

MBA intern hiring is slow to recover

Francesca Di Meglio

The drought in internship hiring is far from over. For some MBAs, this may be a long, frustrating summer.

The economy may be in recovery, but for some internship-seeking MBA students, it may turn out to be a jobless one. Many top business schools are reporting that internship hiring appears to be stabilizing but has a long way to go before it returns to prerecession levels. "Things are better than last year," says Jack Oakes, director of the Career Development Center at the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business (Darden Full-Time MBA Profile). "There's no way it could be worse or the whole country would be in dire straits."

Some schools are guarded about prematurely sharing data on the success of students seeking MBA internships, because May is when the hunt usually ends. Oakes, for instance, declined to disclose the number of students who have internships, but he says postings increased 34% from March 2009 to March 2010. Of the 105 full-time MBA students seeking internships at the University of Washington's Foster School of Business (Foster Full-Time MBA Profile), 31 have accepted internship offers as of Apr. 1, up from 28 a year ago, says Paula Klempay, director of MBA career services at Foster. In fact, most schools interviewed for this story are saying much the same thing: If there's been any improvement, it's not much.

For business schools trying to adapt to the recession and its aftermath, career service directors say that finding internships for students requires some big changes—from casting a wider net in search of job leads and leveraging pre-MBA experience to settling for a less-than-perfect position. With fewer full-time jobs on the table, finding an internship—the traditional gateway to a post-grad position for many MBAs—is more important than ever. Recruiters say internships give employers a chance to put MBAs to the test. "We treat the summer program as a microcosm of their career," says Mark Howorth, senior director of global recruiting at Bain & Co., which in 2010 hired its largest summer associate class ever from 25 MBA programs in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. "We want them to have a real client, real case teams, and real presentations."

The Arrogance Handicap

At the Georgia Tech College of Management (Georgia Tech Full-Time MBA Profile), Jim Kranzusch, executive director of MBA career services, is taking aim at one of recruiters' pet peeves: the "arrogant" MBA. Applicants can't get into the school unless they interview with both admissions and career services and pass Kranzusch's attitude test. "We will not accept students with any attitude or feeling of entitlement," he says. "All of us have been on the corporate side, and no one wants to work with someone who is arrogant."

These days, however, recruiters say entitlement has been replaced by desperation on many B-school campuses. Howorth says internship candidates today are more concerned about how a particular position will help them achieve their long-term career goals. And the days of experimental internships—to see if you like a particular industry or company—are over. "Candidates should evaluate an opportunity based on the experience they'll get, not by the company name or the glitz and glamour of it," says Keosha Moon, director of marketing, planning, and operations at the MBA Career Management Center at Emory University's Goizueta Business School (Goizueta Full-Time MBA Profile).

Before an MBA can accept or reject an internship, though, he or she has to find one. Increasingly that means tapping a far larger network than before, including family, friends, friends of friends, online acquaintances, alumni, and former colleagues. Damien Lipke, a first-

year MBA student at Georgia Tech, engaged as many people as possible on his internship search. An officer in the Navy before business school, he says he also registered with MBA Veterans, a global network of business school students and graduates with military experience. Lipke ultimately landed a summer position at Bank of America (BAC) in Charlotte, N.C., through on-campus recruiting. "I'm really interested in the position I'm taking on as an intern," Lipke says.

"I hope it leads to a full-time role. It's one of the reasons I'm excited about the internship."

Don't Sit Around and Wait

Business schools are advising students to consider every opportunity that becomes available to them and to take advantage of their pre-MBA experience. "Recruiters want proven experience that they can leverage right away," says Darden's Oakes. Settling for less than your dream internship is no longer a mistake. "Students used to sit around and wait for Google (GOOG), only Google," says Peter Giulioni, assistant dean and executive director of MBA Career Services at the University of Southern California Marshall School of Business (Marshall Full-Time MBA Profile). "That could be a really long wait."

Another strategy that business schools are asking MBAs to consider: making the first move. By identifying a solution to a company problem, students can persuade a potential employer to take them on for eight to 10 weeks to execute the idea, says Giulioni. Business schools themselves, says Foster's Klempay, are talking up MBA intern candidates in this way to small and midsize companies that might not have considered them an option before. Darden's Oakes says students need to show the value they can bring to the company—in dollars and cents. "Recruiters are looking for people to grow the business," says Oakes. "A potential recruiter's advice to me was to have students get as close to revenue generation as they can."

When jobs are scarce, critical mass also helps. Notre Dame's Mendoza College of Business (Mendoza Full-Time MBA Profile) helped organize an interview forum in San Francisco for MBAs seeking internships and permanent positions. The draw: With six other business schools participating, prospective employers can combine several recruiting trips into one and get their pick of a much larger pool of candidates. Some Notre Dame students are even putting colorful company logos on their résumés to display their employment history, says Patrick Perrella, director of MBA career development at Mendoza.

To land an MBA internship, career service directors are advising students to give it everything they've got—and make no excuses. "We tell students we're not going to use the economy as a reason for not being successful," says Kranzusch. "There are enough jobs for MBAs. Students might have to work harder to get them."

Fonte: BusinessWeek. Disponível em: <www.businessweek.com>. Acesso em: 9 abr. 2010.