can influence or be affected by the program. Literature concerning internships has neglected to take into consideration multiple stakeholder perspectives (Alpert et al., 2009), as most research to date has only focused on one or two stakeholders (e.g., Gault, Leach, & Duey, 2010; Knemeyer & Murphy, 2002, Swanson & Tomkovick, 2011; 2012; and Weible & McClure, 2011). When viewed collectively, literature identifies primary internship stakeholders as 1) the higher education institutions, 2) students, and 3) internship providers/employers. Figure 2 illustrates part of step one in the SA process as it presents a larger set of probable stakeholders generated through

brainstorming and literature review by the authors to identify possible influencers of and those who are likely affected by a marketing internship process.

Adapting the descriptions of business stakeholders, primary internship stakeholders are parties that have a proximal affiliation to an internship program by participating directly in or contributing directly to the internship process. Secondary stakeholders have a distal association to an internship program and generally do not impart an immediate or direct contribution. Thus, by these definitions, primary internship stakeholders would include students, employers, and university faculty and administration that have firsthand involvement in the internship process, while secondary internship stakeholders that have a distal yet relevant association with the internship program would likely include parties such as parents, alumni, industry groups, and accrediting agencies. However, alumni businesspersons that offer internship opportunities to students would fit the

primary stakeholder description, while employers that do not offer internships but seek to benefit from value gained through hiring experienced graduates, specifically those with internship credit, would fit the secondary stakeholder description. The following sections complete a conventional internship SA by identifying primary internship stakeholders noted in literature and by characterizing defining qualities of primary stakeholders in terms of expected power and apparent contribution in an internship.

Stakeholder 1: Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions, including internship directors and faculty, contribute to internships by coordinating the learning opportunity and hold significant power by virtue of an official capacity to offer or abandon internships. Internships provide advantages for colleges and universities as the institution builds a relationship with businesses that may eventually hire their graduates. Businesses can also provide feedback to the institution regarding student performance. Establishing relationships with businesses can provide guidance to curriculum, present new opportunities for support, enhance the institution's reputation, and improve student recruiting and job placement (Coco, 2000; Divine et al., 2007; Gault et al., 2000; Weible, 2010).

Internships can aid in how colleges and universities manage student retention and persistence to degree completion. Historically, in the US, three quarters of students who leave college will do so in their first two years, while the greatest proportion withdraws in the first year (Tinto, 1987; 2012). High attrition is an issue in educational systems in many countries, including Australia and the UK (Maher & Macallister, 2013). Establishing relationships, such as through internships, early in a student's enrollment at a college or university is critical to completing their degree. Vincent Tinto's (1987, 1993) academic and social integration model and Alexander Astin's (1975, 1977) involvement model contend that contact increases persistence, retention, and degree completion due to involvement of faculty during an internship.

Stakeholder 2: Student Interns

Students contribute to internship programs as active learners and program participants. Students have a sizeable amount of power in the relationship through the interest they place on experiential learning and the value they expect to receive by gaining internship experience. Internships provide students an opportunity to gain working knowledge and on-the-job training for a profession while in college. In a 2008 study of 619 AACSB-accredited business schools, researchers identified benefits for student interns, which included higher starting salaries, higher job satisfaction, improved job-related skills, and the development of key communication skills (Weible, 2010). By connecting the college classroom to actual real-world application of learned concepts, students improve their skills needed in the workplace. The

same study also supports the view that internship programs lead to economic development in local, regional, national, and global settings that encompass additional internship stakeholders.

Other advantages for students are increased career opportunities, quicker job offers, faster promotion rates, enhanced organizational commitment, and ease of transition from college to work (Clark, 2003; D'Abate et al., 2010; Gault et al., 2010; Hyman-Parker & Smith, 1998; Weible, 2010). Sides and Mrvica (2007) argued that "not until would-be professionals begin to live the occupational life they have chosen (and we would advocate that they begin this as interns) do they really start to understand how their formal knowledge is applied" (p. 33). Internships provide direction in student learning and career choice.

Stakeholder 3: Internship Providers / Employers

Employers contribute to internship programs by providing jobs that promise realistic learning opportunities. Like higher education institutions, internship providers hold significant power in the relationship by virtue of an employer's capacity to extend or eliminate internship positions. Employers benefit from internships by providing temporary employment opportunities that immerse students in on-the-job learning (Gault et al., 2010). Employers can enhance organizational knowledge and innovation through internships that present fresh skills and ideas from new talent (Sides & Mrvica, 2007). Additional research shows companies are increasingly using internship programs to identify new employees. Coco (2000), for example, found that an internship is one of the most important experiences that employers look for when hiring new graduates. The report concluded that internships will continue to escalate in importance and frequency as a recruiting tool for employers to identify and hire new college graduates who require less training than non-internship graduates.

The cursory SA above identifies several key internship stakeholders and a number of attributes that characterize their relationships to internship programs. The design of a discipline-specific internship program, or in this case a marketing internship program, requires a more focused and inclusive SA. Therefore, to discover a comprehensive multi-stakeholder vision of a single undergraduate marketing internship program in an AACSB-accredited College of Business Administration, the following completes a key SA by considering the experience and expectations of interns (students), internship providers (employers), and the higher education institution (university) in assessing program design.

METHODOLOGY

Grounded theory is a process of discovering theory and new conceptual frameworks through patterns and themes that emerge from data rather than strictly through confirming an existing theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This exploratory study will use grounded theory principles

to code data and guide research. This study follows methods used in related research involving stakeholders and marketing concepts (e.g., Clulow 2005); such that propositions will be grounded in outcomes that emerge through analysis and correlate with theory. A number of stakeholders illustrated in Figure 2 will be explored using constructivist grounded theory, which is a version of grounded theory that focuses on what Charmaz (2000; 2006) describes as a way of becoming familiar with the worlds of both researcher and participants by building relationships that allow one to seek deeper meanings of events.

To discover the meaning of marketing internship stakeholder relationships, multiple sources of data were collected via site observations, document analysis, and interviews of key internship stakeholders (Gibson & Brown, 2009; Patton, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data triangulation is a way to ensure findings from data are credible (Patton, 2002). In this study, triangulation will include multiple data sources. Site observation visits were conducted at three employer sites that included a large integrated manufacturer, a mid-sized financial services firm, and a mid-sized B2B service industry. The site visits were conducted initially from July 31-August 3, 2012 and repeated during the period October 19-November 15, 2012. Document analysis reviewed over 100 pages of employer and university papers, including meeting minutes, agendas, promotional materials, training manuals, and job descriptions related to internships (Appendix A provides example job descriptions). The concept of saturation aims to avoid premature data collection closure, so for this study it will be used to help determine data needs (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Several primary stakeholders were interviewed for this study. Five students, seven university representatives (faculty/administrators), and three intern providers, representing employers from manufacturing, B2B service, and marketing (advertising, public relations) participated in the pilot SA. Stakeholders were contacted via an email that described the intent of the study and requested an interview or site visit be scheduled. Interviews, which were recorded and transcribed, lasted approximately 30 minutes and site visits lasted no longer than 2 hours. A brief interview guide was used to ensure consistency and to build trust with all interviewees by asking the same questions while allowing for conversational discussion, which can inform new paths of inquiry and add rich meaning (Patton, 2002). Open-ended and probing questions in the interview guide were used to inquire about stakeholder expectations and perceptions of a marketing internship program. The interview data were entered into NVivo (QSR International, n.d.) and results were open coded and explored for discernible themes.

FINDINGS

Marketing Internship SA

While conventional stakeholder theory aims to explain manager relationships with business stakeholders, this study presents a new framework that extends stakeholder theory to higher education through analysis in describing primary stakeholder relationships in a marketing internship program. This study identified university faculty and administration, marketing students, and employers seeking interns as key stakeholders and collected their views as part of a single study of internship design. The following presents a number of expressed attributes (e.g., expectations, contributions) that help characterize marketing internship stakeholder relationships.

Stakeholder 1 – University (Marketing Faculty & Administration)

The University includes key internship stakeholders, primarily faculty and administrators, that seek to make internships relevant to employers and students. Through interviews with university stakeholders, it became evident that expectations in program design varied, ranging from wanting more frequent contact between faculty and student to suggesting regular faculty communication and routine site visits to employers to further learning opportunities and to generate development (giving) relations. The following quotes suggest that an aptly designed program has the capacity to benefit most primary stakeholders.

“Although work experience and an in-depth look at an organization and at a particular industry are desirable results of an internship, they are not the principal objectives. Therefore, emphasis throughout the internship will be on providing you with the opportunity to make significant contributions to your employer's operations through your insights and applications of what you have learned...” [University Website]

“A good opportunity for students is an internship where students learn to do [marketing] work, and all the stakeholders...get something out of it.” [Administrator 1]

“...[for a] Business Retention Internship Program...students would design surveys, administer them to local businesses, and present their findings.” [Faculty 4 – Internship Coordinator and Business Association Representative]

“It's an opportunity for the firm to test-drive a student and an opportunity for a student to get real-world experience. From the university's point of view, it's an opportunity for us to build stronger relationships with employers, which ultimately yields more interaction with corporate executives, and perhaps more giving to the university.” [Administrator 2]

“The majority of the companies...want to see someone that's gotten involved with community service and volunteering, someone that has been exposed to international experiences, student organizations, leadership experiences, someone that's received

awards or acknowledgements or achievements... someone who's done an internship." [Administrator 1]

The University is challenged to help students apply skills learned in class to an internship setting and to future opportunities. University stakeholders expressed concern over lack of collaboration among stakeholders and lack of role clarity in actual internship duties, job opportunities, and career paths, which could result in less than ideal internship choices and experiences.

"Hopefully, what we do is we help [students] understand transferables and the positives they got from the experience that they can use somewhere else." [Administrator 3]

"...there are tensions among key internship stakeholders that deal with the struggle to align student interns with university expectations and the job the employer is seeking to fill. These tensions could be better understood if collaboration were initiated and continued by the Department of Marketing among the stakeholders." [Faculty 1 Internship Director]

"They make poor choices for reasons that shouldn't be related to their preparation for a career field." [Faculty 2]

"It's a wonderful opportunity for you [the student] to have that point in time where you actually determine 'Is this a good fit for me?'" [Faculty 3]

"Faculty and staff are actively involved in helping students land internships and jobs." [University Communications]

Stakeholder 2 – Marketing Student

Student understanding of the internship experience contributes to their expectations of the program. Prior to this study, students would learn about internship requirements via policy outlined on the University's website or by speaking to an internship coordinator. Students would receive information about internship opportunities and job requirements from employers; unless employers shared this information with the University or internship coordinator beforehand to distribute during appointments and at scheduled group information-sessions. This understanding was manifested as students viewed an internship as an opportunity to learn by doing, build confidence, establish a professional network, solidify their career path decision, and differentiate themselves with potential employers. Expectations also emerged through student reflections and reactions, expressed in terms of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the internship experience (Narayanan et al, 2010), where gaps between actual performance and expectations were noted for consideration in program design. As some quotes indicate, students expect to receive some direction in finding internship opportunities. The following student quotes exemplify expectations of and reactions to the marketing internship.

"I learned so much and I feel like I'm more ready for the real world now that I have that under my belt. I think it's great that you require it. I think it really should be required." [Student 4]

"Going into the internship I knew it was going to be challenging...." [Student 3]

"It will benefit me that I've had the experience to talk to people face to face and try to sell them a product. It was really hard to do...." [Student 5]

"I don't think I was expecting as much training as we did get into." [Student 3]

"You want to see what it [the job] is really like? The only way that you really know that [how to do the task] is if you actually do it." [Student 2]

"It's a great way to find jobs and get experience in the workforce and get working on your future career. I'd say it'd be the best way to get your foot in the door." [Student 3]

"I personally do feel like there was not really a lot of help from the faculty to find [an internship]. I was really on my own." [Student 1]

Stakeholder 3 – Marketing Internship Provider (Employer)

Employers appear to struggle with how to structure the internship process so to evaluate interns for future employment by giving meaningful tasks to allow interns to apply what they have learned in class to actual situations. Some employers see the key relationships as only between the employer and the university, while other employers see the university and students working in concert with them to create successful experiences, and some employers viewed internships as a reality check for student's introduction to the workplace.

"The best internships are the ones that are win-win, where we work together and we correspond with the professors throughout the summer, and 'Here's the progress, here's where the person might be lacking.' So...an internship program – be it from an employer or I would expect from the university level – is definitely a two-way communication stream." [Employer 1] – Internship provider from large integrated manufacturer

"Data...gathered since the program began in 1980 showed employees that came through their internship program were twice as likely to still be with the company after 10 years versus employees that came in without going through their internship program." [Employer 2] – Internship provider from mid-sized B2B service industry (researcher field notes)

"We wouldn't be as successful as we are if it wasn't for the product [interns] you [the university] produce."

[Employer 2] – Internship provider from mid-sized B2B service industry

“In the marketing and sales business there is a fair amount of rejection. There are some things you have to learn about how to deal with that [rejection]. Interestingly enough, it takes a little time and a little effort. You know what? Time and effort seems to be what we are short of these days. Through our internship program you have a chance to learn among other things how to deal with rejection.” [Employer 3] – Internship provider from mid-sized financial services firm

Marketing Internship Program Design

Outcomes of the pilot SA suggested a number of defining characteristics (expectations, requirements) for trial in the design and delivery of an undergraduate marketing internship program. For example, it was suggested to accept 400 hours (10 weeks) as the internship duration. The accepted benchmark became 480 hours (12 weeks) of employment to allow sufficient time for students to learn by doing, to gain career exposure, and to contribute to business performance. Stakeholders offered a number of ideas and clarification that can contribute to an improved marketing internship design:

- 1) Hold faculty-led information sessions at the university for students and employers to attend,
- 2) Acknowledge gaps between performance and expectations by involving stakeholders and addressing stakeholder goals through collaborative alignment,
- 3) Have faculty conduct site visits regularly to connect with students and employers,
- 4) Ask employers to submit job requirements to the university to facilitate transparency and mutual fulfillment of expectations,

- 5) Have students complete daily reflection journals, a work-integrated learning report, and a self-evaluation to enhance learning, and
- 6) Request that employers complete an evaluation of the intern’s performance during the internship and forward to the internship director to use in determining final grades.

The existing program requires the student to receive the internship director’s approval of a specific internship by submitting an internship proposal of why the student wants to intern with an employer, enrollment in the marketing internship three-credit course that requires 480 hours of on-site time with the employer. Other requirements are an hours-log, weekly activity reports, and answering several marketing related questions on how the employer applied marketing concepts and theory. By combining the existing internship program (Appendix B) with the items and suggestions above that emerged through SA, it is anticipated that a more comprehensive internship program that leverages stakeholder involvement, workplace opportunities, and classroom knowledge will result. Such modifications allow the internship to be tailored to meet stakeholder expectations discovered during the study. The SA discovered gaps that need to be addressed to improve fit between the student, the employer intern position, and the academic institution, which Arnold (1998) claims are necessary to cultivate fit to improve a marketing internship design. The conceptual model in Figure 3 depicts an initial understanding of the nature of the primary marketing internship stakeholders with their relationship and proximity based largely on theory, literature, definitions, and findings from this research.

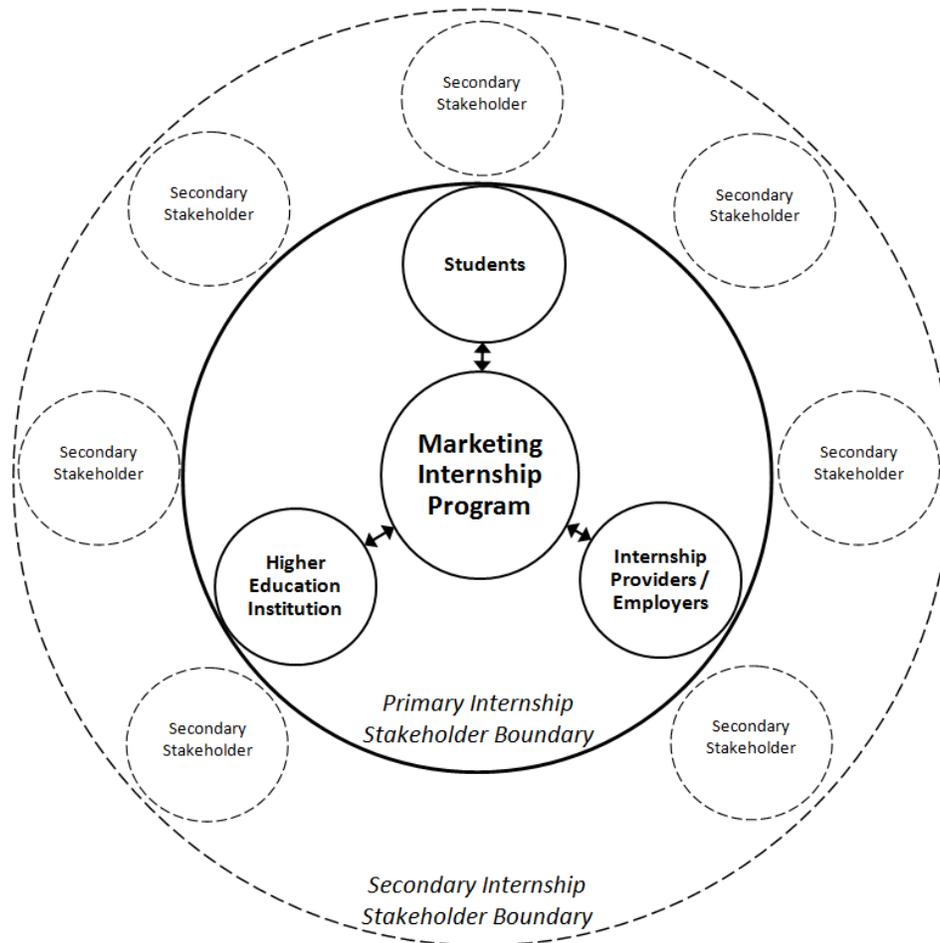


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework with Primary Marketing Internship Stakeholders Identified

DISCUSSION

A number of major themes emerged in this study from the data relating to each of the key internship stakeholders. Themes from the higher education institution emerged as program design expectations, collaboration, and role clarity. Student themes manifested as internship expectations and nature of internship connections. Employer themes centered on internship coordination, program structure and assessment, and return on investment.

Stakeholder responses indicate that the *higher education institution* seeks to create more opportunities to connect students with real-world experiences with employers to solve the real problems they face. The marketing internship SA suggests universities screen students and employers to assist placement. In addition, results suggest proper promotion of internship opportunities and partnering with businesses where interns are placed can enhance student persistence, program prestige, and financial support. Internships with prestigious companies can attract students and lend prestige to a marketing program. The mutually beneficial relationship between a university and businesses employing interns can lead to financial support in the forms of scholarships, equipment, and grants (Divine et al., 2007). An effective marketing internship program could be a critical tool to help higher education institutions

differentiate themselves as not only providing quality educational programs but also equipping graduates to gain quality jobs upon graduation (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Divine et al., 2007; Gault et al., 2000).

Students seek rewarded experiences that allow them to gain confidence in their skills acquired in college to critically think and apply them in a complex business environment. At the same time, students find it difficult to seek and arrange internship opportunities alone. Students need empowered to connect with faculty early to learn about internship opportunities to become more aware of the value and option of completing an internship, as some marketing programs may not require an internship for graduation. Connecting and communicating with faculty who are responsible for coordinating internships is important to students so they do not feel lost in the process and will persist in the program. Program design elements that foster communication and clarity early in the experiential learning process have potential to help students determine career fit. A critical element to position internships as a win for all key stakeholders could be to incorporate the student's voice in the process. Mitra & Serriere (2012) described how student voice could be integrated into the educational decision making process, which could include communicating with employers and university stakeholders. Such collaboration could address unique

opportunities or expectations and situations were internships have not been fully utilized.

Employers that provide internships, and even employers that do not provide internships, seek out universities that provide top talent by preparing new graduates that will have an immediate and satisfying impact on business performance. Kochan (2012) reported high unemployment in certain industries that require medium to high skill levels and noted recruiting experts viewed on-the-job opportunities like internships as a tool to help alleviate these shortages, which supports continued emphasis by employers and higher education institutions on structuring quality learning internship opportunities. Employers need to be able to articulate what they need from an internship program (Rothman, 2007), and be willing to insert themselves into the discourse with both educators and students to develop an understanding of internship outcomes (Penuel et al., 2007). Such an approach to discover how educators and employers communicate allows for collaboration to better design marketing internship curriculum that can better prepare graduates for meeting employer needs and validate the integrity of the institution.

While there are a myriad of factors to consider as part of a strategy to design an effective marketing internship program, findings from this exploratory study and conventional SA presented several implications and contributions for a program and its key stakeholders. First, this study confirms that SA is a practical tool for use in an education setting, specifically to help facilitate higher education course design. Second, a framework based on the analysis of stakeholder data emerged that visually depicts key internship stakeholder relationships (Figure 3). Brainstorming helped identify a large pool of potential stakeholders that was narrowed to a smaller list of primary stakeholders to consider when evaluating expectations. Third, the SA process stands to improve a marketing internship course, as resulting themes suggest a number of gaps and improvement opportunities to incorporate in program design. A three-way partnership of primary internship stakeholders is capable of generating improvement ideas through active collaboration and involvement in the course design process. Fourth, using data triangulation methods in the SA process helped demonstrate consistency across sources. These contributions center on facilitating collaboration in creative ways in order to connect and focus internship stakeholders on investing in internship programs that are designed to benefit each stakeholder. When internship programs are designed with input from key stakeholders, it presents a greater potential for being a rewarding experience for all stakeholders.

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CONCLUSION

When developing and implementing a marketing internship, it is essential to monitor important stakeholder relationships for support and involvement and for better clarity and alignment of needs and expectations. This exploratory study is a first of its kind that identifies and includes the voice of three or more stakeholder groups in analysis to evaluate and improve an internship program design. A SA that follows three essential steps, 1) identify stakeholders, 2) characterize stakeholders, and 3) decide on strategy, is useful to discover and gather pertinent details about major stakeholders to determine the best strategy to use to design an effective internship program that is comprehensive and beneficial for those involved. An objective of conducting a marketing internship SA is to fill the gap in literature regarding the relevancy and connectedness of program design to facilitate engaged learners and to equip students for the realities of a career in marketing. By conducting a marketing internship SA, stakeholders gain a more complete understanding of relationships and expectations, including compatible and competing interests, which can be reflected and balanced through program design.

Future research should explore additional internship stakeholder relationships and aspects of stakeholder salience, such as which stakeholders hold which resources and in what quantities. Secondary stakeholders need to be considered in the internship discussion as D'Abate et al (2009) argued that internships should be structured to ensure that "the intern feels good about their job being performed and that the intern does a job that is of importance to other employees within the organization" (p. 536), so the voices of the student, university, employers, and other stakeholders, including co-workers and employers that currently do not offer internships but prefer to hire graduates that have the experience, work in agreement toward achieving a mutually rewarding experience that benefits all stakeholders (Grasgreen, 2011). This study is limited by its exclusive and exploratory focus on a marketing internship program at a single university. Qualitative research provides a deep understanding of a specific setting and is not intended to generalize to other settings but is commonly used to generalize to new concepts, applications, and theory. The qualitative methods used for this study were successful in culminating a conceptual multi-stakeholder framework in a marketing education context that the reader, particularly marketing faculty and internship administrators, can consider prior to conducting a SA for a specific internship program design.

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Appendix A

Sample Job Descriptions for Marketing Internships in Health Care and Finance

JOB DESCRIPTION-MARKETING INTERN HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATION

[*Employer Name Removed*]... is looking for an intern to work in the Marketing Department within our Healthcare organization. The Market Research intern will actively work with marketing and sales excel spreadsheets, our CRM systems and marketing databases that include web, PPC, and social media analysis.

The Market Research Intern will be a part of a dynamic team whose responsibility is driving data analysis and reporting in support of better understanding and identifying key metrics for targeting partner, customer, and patient awareness and overall growth. The Market Research Intern will work with key users from various internal and external company groups to understand business requirements and marketing solutions that meet the business needs and are in line with industry best practices.

The position will assist our Marketing team with various projects to include gathering market data, company data, competitor data, analyzing surveys, analyzing trends from Analytics, track and analyze campaign key metrics and other marketing needs.

- Research and gather market data to better identify key trends within industry.
- Study market research/trend reports from competitors-extracting key.
- Conduct and interpret data analysis from Customer/Physician Satisfaction Surveys.
- Perform data extraction from web and social media analytics.
- Evaluate and optimize effectiveness of marketing campaigns.
- Analyze previous marketing campaigns and key metrics.
- Other duties and responsibilities as required by the marketing team.

JOB DESCRIPTION-MARKETING INTERN PRIME LENDING

Title: Marketing Intern Prime Lending

Supervisors: [*Supervisor Name Removed*]

Responsibilities:

- Assist in the execution of outreach efforts to professional staff and employers related to cooperative education and internships
- Assist with developing marketing strategies for promoting
- Assist with branding and logo
- Assist with developing a marketing campaign for increased sales in specific assigned region

Qualifications:

- Self-starter; able to work well without constant direction
- Strong oral and written communication skills
- Strong organizational skills and attention to detail
- Strong computer skills (Adobe and Publisher proficiency required)
- Previous marketing skills strongly preferred
- Familiar with cooperative education and internships
- Communications, Marketing, Graphic Design majors preferred
- Minimum cumulative GPA of 2.75

Skills to be developed:

- Enhance written and oral communication skills
- Learn about practical marketing strategies

Time commitment: Approximately 40 hours a week for 10-12 weeks

Compensation: credit-bearing; must be able to earn credit through the University

Appendix B Internship Policy

MKT 490-Internship in Marketing 3 Credit Hours

A full time work experience occurring with a marketing organization. Detailed written report reflective journals, and assignments required. Prerequisites: permission of instructor and department chairperson; 56 semester hours completed; Marketing major in addition to MKT 300 or MKT 304; admission to Professional Business Studies or listed on signed major or minor. **Recommended:** completion of 6 credit hours in marketing.

An internship in Marketing is a requirement for the Marketing Major.

Objectives:

To provide participating students with a meaningful experience that is complementary to and compatible with their areas of specialization and long-run career goals. Not all internships are eligible for MKT 490, the internship course. Companies can use the "internship" for all kinds of jobs. However, if the job can be counted as internship credit (MKT 490) is the decision of the internship director.

To enable students to apply their classroom learning to the workplace environment.

To enable students to associate with practicing professionals in the environment of profit or not-for-profit organizations.

Policies:

You are to discuss an opportunity with the internship director BEFORE you accept the position.

The intern student must be enrolled in MKT 490 internship course BEFORE you start at the company.

The intern student must be registered in MKT 490, during his or her internship experience.

The intern student may receive credit for one additional course when completing the internship requirement, with permission of the Internship Director.

The intern student should be paid for the work he or she performs.

Every intern student is expected to complete 480 hours with the same organization in their internship program.

After an internship has started, an intern student is not permitted to change his or her internship organization without approval of the Internship Director.

Any internship that does not fit the above requirements must be discussed with, and approved by, the Internship Director prior to accepting an internship opportunity.

MKT 490 is a class with assignments, just like any other class. Your grade is determined by your employer evaluation and quality of the work on assignments turned in.