



# Building an Export-promoting Internship Program

Effective Partnerships for quick results

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# Topic

Recent rapid changes in the International Business internships at Lee Business School, UNLV

# Motivation for presenting

- **Sharing:** What's been so beneficial for us, may be useful for others.
- **Reflecting:** An opportunity to consider what are the best and most essential features.
- **Comparing:** Hopefully to learn about similar circumstances and responses elsewhere.

# Basic Structure

- UNLV IB Program provides interns
- Business assistance agencies (Nevada SBDC, MEP) use the interns
  - to “sell” SMEs on the value of exporting, and
  - to assist them to develop export plans.

# Context: why this felt like a breakthrough

- UNLV IB Major was established in the late 90s; director appointed about 2000.

Program has tried to find its way forward with limited resources

- We have tried to emphasize internships throughout
  - more struggle than success
  - perpetual mismatch

# And then things came together

- It seemed to happen suddenly two or three years ago.
- What are the lessons?

# Some key elements

- Business development agency – sufficiently large business clientele
- IB Program – sufficiently large number of students  
*To maintain a dependable flow of matches*
- Interest in export by all  
*To fit into the IB program*

# How were these achieved?

## Evolution of the program

1. Spring 2010 – first Nevada ExporTech™ run by NIE
2. July 2010 – BIE grant period begins
3. First cohort of NSBDC interns
4. Spring 2011 – second ExporTech™
5. Fall 2011 – second cohort of NSBDC interns
6. Spring 2012 – third cohort of NSBDC interns also serves third ExporTech™



# First ExporTech™ Spring 2010

- Terry Culp, Director of Nevada Industry Excellence (NIE) the Nevada MEP provider
  - decides to offer ExporTech™
  - Requests interns from UNLV IB

# First ExporTech™ Spring 2010

- The ExporTech™ program:
  - Developed by the Commercial Service and MEP
  - Companies, ready for export or ready to expand export, attend three all-day sessions at one month intervals
  - Hear experts' presentations on export
  - Develop an export plan
  - Receive feedback and suggestions on plan from experts
  - Plan ready for implementation following final session

# First ExporTech™ Spring 2010

- Role of interns
  - Attend all sessions
  - Provide research and other support necessary to prepare export plans.

# First ExporTech™ Spring 2010

- Provision of key elements:
- Business clientele – clients of NIE
- Export interest – inherent in decision to offer program
- Student clientele – created certain challenges
  - Relatively short notice
  - No pay available
    - Firms barely convinced to look into export
    - Neither NEI nor UNLV IB had budget to pay interns
  - Time too short to allow academic credit for internship

# BIE grant begins: fall 2010

- Provides funds for payment of interns
- NSBDC is agreement partner

# First NSBDC cohort

- Student clientele
  - Grant funded (limited) compensation for students
  - Internship period coordinated with the semester to permit academic credit
- Business clientele available to NSBDC
- Export interest of clients often a challenge

First cohort collected and prepared for presentation  
export education material

# Second ExporTech™ Spring 2011

- Business clientele – clients of NIE
- Export interest – inherent in decision to offer program
- Student clientele – created certain challenges
  - BIE grant funded pay and advance notice helped recruiting
  - However time remained too short to allow academic credit

# Second NSBDC cohort

- Business and student clienteles remain available
- Program now began to address the export interest issue
  - Students now present material developed by the first cohort to business clients recommended by NSBDC advisors to stimulate interest in export.
  - When interest results, interns assist in developing an export plan, working with client and NSBDC advisors.



# Most recent cohort: Spring 2012

- The same interns working with the NSBDC are detailed to ExporTech for the two months it is in session. Total time in the internship now sufficient for academic credit.
- Otherwise same arrangements as previously

# Summary: Providing key elements

- Business clientele – partnering with a business development agency (e.g. SBDC) immediately brings in their clients.
- Student clientele
  - Available to the program in principle
  - Communication can be a problem

# Summary: Providing key elements

- Export interest may be an issue
  - ExporTech program automatically focused.
  - Presumably could connect with other export training programs as well
  - One could also develop e one's own material (NSBDC)

# Summary: Providing key elements

- I believe that its provision of these three elements explains why the program succeeded.
- Working with a business development agency that has a well-established list of clients explains why it succeeded so quickly.

# Direct benefits to IB program

- Usual benefits to interns
  - Experience gained by interns
  - Connections and occasional placement
- Increasing awareness of the program
  - Becoming more part of the culture
  - Recruiting interns becoming easier

# Direct benefits to companies

- ExporTech™ Companies
  - Program as a whole very successful in leading to export plans, implementation, and sales results
  - Many partners contribute
  - Interns have proved invaluable for creating export plans
    - Much easier for companies; More detailed
    - Participants have been very complementary
- NSBDC Companies
  - Increased export awareness
  - Export planning

# Direct benefits to partners

- Evaluated by success of clients noted above

# Ancillary benefits

- The internship program also raised the profile of the IB program generally
  - General awareness of program
  - A visible success inspires belief more is possible
- Indirect but tangible benefit, fund raising and support
  - Executive Advisory Board has become more active and more successful at collecting contributions to the program.
  - We are trying to leverage this to increase numbers of direct provided internship placements



# Lessons: initiating a program

- Partnering with a business development agency can lead to very fast growth of the program
- Export interest might be an issue – If a pre existing export training program is not used, one needs to be developed.

# • Lessons: generalizability

- If the three key elements are provided, it would seem possible to implement a program.
- Question – How similar is Las Vegas to the situation elsewhere?
  - SBDCs are widespread
  - There is at least one MEP provider in every state.