

It's more than just money

THE LURE OF NON-PROFITS APPEALS TO SOME MBA STUDENTS



Looking for a *real* return on your MBA investment? Then you just might want to consider—are you ready for it?—a non-profit organization. The payback, of course, would be a stronger, more vibrant community. And although it may not be the answer you were expecting, a small group known as the Community Experience Initiative is hoping to change that. Working with universities across Canada, CEI uses internships to help non-profits hook up with people with MBA training. Government cutbacks, says Kariann Aarup, CEI's co-founder, have forced non-profits to turn to MBAs to help them fundraise and reorganize in these leaner times, but most simply cannot afford to hire them. That's where CEI comes in. Since

hiring even a single MBA student can be a big expense to a cash-strapped organization, CEI, a registered charity, kicks in half an intern's salary from money it has raised through its own fundraising (the rest is covered by the hiring organization). Of course, no one dreams of making it big working for a not-for-profit. But debt-burdened MBA students can take some comfort in knowing they won't have to count on the charity of others to pay their bills. Those in the program earn \$2,500 a month for a three-month internship, which is on par with what an intern in the private sector would make.

Benefits to the community aside, the internships arranged through CEI are rewarding. Participants can expect to get a broad range of experience working for a non-profit, since everyone does a bit of everything, just as some CEI placements have done for the United Way in Saskatchewan and the Kids Help Phone in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. "Interns feel a certain sense of empowerment—like they can really make a difference," says Aarup, who holds an MBA from McGill and has started her PhD at Hautes Etudes Commerciales in Montreal. That feeling can get lost in a large corporate environment, especially if an intern is left to work for months on a single project.

Finding volunteers for the program hasn't been a problem. Although CEI has matched only 40 students with internships, more than 900 people have applied since the program started four years ago. It's not your typical office work, either. Take Rotman MBA Kamal Mahmud, who spent last summer in Kathmandu, Nepal. There, he implemented an application that will help the Integrated Development Society—a non-profit group that brings clean drinking water to rural parts of the impoverished nation—analyze its field research. Now that's an investment that will keep paying healthy returns.

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