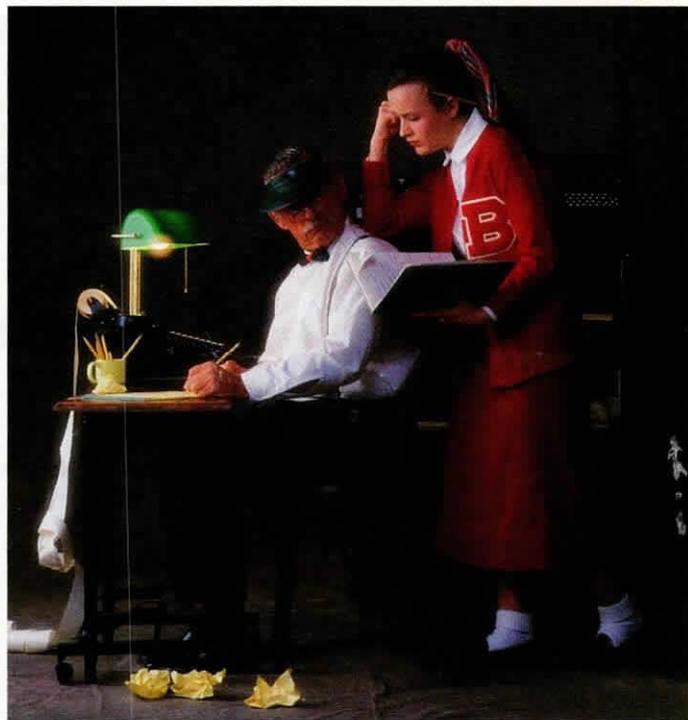
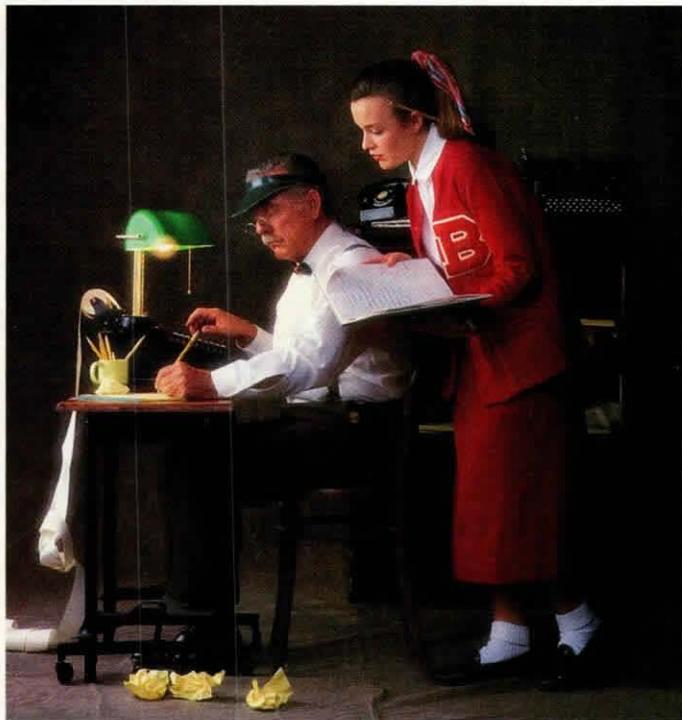


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# CORPORATE INTERNS



by Tom Callaban

**F**rom ancient times to the end of the 19th century, master craftspeople had a way of ensuring that skills would be passed on to future generations: the apprentice system of labor. Under the watchful eyes of an older worker, an apprentice labored during 12- to 14-hour days, six days a week, for years until he or she earned entry into the specialized field. The modern corporation is far removed in size and purpose from the guilds of the Middle Ages and their independent craftspeople. But modern companies are resurrecting the idea behind apprenticeships when

they allow interns to work in their offices to gain the experience and contacts that can lead to jobs. Says Carol Feit Lane, who a decade ago helped create one of the first internship programs for adult women:

"The modern internship has become like the old apprentice system. Especially with internships in business, a high percentage of people end up working where they interned. Many organizations are increasingly utilizing internships as a recruiting tool."

Once used almost exclusively as the stepping stone between a physician's medical education and

Northbrook Women's Club and, at times, a recreational therapist from the North Suburban Special Recreational Association join the staff to relieve the parents, who are free to go off for the next hour to their own support group. Says Norwell:

"While we give mothers training in working with their babies, we also give them needed support. These parents can become very discouraged, very isolated. Here they can talk about their doctor's appointment or their opinion of the new speech therapist; they can discuss their child's upcoming surgery and the anxiety such a surgery may mean. Some surgeries may mean a lag in the training, and perhaps a new way must be found to make up for that lag."

With the supervised support system offered by the PIE program, parents can learn to accept the reality of their situation and to discover opportunities to help other confused and hurting parents. They often reach a level where they are comfortable enough to share their own growth and are supportive of others as they grow. Anger dissipates, and commitment and responsibility take over.

The weekly parent-child sessions can be draining. The staff teaches parents how to create a new and different set of limits and possibilities to change the way the children operate. The children are pushed to transcend gesture and begin speech. It's hard. The children scream and fight; they resist the pull; they feel uncomfortable. Sometimes the children and the parents alike are convinced that the new set of possibilities won't work. Even at an age of 6 months, children can form negative patterns. "We're here to show both the parent and the child it will work," says Norwell.

How well does it work? The test comes in several areas. The advancement of the 3-year-old children into the state-mandated programs is one area. In the first four years of the PIE program, an average of 15 children each year have gone from PIE into regular classes, a figure that might never have been possible without the program. Some children do go into special-education preschool but have the potential to move into regular classes within a few years. Other children never will attend regular classes but, because of the PIE program, they do not require institutionalization.

Joan Hilton (a pseudonym), a participant in the PIE program and the mother of four, calls her daughter Veronica "our star." Hilton says her baby, born completely asphyxiated and considered dead, "survived only with the help of the PIE program." She says:

"Therese Wehman [a PIE co-coordinator and an initiator of the program] came to our home when Veronica was just a tiny baby. Therese gave us a list of exercises, taught me what to do,

showed me what kind of tools and apparatus would be helpful, told me where to go to get extra help, and gave us so much support.

"Veronica is doing so well today that at her 2-year-old birthday, she got up and sang 'Happy Birthday' to herself. I am indebted to that group forever. It's a lovely, lovely program."

*Liane Clorfene is a free-lance writer based in Evanston, Illinois.*

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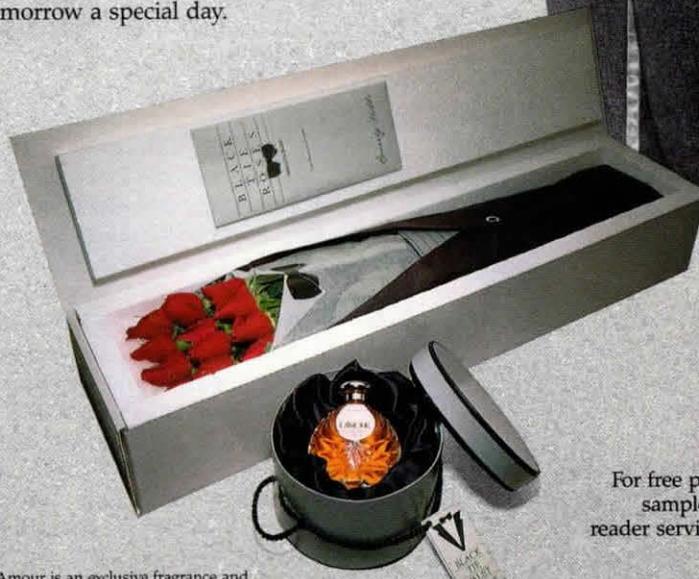
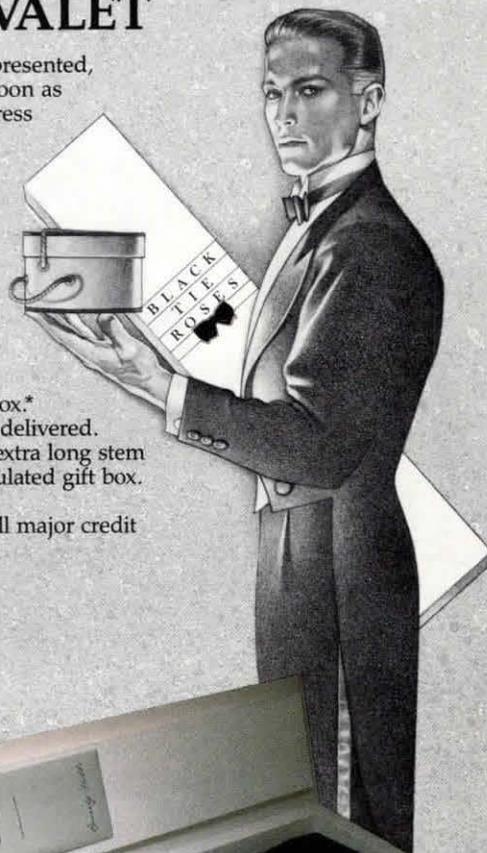
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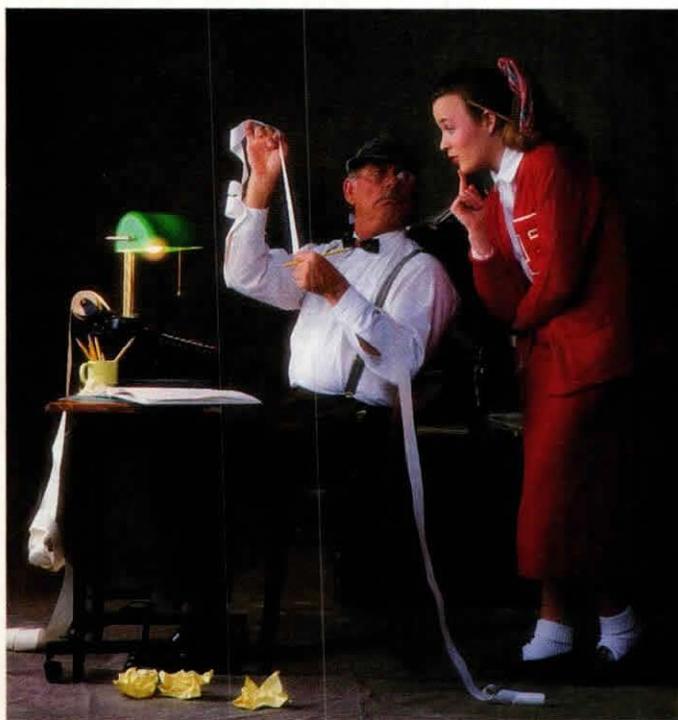


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*With a nod to apprentices of the Middle Ages, internships are providing valuable on-the-job training as they help corporations recruit new employees.*



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practice, internships now are the stepping stone to the world of work for millions of Americans of all ages and fields of interest. Many corporations have welcomed internships as a way to train and recruit potential employees while giving something back to the community.

Says Jane Kendall, executive director of the National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE), a clearing house for college and university internship programs:

"I often describe internships as a win, win, win situation. If the

internship is well designed to give the intern meaningful work, the employer, intern, and school or organization sponsoring the program win."

Spurred by a tight entry-level job market and the demand for relevance in education, interest in internships has increased dramatically over the past few years among individuals, schools, and businesses. NSIEE counts 1,100 colleges and universities as members, a jump from 700 three years ago. Estimates as to the number of interns among the nation's 12 million college students range from the

conservative figure of one in seven to one in four or five. In addition, there are dozens of private internship programs across the country designed specifically for adult women reentering the job market and for men switching careers.

Exact figures concerning internships are elusive, however, because the types of internships vary from situation to situation depending upon the needs of the individual and the host company. Internships can be paid or unpaid, full-time or part-time, last from six weeks to six months. Companies can use them specifically

as a recruiting tool or as a community service to help individuals gain experience in their fields of interest.

But most internships do provide low-risk situations where individuals learn firsthand about their career choice. Stephen Feeley, now an assistant account executive at the Dorf-Stanton Agency in New York City, used a collegiate internship at ITT Corp. to test his career choice of corporate public relations. He says, "Any internship is

valuable because at the very least if you decided that this work is not what you want to do, you don't have to spend three months after graduation finding that out on a real job."

Feeley also found that his six-week experience at ITT provided valuable material for the portfolio he used in his job hunt after graduation. ITT has offered internships in its corporate relations and advertising department for the past several years. Says Juan C.

Cappello, ITT senior vice-president: "We find that most college students who apply for an internship have excellent writing abilities and positive attitudes but lack the all-important experience in working in a corporate environment. Once in the company, interns undergo intensive training in public-relations skills and receive a myriad of assignments including writing, interviewing, editing, and proof-reading under the direct supervision of a corporate-relations manager."

Besides being a chance to practice techniques learned in school, interning is a valuable way for students to get a taste of future careers. Richard Ziff ran the internship program at 3M Company for seven years before leaving to form Richard Ziff Communications in New York City. He says:

"From an intern's point of view, they learn that in a corporate setting you have to act and behave in certain ways. They learn that if you want to be treated like a business person, you have to dress like one and show up on time in the morning."

The transition to the business world can be difficult for graduating students as well as for women returning to the work force after helping to rear their children.

Says Prof. Edward Wakin, who has run an internship program at Fordham University for the past 10 years:

"Students in particular worry about what it's like out in the real world. They have been segregated in the world of school, or if they do work part-time, it's usually at a place that has little or nothing to do with their career goals."

But if the immediate goal of an intern is working to learn, not to earn, the long-term goal is crucial: a job. Since interns are willing and eager to prove themselves during their internships, more and more companies are using this situation to meet their own recruiting needs.

In the 1960s when entry-level jobs were plentiful and a bachelor's degree was the passport to those jobs, corporations recruited on campuses for future employees. They still do, but many companies now are finding that students actually come to them competing for internships. Companies thus can pick the best students and groom them for jobs in the organization.

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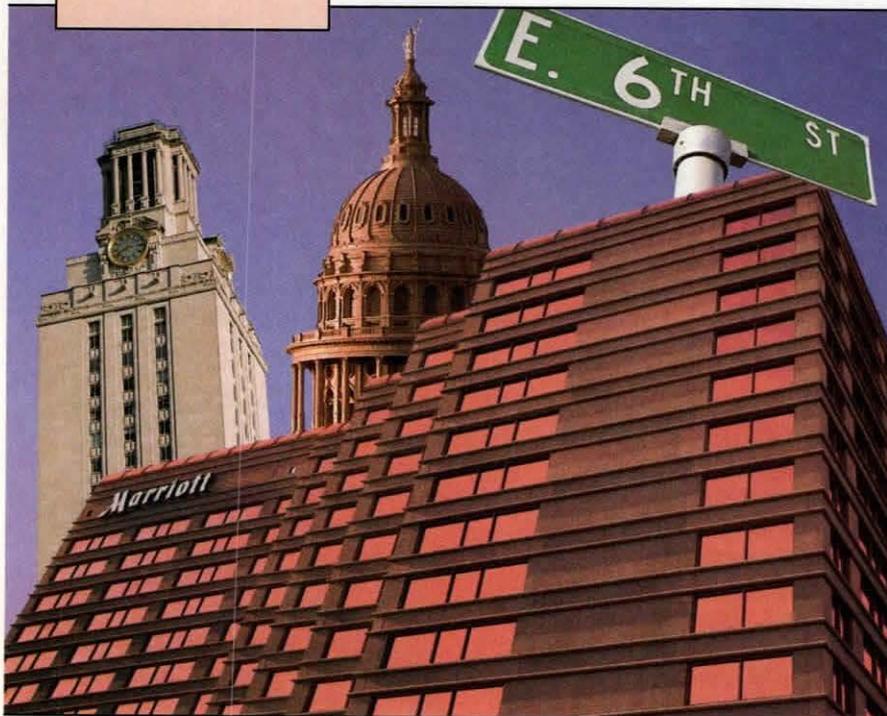
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students successfully completing their paid Summer Internship Program (SIP) either will be invited back to do another internship during their academic career or will be offered permanent positions with the company. Pepsi-Cola's program is a pioneer in that it is designed specifically for minority students.

SIP has been in existence for three years. Some 50 undergraduate and graduate students from more than 30 universities participated in last summer's program. "The students learn the corporate world and our industry, and we're looking for future leaders," says Jacquelyn Gates, manager of corporate relations for Pepsi-Cola.

The William M. Mercer-Meidinger international consulting agency also has hired summer interns to work in specific areas of the company. In one case the summer work evolved to a point where the company paid for an intern's education and continued to use him one day a week during the school year.

Says Karin Allport, a principal with Mercer-Meidinger:

"The ideal is to get people to join us when they graduate. The internship gives us an edge in finding them and saves us a lot of time in recruiting people we might have a hard time attracting on campus. It helps the interns because they get comfortable with us and get to know the people they'll be working with."

Besides providing a company with a pool of potential employees, internships can infuse an organization with new blood and ideas. Since an intern is not part of the power structure of a company, he or she has the vantage point of a participant-observer and actually can help employees who often are too close to the forest to see the trees. Allport explains:

"It's definitely a positive experience for both the intern and the company. For the company, interns provide a novel perspective. Since the intern is not part of the regular environment, they are nonthreatening. When the intern makes a suggestion, people in the company can ask, 'Why haven't we thought of that? Why aren't we changing?' It's very refreshing."

But if corporations and other organizations are realizing the benefits of employing interns, the interns themselves are gaining the most from real work experience. This is especially

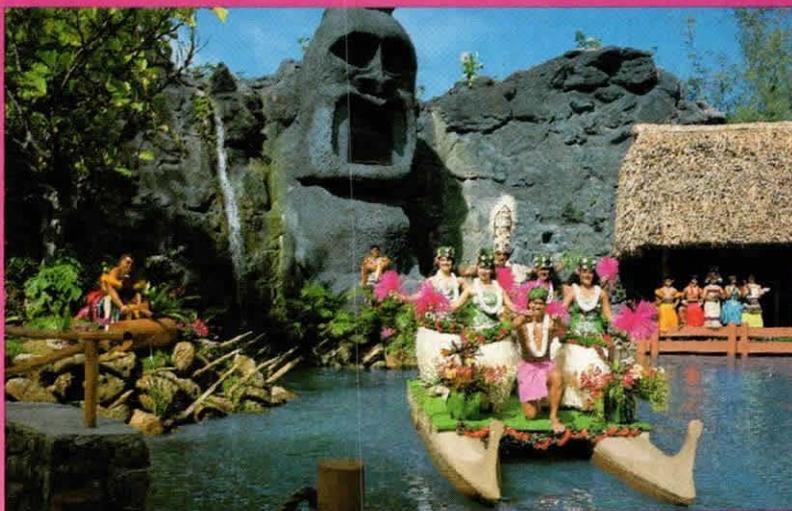
true for adults such as 39-year-old Pat Neptune, who wanted to switch from college teaching to business.

To help make that switch, Neptune joined Project Re-Entry, a Boston-based program for men and women that has seen half of its interns gain full-time employment with their host companies. Neptune, however, didn't follow that trend; she instead found a full-time job in the second month of her five-month program. She says:

"The internship is absolutely essential. When I was going on informational interviews, employers were impressed by my background but not [by] my lack of experience in their field. This lack of experience was a giant gap. What an internship does is give you a way around that gap."

*Tom Callahan, based in Yonkers, New York, contributes articles to many national publications.*

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