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How to Run a Production Management Internship

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How to Run a Production Management Internship

Introduction
In Summer 2015, I was a production management intern at Williamstown Theatre Festival (WTF) in Williamstown, MA. From this experience, I discovered that, while the internship was a great overall experience, there were some aspects missing from the program. As an intern, I recognized that there were educational opportunities at WTF of which the intern supervisors did not take advantage.

This project is my Master’s of Public Administration capstone project, and is important because it has the potential to change the course of the production management internship at WTF, and potentially at other theatre companies nationwide.

Methodology
15 interviews with theatre professionals who work at WTF and other theatre companies across the country
- Professionals include: production managers, stage managers, scenic designers and painters, technical director, production designer
- Questions asked include:
  - Please describe your experience as a production manager/department head working with interns. How do you manage interns?
  - Insight on how other programs work with interns and provide educational internship experiences.
  - What do you think are the main competencies of being a production manager?
  - Basic components and characteristics necessary to being a successful production manager. Shaped the content of the internship manual.
  - What are some of your daily activities as a production manager?
  - Activities to be used as daily intern activities.
  - How did you accommodate specific interns’ educational goals, if any?
  - Insight on how to structure an internship geared towards achieving interns’ goals.
  - Did your department hold workshops this summer? Please describe one and how you fit it into the busy schedule.
  - Inspiration for production management workshops, as well as possible workshops for production management interns to attend.

The Research Question
How can a theatre company best coordinate and organize an educational and sophisticated production management internship experience?

The Internship Manual
The end product of my research is a Production Management Internship Manual, for use at WTF and other theatre companies.

- Part I: The Job Description
  Some important characteristics of a good production management intern include: organization, calmness/level-headed in stressful situations, efficient and effective communication, time management
- Part II: The Interview
  Behavior-based interviews are most effective.
  Can ask the question: What do you want to learn from this internship?
- Part III: Prep/The First Day
  Preparation is key, because the season is very busy.
  Set goals for yourself as supervisor.
  The Preseason Plan includes preparing a list of intern tasks, allowing for equal distribution among interns.
- Part IV: Implementation
  Involve the interns as much as possible.
  Opportunities for interns to learn by observing and participating.
  Remember that everyone at the festival is still learning.
- Part V: Workshops/Working with Other Departments
  Workshops as a collaborative tool
  Weekly meetings are helpful, with and/or without supervisors.
  Stories from professionals in action
  Sample job description (appendix A)

Intended audience: Production management internship supervisors
Manual can be used to help guide a successful production management internship. Can be used for other internships.

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