



INTERNSHIP

**Smart Workforce Strategies:
The Power of Virtual Internships**
A case study using Career Catalyst



FOUNDATION *for* CALIFORNIA
COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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In today's ever-changing labor market, companies need smart workforce strategies to maintain a competitive edge. Work-based learning opportunities such as internships, apprenticeship, mentorships and work site tours can all be effective in grooming the next generation of workforce talent and finding future employees. Studies show that these strategies are on the rise among companies within a broad range of sectors and contribute to company's bottom line.

The National Association of Colleges and Employers' (NACE) [2017 Internship and Co-op Survey](#) reported that at the one-year mark, the retention rate for hires who had internships with the organization that hired them was 65.5%, and it was 52% for hires who had other internship experience. For hires with no internship experience, the retention rate was 46.2%. Retention rates are a major concern of employers across sectors.

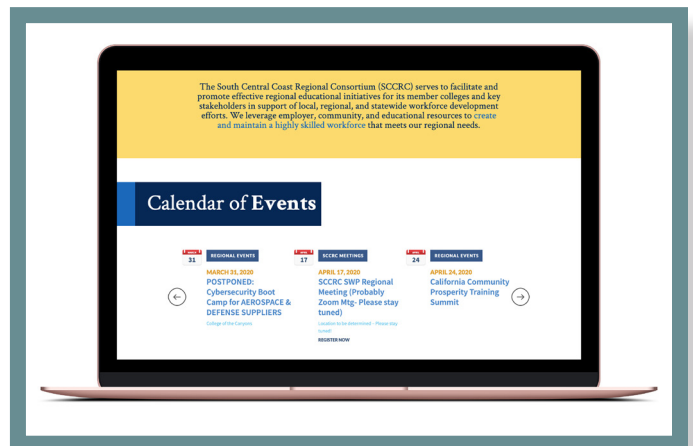
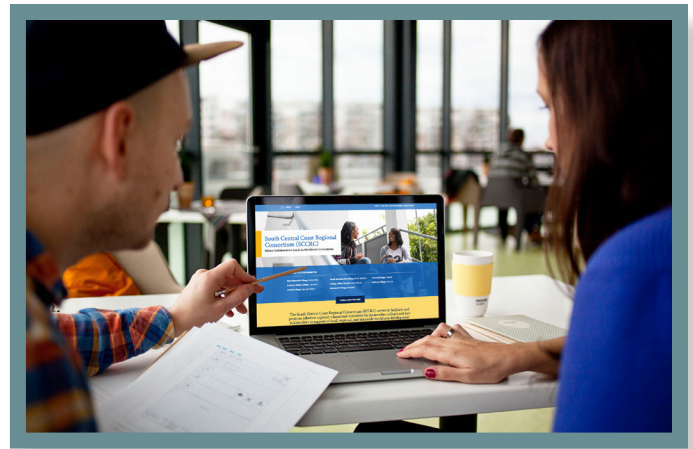
[Employee Benefit News](#) (EBN) reports that it costs employers 33% of a worker's annual salary to hire a replacement if that worker leaves. In dollar figures, the replacement cost is \$15,000 per person for an employee earning a median salary of \$45,000 a year, according to the Work Institute's [2017 Retention Report](#).

Internships and other work-based learning opportunities traditionally take place at an employer's place of work. But not all opportunities for internships require a physical workplace. Take for instance, this case study with [Full Capacity Marketing, Inc \(FCM\)](#), a national marketing and communications firm that wanted to hire remote interns as part of a contract it was awarded from the [Central/Mother Lode Regional Consortium \(CRC\)](#).

The CRC represents 14 community colleges in central California focused on building high-performing public/private partnerships through facilitating the development and growth of college training and educational programs to meet the needs of identified high growth sectors.

The CRC awarded FCM a contract to create and deploy an effective regional career education campaign targeting both students and employers, that included the competitive recruitment of nine interns from the 14 colleges to support the project.

Regional Chair CRC, Karri Hammerstrom explained, "We like to embody practices that we recommend to our regional employers like work-based learning opportunities. While we knew integrating interns into a very aggressive timeline for our project would be a challenge, our members were committed to not only getting results with the campaign but developing the skill sets of interns that would work with our selected contractor. FCM was definitely up to the task in working with us to achieve both goals of the contract."



As a first step to recruit the interns, the CRC created a high value proposition recruitment campaign for the nine paid internships who would work with FCM, the 2017 Best Public Sector Marketing Company in California that has earned more than 60 global awards for their work in education and workforce. FCM wanted a team-based approach to the internship experience to mirror what happens in traditional agencies where staff are expected to collaborate across divisions to bring contract deliverables to fruition.

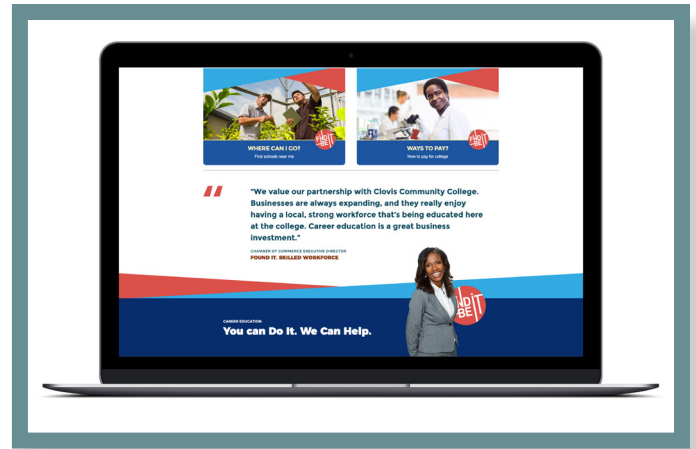
FCM CEO/Founder, Celina Shands said, "In our industry, students need to be put in situations where they have to collaborate and use critical thinking to solve real problems that we face every day. This means that they need to learn how to tap expertise within various divisions of our company like graphic design, project management, digital media and to learn the right questions to ask each subject matter expert. It's through this collaborative approach that students broaden their skill sets and expand their portfolio which contribute to employability."

FCM is no stranger to out-of-the-box internship programs. Hammerstrom explained, "We knew that having our interns work with FCM would be a rich experience in building specific skill sets agencies want students to demonstrate when seeking employment. FCM has a long history and dedication to internship programs like executing a Department of Labor grant to bring Visual and Web Design, UX/UI training to low-income young adults and inner-city students in Kingsbrook, New York."

Given the CRC's broad geographic region of 56,000 square miles coupled with an aggressive timeline that included multiple deliverables, FCM needed to deploy virtual internships using a host of technology tools to not only bring interns up to speed but to create a rich virtual work environment to elevate the interns' skill sets.

Shands said, "We had a total of four months to work at lightning speed to conduct the necessary market research and create a campaign that resonated with prospective students that were likely to enroll in CRC career education courses; create and test the brand identity; create the marketing plan; and apply the brand by building a highly engaging campaign website through career quizzes and 56 videos that told the story about career education through the eyes of the diverse student population. My head hurts just listing list again, and we knew that the last thing we needed was a slow on-boarding process for the CRC intern team."

One of the reasons employers may not consider internship programs is due to a lack of time to execute the necessary paperwork and processes. That's why FCM reached out to the Foundation for California Community Colleges (Foundation) to inquire about their Career Catalyst program, a suite of services for organizations



who are seeking to offer paid work experience. Shands said, "As we began to work with the Foundation, we found that Career Catalyst met all the requirements for fast-tracking our required internship process with the exception of one—the CRC project required interns to work remotely." The Foundation had never run into a situation that involved virtual-based interns.

Tim Aldinger Executive Director, Workforce Development for the Foundation said, "The Foundation has been aware of the significant growth of virtual internships but had not yet worked with a partner that needed that. It was great to work with FCM and CRC to figure out our process to not only serve them, but to have a blueprint for similar requests in the future."

Career Catalyst is a comprehensive service for companies that assumes liability, performs all necessary human resource functions, and ensures that interns are compensated for their work at the employer site. The Foundation staff provide the tools, materials, and expertise necessary to support employers and ensure workers gain knowledge of the skills and attributes necessary to be successful in the workplace.

Thanks to Career Catalyst, FCM was able to quickly onboard the nine interns and the results have been outstanding. With only three weeks into the launch of the career education campaign the interns have contributed to more than 300 leads of prospective students who are excited to enroll in career education courses.

Shands attributes much of the campaign success to the interns' contributions: "We trained our interns in our agency's online tools that keep us connected 24/7 such as Asana, Skype and GotoWebinar. These are commonly used platforms that employers expect students to understand and use; more companies are also moving into the new "gig" economy which is another entrance point to employment for these students if they can master these platforms.

FCM assigned executive team members in each of their divisions to work daily with the interns who were grouped in three teams consisting of a project manager, graphic artist and videographer. Every Friday, FCM would host a virtual meet up using web cams and an online meeting room. The intern project managers would present the key challenges of the work plans and the recommended solutions to resolve issues with input from their videographer and graphic designer. FCM would then review the critical tasks for the following week to keep the momentum moving.

"One of the first tasks assigned to the interns was to create a brand name for their teams," said Shands. "We wanted them to explore their collective team personality and use their creativity to identify a brand name that represented their unique characteristics."

The team brand names and members include the following and are highlighted on the [CRC website](#).

NorCalGold

Riley Gillihan: project manager, Modesto Junior College
Johnny Magallon: videographer, San Joaquin Delta College
Eddie Martinez: graphic designer, Modesto Junior College

Ad Scientists

Aliyah Khan: project manager, Bakersfield College
Abigail Jaquez: videographer, Clovis Community College
Michael Alejandre: graphic designer, Modesto Junior College

BAM

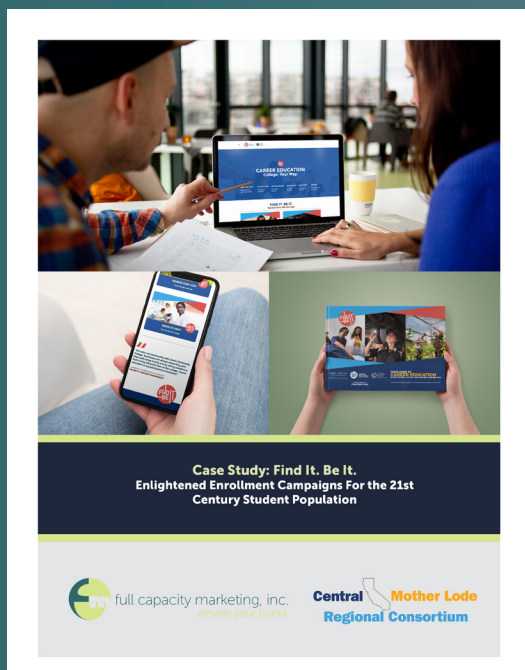
Michael Reese: project manager, Bakersfield College
Augustin Duenas: videographer, Taft College
Britnee Gamble: graphic designer, Bakersfield College

Hammerstrom said, "It makes our work very fulfilling when we can integrate the workforce strategies and demonstrate the power of them to our regional employers."

Do you want to launch an internship program at your company? For more information and best practices across California, contact Joshua Modlin, Manager of Education to Work Partnerships at the Foundation at (916) 325-1852 or jmodlin@foundationccc.org.



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