

## **To Investigate if Structured Internships Affect the Intern's Perceived Organizational Commitment Compared to Unstructured Internships.**

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### **Introduction.**

A challenge that arises in today's businesses is a high turnover rate. Turnover, or employees that leave a company for one reason or another, in the hospitality industry is one of the highest turnover rates in the country. Turnover for the leisure and hospitality industry during September 2005 and August 2006 was 52.2%, while the average turnover rates nationwide between the years 2004-2006 is 22.7-23.4 percent (US Department of Labor, 2006). The difference between the average turnover rate and hospitality's turnover rate is a drastic difference. The solution to this problem is to retain employees for a longer period of time.

Turnover negatively impacts businesses in two ways: turnover costs and efficiency ratings. Businesses do not like to see high turnover within their company, simply because it costs money. Using a wage rate of only \$7 an hour, it costs a company \$4,350 for each departing employee (US Department of Labor, 2006). The US Department of Labor suggests it costs company's one third of the new hire's salary (US Department of Labor, 2008). Businesses are always looking to cut costs. One way to cut costs is to lowering their turnover rate and put more time and money into holding onto their current employees.

One idea to reduce turnover is to build or retain by organizational commitment. Tett believes that ones commitment to their organization is the number one reason for turnover (1993). There are many ways to create organizational commitment; one way is to retain students after they finish their internship. Internships are rank number one by recruiters and human resource managers when looking for applicants (chi, 2009). The question then becomes how students perceive organizational commitment after the internship is over, as well as they type of internship.

Many studies have been conducted on internships. Beggs believes that when looking at internships one should look at both the practitioner's requirements, and academic programs requirements (2008). Academic program requirements have been suggested to have a require amount of time the student works at the company along with a written report following their completion (Petrillose, 1998). Another suggestion includes writing in journals (Elkins, 2002). Rothman believes that employers should provide feedback to their interns, as well as Supervision and challenging assignments

The definition of internships is "An internship is usually described as a professional work experience at a company or organization during the summer or other appropriate time prior to graduation (University of Missouri, 2007)." The definition of internships for this study will be split into two categories, structured internships and unstructured internships.

### *Structured Internships.*

Structured internships will be considered any internship with a defined curriculum and required hours of field related experience in the hospitality industry. For this study the structured internship requires 750 total hours of field related work experience under

supervision. The internship must also include three different areas of work, as well as four written papers to be completed throughout the internship. At the end of the internship an evaluation must be filled out and sent to the instructor.

#### *Unstructured internships.*

Unstructured internships will be considered loosely defined curriculum and required hours of field related experience in the hospitality industry. The internship requires 400 hours working in the hospitality field. The choice of employment paid or unpaid is up to the student. A five-page report must be submitted at the end of the internship. An evaluation must be completed by the supervisor along with a self-evaluation and sent into the instructor.

#### **Problem Statement:**

To investigate if structured internships affect the intern's perceived organizational commitment compared to unstructured internships.

#### Objectives:

1. Describe the intern's level of organizational commitment to the company.
2. Describe the correlation between structured and unstructured internship program's organizational commitment.
3. Describe the demographics of interns for both structured and unstructured internships.
- 4.

#### **Procedures and Methodology.**

#### **Research Design.**

The design being used for this research is descriptive survey. Descriptive survey correlates with the end sought of explore and describe. According to Ary, survey research gathers information from subjects or groups of subjects by using instruments such as questionnaires and interviews (2006). "Surveys permit the researcher to summarize the characteristics of different groups or to measure their attitudes and opinions toward some issue" (Ary, 2006). This research will measure organizational commitment, comparing structured and unstructured commitment.

#### **Subject Selection.**

##### *Population.*

The target population of this survey will include students from the Missouri State University as well as University of Missouri. It will consist of all students enrolled in each university's internship course. The population will consist of everyone enrolled in this course over the year 2010, which includes spring, summer, and fall semesters.

##### *Sampling.*

Each student that has enrolled in the university's internship course will be sampled. Students from all three semesters will be included in the sampling.

##### *Addressing Errors.*

- *Sampling Error:* There will be no sampling error. Each student will be taken from the university's enrollment.
- *Selection Error:* In order to account for selection error, all duplicates will be removed from the list.

- *Frame Error*: Frame error will be accounted for by receiving a list of students from each university that are enrolled in their internship course.

### **Instrumentation.**

#### *Description of the Instrument.*

The researcher will use a pre-established questionnaire. The questionnaire being used was created by Commeiras, its validity and reliability have been established in their research (2001). The questionnaire contains a five-point Likert-type scaled questions. The researcher shall use a previously constructed questionnaire that has both reliability and validity. The questionnaire or instrument shall include demographic characteristics (age, gender, years in the hospitality industry, and if it was a paid internship). The questionnaire will take no more than 10 mins.

### **Data Collection.**

Data will be collected during the fall of 2010. The questionnaire that will be emailed to each participant will include the following: a cover letter explaining the survey, and the questionnaire. After two weeks, a reminder email will be sent to all participants, who have not returned the questionnaire. It will remind them of the questionnaire and request a response.

After the two weeks from the second email being sent, a non-response error will be collected. The questionnaire will be shortened and re-emailed. The non-respondents from this sample will be given two weeks to complete the new questionnaire.

### **Limitations.**

Due to the specific population in which is being described in this research, it is difficult to obtain an adequate sample size. This research is limited to the two participating universities and its results can not be inferred to the entire population of university hospitality students that must obtain an internship for graduation.

### **Conclusions.**

The following research will add to both our academic works as well as the hospitality industry. By describing the level of organizational commitment intern's possess, the hospitality industry will have new insight into the success of internship programs. The correlation between structured and unstructured internship program's organizational commitment can clarify, for the academic field, if there is a difference between the two programs

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