



Creating and Maintaining an Actively Involved Business and Industry Leadership Team

Education is a business, and there are consumers for our product - our graduates: businesses, industries, government agencies, non-profits, universities, etc.

An actively-engaged business team provides crucial leadership in developing graduates who are prepared to secure employment in the industry. These steps should help you create an active team.

1. Determine which businesses, industries, agencies, non-profits and universities should be represented.

- Distribution of size and type
- Do not limit to just large companies. Medium and small companies provide perspective and are likely to hire, as well.

2. Determine what you want to get from the Business and Industry Leadership Team (BILT) and develop your “sales” script.

- Establish expected time commitment per quarter
- Establish expectations of involvement and activities
 - Job skills validation – detail the process
 - Course and curriculum validation/modification
 - Job forecasting – anecdotally and through surveys
 - Internships
 - Job shadowing
 - Providing expertise in set-up and operation of labs
 - Donating equipment or other resources
 - Providing speakers at student, public and education events
 - Helping with recruitment
 - Teaching Case Study courses
 - Consulting with students

3. Find and retain appropriate business and university partners by starting with the President.

- It's a “high-touch” activity, requiring personal contact, not mass mailings or mass emails.
- Identify businesses and industries, universities and agencies that hire people with the job descriptions representing your curriculum.



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- Contact the President of the company or university
 - Share your vision of what the program can mean to the area.
 - Explain the importance of the company having a subject matter expert, usually first-line manager, involved in the BILT. (Typically the HR representative can also be involved, but you need to have an SME, as well.)
- Mention that you have grants from NSF, DOL, etc., if you have them. This carries a lot of weight.
- Establish time expectations of BILT members.

4. Conduct initial BILT meeting.

- Invite all faculty to attend the meetings as observers to gain their buy-in to what the BILT wants
- Publicity – invite reporters (If your college has a PR department, they could manage this.)
- Refreshments – not elaborate, but important to have, especially early in the morning.
- Time – early morning typically works better before BILT members go to the office
- Explain how important they are to the program and what their companies will get from their involvement
- Clarify roles and responsibilities between BILT and educators. (Educators are there to listen, not to present or run the show.) Consider having one of your strong business leaders to chair the meeting. This could be an annual rotating duty.
- Explain the need for quarterly meetings and establish dates for the year.
- Review opportunities for helping (from your “sales” script).
- Ask for feedback on industry trends, which helps you anticipate what your students will need to know in the future.
- Stick to the agenda and keep discussion rolling, limiting those who might want to dominate.
- Acknowledge the importance of their time by starting and stopping on time regardless of whether or not you complete your agenda. End early if you have what you need. You can always complete your work via email.
- Take minutes. Publish them. Have the BILT approve at the next meeting.

5. BILT recognition

- News releases/articles
- Thank you emails (personal, not mass emails)
- Thank you letters to the President or their managers
- Certificates
- Plaques

6. Reporting

- Quarterly minutes
- Yearly accomplish report – activities not just head count
- Have students present

7. Keeping the BILT fresh

- Aim to have at least one new member each quarter and introduce them
- Talk with each member individually at least yearly to ask them what they think you could do differently to obtain more from them or the entire BILT

8. Benefits from following this approach

- Business ownership of your curriculum and your program in general
- Interest in hiring your students above other applicants because they understand what your students know
- Faculty recognize and understand business requirements first-hand.