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Sustainability Starts Early

Creating a Great Ops Internship

Fatema Boxwala
Production Engineering



A Professional Intern™





UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

yelp

rackspace®

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Motivation

Retention

The youth are our future



- Interns are your future talent pool
- Not usually introduced to Ops/SRE in school
- Giving them their first impression of the tech world
- Lasting technical contributions



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Livin’ The Life

Starting from a place of empathy

- Short-term full-time employees
- Simultaneously doing work for school
- Often far from home in a new city
- Little or no benefits
- Less experienced than everyone else



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Before they start

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Talk to your intern

The secret sauce of every relationship



- Projects and experience
- Expectations (yours and theirs)
- Information and resources
- Logistics



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Are you ready for an intern?

It’s a big commitment

- Mentor commitment
- Buy-in from other team members
- Project preparation
- Documentation



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usenix SRECON EUROPE MIDDLE EAST AFRICA

Chastity Blackwell, Yelp

"The 7 Deadly Sins of Documentation"

www.usenix.org/srecon18europe/program



Designing a good project

Maybe even a great one

- Incorporating their skills
- Something that will actually be used
- Involving multiple people/teams/technologies
- Well scoped for their time frame
- Related to your work

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During the Internship

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Set them up for success

When they succeed you succeed

- Explaining access to resources
- Frequent check-ins
- Providing opportunity for growth
- Treat them like a full member of the team



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Treat them like full-times

If it sounds cruel you might have a whole other problem

- Full access and permissions (sudo, prod)
- Helping with incident response
- Shadowing on-call, on-point
- Working on the ticket queue





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Mentorship — “Did you know you can apply for this thing?”

Advocacy — “We should consider them for this thing!”

Sponsorship — “I think you should do this thing and I can set that up.”



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Expectations and feedback

Feedback is a gift



- Building realistic expectations together
- Providing regular feedback (and asking for it in return)
- Soliciting feedback from other team members
- Ask Your Intern How They’re Doing

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When it goes wrong

My intern is sad, what can I do?



It happens to the best of us

- Offer new options
- Different hours, different project, different timeline
- Pivot expectations
- Be their best advocate



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All the mentors I've had before

Anna Lorimer

Arshia Mufti



Daniel Porteous

Emil Stolarsky

Kelly McBride

Avleen Vig

Chastity Blackwell



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