

Interning in India

A growing number of foreign students are looking for internships with Indian companies

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It is 'destination India' for B-schools abroad. Universities in the US and other countries are looking at Indian internships for their students. An Indian internship looks good on a resume. "Companies place high value on candidates with in-country experience," says Kimberley Welsh, Executive Director, India Leadership Development, a unit of Global Leadership Development that organises Indian internships for foreign students. Since 2003, the company has seen growing interest in Indian internships. "This summer we received 650 responses for such programmes," she says.

Universities that have been sending students for Indian internships include Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cornell University, Carnegie Mellon University, Stanford University, University of California-Berkeley, INSEAD Business School in Paris and London School of Business.

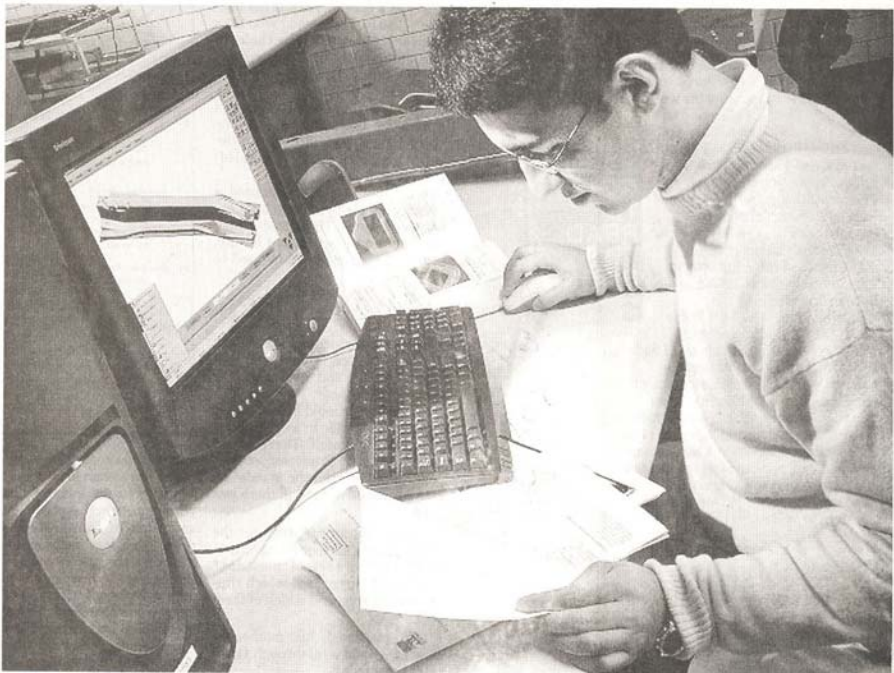
India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF) coordinates research on Indian businesses and has organised six educational trips for foreigners to India in this connection. A group of 80 Harvard Business School students visited India in 2003. Subsequently, groups from Wharton, Kellogg School of Management and Graduate School of Business, Chicago have visited India. "Today, almost every business school worth its name has a yearly trip to India," says Ajay Khanna, Chief Executive Officer, IBEF.

Tim Bourbon, a final year student in International Affairs at Deakin University, Melbourne, is interning with the Australian High Commission in New Delhi. "I preferred India to the UK or US because of cultural differences besides being in a booming market economy," he says.

Most students interning in India seem to be keen on studying the Indian outsourcing model. "Like many people in the US, I had the impression that BPO was a little more than IT and call centre support. I was amazed at the extent and sophistication of services provided, as well as the possibilities for the future," says Parker Hume of Harvard Business School who interned with BPO company Genpact for about 3 months.

Baptiste Brandon from Boston University interned with Perot Systems in 2005 and 2006. He cites an instance of how a discussion with the top management at Perot Systems helped open his mind to innovative business practices. The topic was 'how to measure good work in the organisation' and the evident answer was - through profitability. "However, I learnt progress is, in practice, a micro-event (part of good work). And the company's profits are too macro to accurately prove progress and consequently good work," he says.

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A student of Deakin University on an internship: Besides learning and applying management principles, students interning in India value exposure to soft skills and the work culture.

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ment principles, students seem to value exposure to soft skills and the work culture in India. Jennifer Peter interned with information technology company Ilantus and feels she has gained multi-tasking skills being in India. "This internship has made me more responsible vis-à-vis a traineeship in Europe. I have become more flexible and open to coping with change in plans," she says.

Hume of Harvard Business School says Indian companies communicate more often

with their offices than in most international organisations. This has helped him understand that networking within an organisation is key to success.

It is not just the students who gain from such internships. Companies are looking at these internships to get a wider perspective of their businesses.

"Foreign students give us an unbiased opinion on how we function. Sometimes, they help us become familiar with current business jargon in the US," says Vardhman Jain, Managing Director, Perot Systems-Business Process Solutions, India. He says such internships have paved the way for company employees to attend courses in foreign universities such as Wharton.

Perot Systems started such internships in 2002. Today, many companies have started offering structured programmes lasting up to three months. Patni Computer Systems' Global Internship Programme took in five students this year. "The programme covered management practices, understanding soft-

ware processes and cultural training," says Kalpana Jaishankar, Vice-President, Human Resources Operations and People Development, Patni Computer Systems. Students also worked on projects related to quality of services and costs and margins, besides recommending new strategies for the company.

Genpact too started a programme this year with 12 interns.

They worked on areas such as defining and developing a business strategy for the mainland European outsourcing market, identifying products and investments for growth in multi-lingual environments and assessing monolingual services, according to Rajnish Sinha, Vice-President, Corporate Human Resources, Genpact.

These internships have also encouraged other areas of interest in India. Anand Talwar, Vice-President, Talent Management, ITC Infotech says internships have encouraged employees in the company's foreign offices to visit Indian offices for training programmes.