



FP Weekly Checklist: “Returnship” Programs Can Help You Find Top Talent and Build Loyalty

Insights

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As an FP Weekly member, you’ll receive practical and cutting-edge checklists of issues to consider, action steps to take, and goals to accomplish to ensure you remain on the top of your game when it comes to workplace relations and employment law compliance. This week we provide you a checklist of items to consider when developing a “returnship” program – a full-time paid internship opportunity for adults who are returning to the workforce after taking significant time off.

Why Consider a “Returnship” Program?

Like many business leaders, you may be struggling right now to find qualified job applicants for highly skilled positions. As you review your hiring practices and look for ways to expand your candidate pool, adding a returnship program to your strategy can help you build loyalty and improve diversity by onboarding talented workers who may need to refresh their skills after a gap in employment.

Perhaps a software engineer is returning to the workforce after spending several years at home caring for kids or elderly parents. Maybe an operations manager is coming out of retirement, or a financial advisor is ready to work after attending to a serious health condition. There are countless reasons people leave the workforce and just as many that lead them back to full-time roles.

Oftentimes, however, such workers face obstacles because of the gap on their resume. Indeed, job applicants with resume gaps have a 45% lower chance of receiving job interviews, according to [a study by ResumeGo](#). In addition to facing barriers based on employer perceptions, job applicants who are re-entering the workforce may find that technology, processes, and the necessary skills to be successful have changed.

But many “returnees” have a wealth of valuable knowledge and transferable skills that they developed through their prior work experience. So, your returnship program can be a win-win opportunity to help meet your business needs while also providing a pathway to success for professionals who are transitioning back into the workforce. Here are the key questions you should answer as you develop your returnship program.

Your Returnship Checklist

_____ First, you should think about the bigger picture. How will the returnship program fit into your overall organizational structure? For example, will you set up roles in specific departments or create project-based taskforces that work on cross-functional assignments?

_____ Will you establish eligibility requirements for the program? Some companies, for example, will consider only candidates who have been out of the workforce for two or more years while others keep the program open to essentially any qualified candidate.

_____ How will you create learning opportunities for participants? For example, will you provide formal classroom or online training? You'll want to ensure participants have the resources they need to successfully transition from the program to lasting career opportunities.

_____ Will you offer tuition reimbursement for certifications and other credentials? Many participants may need to refresh their technical skills, learn new programs, and otherwise update their knowledgebase after spending time away from their profession.

_____ Will you host networking and social events to help participants connect with and learn from other professionals? Developing soft skills is just as important as updating technical skills.

_____ Will you offer formal mentorship opportunities as part of the program? If so, how will you pair returnship participants with mentors? Be sure to give some thought to how you will make your mentorship program meaningful and successful.

_____ How long will the returnship program last? Some returnships run for eight to 16 weeks, while others last for one to five years, according to the AARP.

_____ Will you establish a process for participants to apply for open jobs in your organization when the returnship is over? Be sure to coordinate such efforts with your HR team and hiring managers.

_____ How will you determine the compensation package for participants? You'll want to do some market research to determine adequate pay for the types of jobs available and the experience candidates have – even if they've been absent from the workplace for a while.

_____ Will program participants be hired as regular employees or contractors? Will they be

eligible for benefits? Be sure to work with experienced legal counsel to ensure your program complies with applicable wage and hour and other workplace laws.

_____ Is your selection process fair and based on objective criteria? As with all hiring programs, you should ensure your selection criteria for the returnship program does not unintentionally discriminate based on age, disability, race, religion, sex, or another protected characteristic.

_____ How will you measure the program's success? Your hiring managers and HR team should work together to develop metrics and program evaluations – and they should be prepared to adjust the program as necessary to achieve the maximum benefit for participants and the organization.

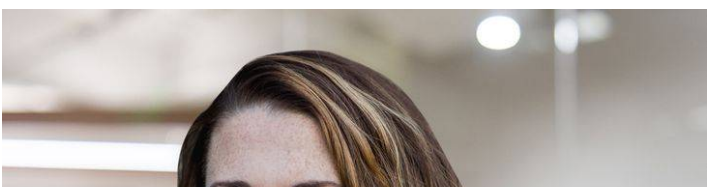
Conclusion

We will continue to monitor developments in this area and provide updates as warranted, so make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to get the most up-to-date information. For further information, contact the authors of this Insight or your Fisher Phillips attorney.

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