



World Travel Holdings Case Study

The Client

World Travel Holdings (WTH) is the nation's largest online and offline leisure travel company, with over two decades of experience selling name-brand vacations and cruises. WTH interacts with hundreds of thousands of customers every year through the company's owned brands which include CruisesOnly, Vacation



Outlet, Cruises.com, CruiseOne, Cruises, Inc., Cruise411, Rooms.com, and Villas of Distinction. WTH also has licensed partner brands with many retailers and several major airlines. The company employs over 800 individuals in nine locations across the United States.

The Challenge

In July of 2006, World Travel Holdings acquired National Leisure Group (NLG), headquartered in Woburn, Massachusetts. Brad Tolkin, Co-Chairman and Co-CEO, looking for a way to complete strategic projects cost-effectively, referred to the HR team to develop an internship program. The person to lead the project was Mark Hurley, Human Resource Business Partner. "WTH was looking for employees who could hit the ground running. The war for talent was coming back and recruiting was tight. We wanted to create opportunities to partner with colleges in the area so we could feed our talent acquisition processes. The goal is for WTH to be an employer of choice. We want students to go back to their universities at the end of the summer and say to their peers 'When you're looking for a career, check out WTH, because they are a great company to work for,'" says Hurley.

The Journey

Once charged with the task, Hurley met with Kathleen Federico, Senior Vice President of Sales and Human Resources. The question was whether or not they could handle the process in-house or if they should find help. If they were going to find help, then where would they find it? "We realized that we didn't have the bandwidth or in-house expertise to get the job done. We honestly may not have been able to get the high-quality program that we wanted created off the ground ourselves," recalls Hurley, "We knew that Intern Bridge was research-backed,

and that by having them help us, we could be confident that our program would meet student expectations and exceed our goals.”

The Solution

WTH decided to work with Intern Bridge to establish a customized, sustainable internship program that would meet all of the goals of World Travel Holdings. Intern Bridge was to determine which departments would be most suitable for the program, work with supervisors to create student-friendly job descriptions, assist WTH in targeting the most appropriate universities for the positions, reach out to the universities to make sure the positions would be posted to their students, screen candidates, and coordinate schedules between WTH and candidates for final interviews and start-dates.

The Implementation

The process began with an email being sent to all of the department directors at the corporate headquarters. The email announced the launching of the internship program and stressed the important role that the program would play in the organization’s recruiting strategies moving forward. Attached to the email was a document that supervisors were required to complete and which detailed the specific projects that interns would take on.

Working with Hurley, Intern Bridge evaluated the proposals to determine which departments would be best suited for the organization’s internship program; in other words, which proposals were most likely to exceed student expectations and create student ambassadors, based on Intern Bridge research and experience. It was determined that the Operations team would obtain an intern for statistical analysis projects, and the Marketing team would obtain an intern for graphic design and content management.

Intern Bridge then converted the supervisors’ proposals to 8.5 x 11” flyers containing the organization’s logo, information about the organization, and the internship description. Supervisors provided up to three academic majors that they felt would be most appropriate for their program. Based on the descriptions and the major preferred by the supervisors, the following universities were targeted: Cornell University, University of New Hampshire, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, Babson College, Johnson and Wales University, Northeastern University, Bentley College, Endicott College, and Bryant University.

Intern Bridge ensured that the positions were posted to each targeted university's recruiting site. Within a few weeks, Intern Bridge had received over one hundred applications for the internship program on behalf of WTH. Each application was reviewed and Intern Bridge contacted approximately ten candidates for each position for screening purposes. Of these ten applicants, three were forwarded to WTH for final selection. Intern Bridge acted as the "communication hub" for the process of coordinating schedules between prospective supervisors and intern candidates. The supervisors made their final selection and Intern Bridge facilitated with generating offers.

As the start of the program drew near, Intern Bridge setup a workshop with the internship supervisors. The workshop helped supervisors better understand their role, and the difference between supervising full-time, experienced employees versus college students.

The Results

World Travel Holdings now has an established internship program capable of contributing to the organization's bottom line and long-term recruiting goals. "Without Intern Bridge, we may have made serious mistakes. We had no knowledge of student expectations or of the overall process of a structured internship program. We knew that we wanted our interns to do much more than make copies and get coffee. We wanted our internship program to help drive our recruiting and business strategies. Intern Bridge gave our program the structure and supervision that it needed to succeed," comments Hurley.

WTH also realized an immediate return on their investment. "Our statistical intern was supplying us with extremely important strategic information. WTH conducts industry-specific research that we share not only internally, but with our partners as well. Some tell us that the data we provide them is often better than what they are able to obtain on their own. And our graphic design intern was working on projects directly with cross-functional teams outside of her department. I've seen her leave meetings with high-level individuals from our organization several times – her quality work has provided tremendous value to the Marketing team and the organization," adds Hurley.

World Travel Holdings plans to continue to grow their internship program, using Intern Bridge along the way to ensure their program is operating at its highest level of potential.