



Creating student internship database for Laurea University of Applied Sciences

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2009 Hyvinkää

Laurea University of Applied Sciences
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Services and customer relationship
Management
Thesis
March, 2009

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Abstract

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Year 2009 26 pages

The aim of the project was to find out need for a student internship database for students of Laurea University of Applied Sciences. My focus was in international degree programmes and researching possible difficulties among students, whose are not speaking Finnish. The survey was conducted by sending students e-questionnaire. The main part of the research was knowledge management and how the school manages it? How knowledge is available for the students and does they now about that? How well school manages market their knowledge and information for the students. Is it efficient enough? The information flow from the top to all users of Laurea intra should be efficient and easy to connect to with small efforts and updates.

The results did show that Laurea intra needs improvements, in order to get international students to use it more actively and find a way to market it to be more attractive and easy to use for every student of Laurea.

Keywords: Knowledge management, communication, internationalization

Laurea-ammattikorkeakoulu
Laurea Hyvinkää
Degree programme of business Management
Services and customer relationship Management

Tiivistelmä

Natalia Tuomola

Harjoittelupaikkojen yhtenäisen tietokannan luominen Laurea-ammattikorkeakoululle

Vuosi 2009

26

Sivumäärä

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli paikantaa tarve harjoittelupaikkojen tietokannalle Laurean opiskelijoille. Tutkimus keskittyi Laurean englannin kielisiin koulutusohjelmiin ja lisäksi ulkomaalaisiin opiskelijoihin, joilla ei ole suomen kielen taitoa. Tavoitteena oli myös arvioida tietoliikennettä ja tiedonhallintaa Laurean ja sen opiskelijoiden välillä, sekä tiedon markkinoinnin toimivuutta ja opiskelijoiden tietoisuutta asiasta. Kuinka saada Laurea intra enemmän vastaan opiskelijoiden tarvetta ja saada se kaikkien käyttäjien tietoisuuteen. Tuloksena oli Laurea intran käytömahdollisuuksien tietämättömyys ja usein myös englanninkielisten kohdalla markkinoinnin ja tiedon puute intrasta ja sen sisällöstä/sisällön puutteesta.

Asiasanat: Tiedonhallinta, kommunikaatio, kansainvälisyys

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1 Introduction of the project

The aim of the project was to do a research about creating an internship database for the students of Laurea University of Applied Sciences. There was a need from the school to do research and examine, if the students would have need for more specific internship database, which would help future students to find more particular information about the internship places. Then gather them on one page, where information can be found easily. The research was made by the help of students, by sending them e-questionnaires to fill in.

In Laurea intra there is a forum for the internship places in Finland and abroad www.laurea.fi, but the problem is do the students find enough information before hand from the internships offered, and how school is managing with the information in the area of the knowledge management of this particular area. Also the language should not be a barrier in the use of Laurea intra. Would the school have a need to increase the level of information, and how would the students feel about that?

The research is based in knowledge management and there is also a close connection to information technology and managing information and data, on due to help future and current students to make decision and find important data.

The students selected to this project research are from Laurea degrees offered in English. The research is about how well the information is available for the international students and availability of internships offered in English.

Degrees taught in English: degree programme in business management (Laurea Lepävaara and Otaniemi), degree programme in business information (Laurea Otaniemi), degree programme in nursing (Laurea Otaniemi), degree programme in social services (Laurea Otaniemi), and degree programme in tourism (Laurea Kerava.)

Questionnaire was sent to the second -and third year students, who already are Done their first internship. The degree programme in tourism just started so it was left outside the research.

After sending questionnaires and receiving answers the information was outsourced and results analyzed. The problem of the empirical section was the students' lack of interest and the disappointingly small percentage of answers received. The questionnaire was sent to approximately 150 students and answers received were 13.

1.1 Laurea University of Applied Sciences

Laurea is the fourth largest university of applied sciences in Finland, and operates in the Greater Helsinki Region in eight units close to good transport connections.

Laurea produces new competences in the field of service innovations and carries out professionally orientated education, regional development and R&D activities by following the Learning by Developing (LbD) operational model.

Laurea employs approximately 500 personnel and has app. 8 000 students, of which app. 1 200 study in the adult education programmes.

http://www.laurea.fi/internet/en/03_information_on_Laurea/index.jsp 14.10.2008

Five Bachelor programmes' are conducted in English:

[Degree Programme in Business Management](#)

[Degree Programme in Business information Technology](#)

[Degree Programme in Nursing](#)

[Degree Programme in Social Services](#)

[Degree Programme in Tourism](#)

http://www.laurea.fi/internet/en/01_studies_and_applying/01_Group/01_Degree_Programmes/01_Bachelor_Programmes_EN/index.jsp 14.10.2008

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Knowledge management (KM)

Knowledge management is a process of creating, capturing, and storing, sharing and applying knowledge. (Pentti Sydänmaalakka, 134)

From an interdisciplinary perspective, knowledge management can be defined as: "the effective learning process associated with exploitation and sharing of human knowledge(tacit and explicit) that use appropriate technology and cultural environments to enhance an organization's intellectual capital and performance". (Ashok Jashapara, 12)

"Knowledge management has become an emerging discipline that has gained enormous popularity among academics, consultants and practitioners. It has been argued that it is no longer the traditional industrial technologies or craft skills that drive competitive performance but instead knowledge that has become the key asset to drive organizational survival and success. (Ashok Jaspahara, 9).

Knowledge Management (KM) comprises a range of practices used in an organization to identify, create, represent, distribute and enable adoption of insights and experiences. Such insights and experiences comprise knowledge, either embodied in individuals or embedded in organizational processes or practice. An established discipline since 1991 (see (*Nonaka 1991*)), KM includes courses taught in the fields of business administration, information systems, management, and library and information sciences (*Alavi & Leidner 1999*).

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge_management_28.3.09

Some more definitions of knowledge management:

"...Any process or practice of creating, acquiring, capturing, sharing and using Knowledge, wherever it resides, to enhance learning and performance in organizations."(Swan et Al 1999b, Ashok Jaspahara, 11).

"The achievement of the organization's goals by making the factor knowledge productive."(Mertins et al.2000, Ashok Jaspahara, 11).

The strategic purpose of knowledge management activities is to increase intellectual capital and enhance organizational performance. (Ashok Jaspahara, 11)

2.2 Knowledge management system cycle

A functioning knowledge management system follows six steps in a cycle, the reason the system is cyclical is that knowledge is dynamically refined over time. (Turban, Leidner, Mclean, Wetherbe, 5th edition, 372).

2.3 Creation of knowledge

The creation of knowledge can happen in many ways. It can be individual studying, brain-storming in a group, and work in an interfunctional team etc. (Pentti Sydänmaalakka, 139).

In this case I was examining results from the questionnaires and students opinion of the need of database.

2.4 Capturing knowledge

Capturing knowledge means, among other things, participating in a training course, reading books, internet searches etc. (Pentti Sydänmaalakka, 139).

Because so much knowledge is available, it is important how we look for knowledge. We should be able to quickly get to the knowledge we need. (Pentti Sydänmaalakka, 139).

In this particular case I agree that easy and quick access to database is relevant. And the structure and information should be easily found. As I received feedback from the questionnaires, there was uncertainty where information is about the internships and how it can be found. So that is one point we have to concentrate on and examine that, what is wrong with the current information.

New knowledge must be placed in context so that it is actionable.

(Turban, Leidner, Mclean, Wetherbe, 5th edition, 372).

2.5 Storing knowledge

As knowledge increases so the importance of storing it grows. Captured or created knowledge must be further processed into such a form that it is easily available for everybody. (Pentti Sydänmaalakka, 140).

The most effective way to store it is in electronic form, which means using database systems. (Pentti Sydänmaalakka, 140). Like Laurea intra-database.

2.6 Manage knowledge

Like a library, the knowledge must be current. It must be reviewed to verify that it is relevant and accurate. (Turban, Leidner, Mclean, Wetherbe, 5th edition, 372).

Only shared knowledge is significant for the organization. Knowledge should be easily available for everybody and good storage is a precondition for effective sharing. (Pentti Sydänmaalakka, 140).

Tools for sharing knowledge, particularly utilizing the power of the Internet, intranet, extranets and e-mail to share tacit knowledge over a firm's value chain. The technologies can be used to develop virtual communities of practice online to help share ideas and tacit knowledge. (Ashok Jaspahara, 296)

2.7 Disseminate knowledge

Knowledge must be available in a useful format to anyone in the organization who needs it, anywhere and anytime. (Turban, Leidner, Mclean, Wetherbe, 5th edition, 372).

There are many different data distribution channels, such as e-mail, mailing of a paper report, Web sites, the use of databases or convening a meeting. (Pentti Sydänmaalakka, 140)

3 Information technology

Information technology, in its narrow definition, refers to technological side of an information system. It includes the hardware, databases, software, networks, and other devices. It can be viewed as a subsystem of an information system.

(Turban, Mclean, Wetherbe1999, 19)

Information system (IS) collects, processes, stores, analyzes and disseminates information for a specific purpose. (Turban, Mclean, Wetherbe1999, 17)

3.1 Data, information and knowledge

By information we mean data that have been shaped into a form that is meaningful and useful to human beings. Data in contrast, are streams of raw facts representing events occurring in organizations or the physical environment before they have been organized and arranged into a form that people can effectively understand and use. (Kenneth C.Laudon, Jane P.Laudon2007, 14)

Knowledge consists of data or information that have been organized and processed to convey understanding, experience, accumulated learning, and expertise as they apply to a current problem or activity. Data that are processed to extract critical implications and to reflect past experience and expertise provide the recipient with organizational knowledge, which has a very high potential value. (Turban, Mclean, Wetherbe1999, 45)

Database is a collection of related files, tables, relations, and so on, that stores data and the associations among them. (Turban, Mclean, Wetherbe1999, 18).

3.2 Information technology in knowledge management

Knowledge management is a more methodology applied to business practices than a technology or product. Nevertheless, information technology is crucial to the success of every knowledge management system. (Turban, Leidner, Mclean, Wetherbe, 5th edition, 376).

Knowledge management systems are developed using three sets of technologies: communication, collaboration, and storage and retrieval. (Turban, Leidner, Mclean, Wetherbe, 5th edition, 376).

Communication technologies allow users to access needed knowledge, and to communicate with each other: E-mail, the internet, corporate intranets and other Web-based tools provide capabilities. (Turban, Leidner, Mclean, Wetherbe, 5th edition, 376).

Several technologies have contributed to significant advances in knowledge management tools. Artificial intelligence, intelligent agents, knowledge discovery in databases, and extensible markup language (XML) are examples of technologies that enable advanced functionality of modern knowledge management systems and form the base for future innovations in the KM field. (Turban, Leidner, Mclean, Wetherbe, 5th edition, 376).

4 Research process in the project

4.1 Problem definition

The first step in any marketing research project is to define the problem. In defining the problem, the researcher should take into account the purpose of the study, the relevant background information, the information needed, and how it will be used in decision making. (Naresh K. Malhotra, 10).

Once the problem has been precisely defined, the research can be designed and conducted properly. (Naresh K. Malhotra, 10).

In this case the main problem was the amount of the knowledge available in area of internships, especially for the international students. The study was due to find out the need for more knowledge, and for need to establish students' internship database, which would be more specific than what we have in Laurea intra right now.

4.2 Approaching the problem

Approach to the problem includes formulating an objective or theoretical framework, analytical models, research question, and hypotheses and identifying the information needed. (Naresh K. Malhotra, 10).

The problem was the question of the knowledge management in Laurea intra and if there was enough information from the students point of view.

Questionnaire was based on the basic questions, which were close related to students own experiences of the whole process of finding the internship place.

4.3 Research design formulation

A research design is a framework or blueprint for conducting the marketing research project. (Naresh K. Malhotra, 2006, 10).

The issue of how the data should be obtained from the respondents (for example, by conducting a survey or an experiment) must be addressed. It is also necessary to design a questionnaire and a sampling plan to select respondents for the study. (Naresh K. Malhotra, 2006, 11).

Questionnaire is a structured technique for data collection that consists of a series of questions, written or verbal, that a respondent answers. Naresh K. Malhotra, 2006, 299).

Questionnaire was conducted as e-questionnaire with the help of internet. It was send to all degree programme students, in research area. It was easy and effective way to reach all at the same time. As well the answers were later on analyzed with the help of SPSS-system.

Because of the very small number of answers received, I realized that SPSS-statistical program will not help in this situation and did analyzing manually and I did draw some charts with the help of Microsoft excel.

4.4 Data collection

Data collection involves a field force or staff that operates either in the field... or electronically (e-mail or internet). (Naresh K. Malhotra, 11).

Questionnaires were sent for approximately 150 students and first time it was done in the middle of December 2008, with one week notice. The number of received answers was 10.

I decided to make other try with the questionnaire and deleted old information and send new ones for time period 29.1-3.2.2009. And after 3.2 I did send reminding note with few extra answer day possibilities.

As well, I organized a lottery of five 2 gigabits Laurea memory sticks to wake up people, and by help of that answer my questions. But unfortunately it was not successful; I did mainly receive answers from the same people.

Survey response rate is broadly defined as the percentage of the total attempted interviews that are completed. (Naresh K. Malhotra, 198).

The responding rate was extremely low and the final number of answers was 13/150.

4.5 Data preparation and analyses

Data preparation includes the editing, coding, transcription, and verification of data. (Naresh K. Malhotra, 11).

The data from the questionnaires are transcribed or keypunched onto magnetic tape or disks, or input directly into the computer. (Naresh K. Malhotra, 11).

In this case answers were analyzed by the help of SPSS -statistical program. Answers were conducted from the open questions and showing results of the students personal opinion.

4.6 Report preparation and presentation

The entire project should be documented in a written report that addresses the specific research questions identified; describes the approach, the research design, data collection, and data analysis procedures adopted; and present the results and the major findings. (Naresh K. Malhotra, 11).

Report was done first by planning theoretical background and fitting it to the frame of the questions. Results were analyzed and presented in the report.

4.7. Qualitative research methods

The means of data collection during the research process can be classified into three broad categories: quantitative, qualitative, and pluralistic.
(Alvin C.Burns, Ronald F.Bush, fourth edition, 204).

Quantitative research a methodology that seeks to quantify the data and, typically applies some form of statistical analysis. (Naresh K.Malhotra, 2006, 143).

Quantitative research is defined a research involving the use of structured questions in which the response options have been predetermined and a large number of respondents is involved. (Alvin C.Burns, Ronald F.Bush, fourth edition, 204).

Qualitative research an unstructured, exploratory research methodology based on small samples that provide insights and understanding of the problem setting. (Naresh K.Malhotra, 2006, 143).

Qualitative research, in contrast, involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting data by observing what people do and say. Observations and statements are in a qualitative or nonstandardized form.

(Alvin C.Burns, Ronald F.Bush, fourth edition, 204).

4.8 Pluralistic research

Pluralistic research, which is defined as the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to gain the advantages of both.
(Alvin C.Burns, Ronald F.Bush, fourth edition, 205).

I did choose the pluralistic research to gain more specific information, of the needs of student and hear out what is their opinion.

5 Questionnaire results

5.1 Degree programme

First question was degree programme to find out if there is any difference related to study programme in case of finding internships/information about them.

Degree programme:

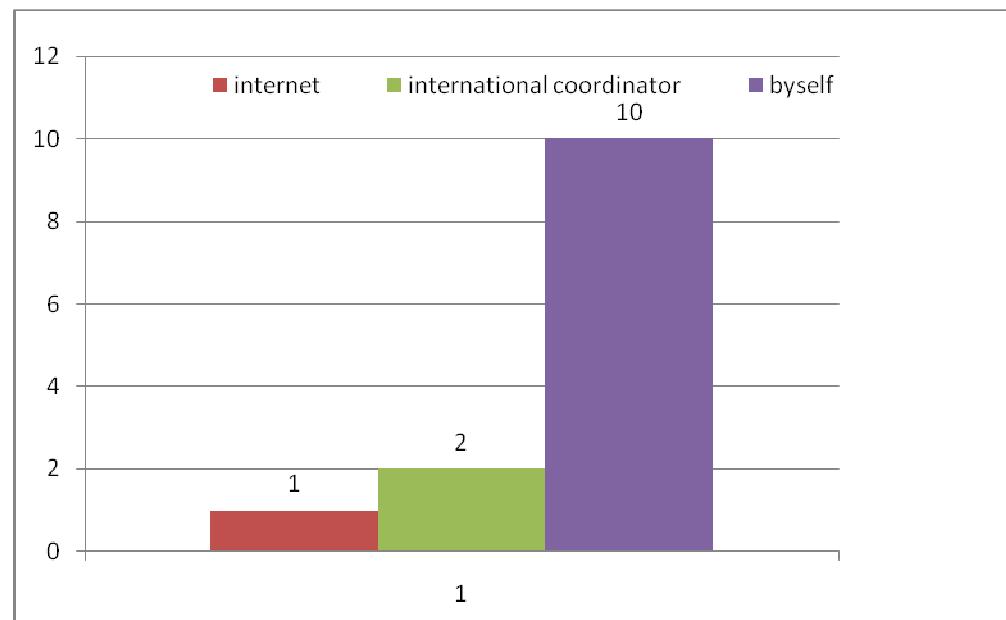
- a).degree programme in business management
- b).degree programme in business information technology
- c).degree programme in nursing
- d).degree programme in social services

Students who did answer to the questionnaire were: 10 students from degree programme in business management. 3 students from the degree programme in nursing.

5.2 Finding internship place

How did you find your internship place? By help of:

- a). International coordinator
- b).internet
- c).Laurea intra
- d).by self



Surprising thing was that students did not seem to use Laurea intra at all, rather were active by themselves. Of course own activity is important, but maybe there is a lack of information in the field of using Laurea intra to find an internship place, maybe it should be marketed more efficiently to the students.

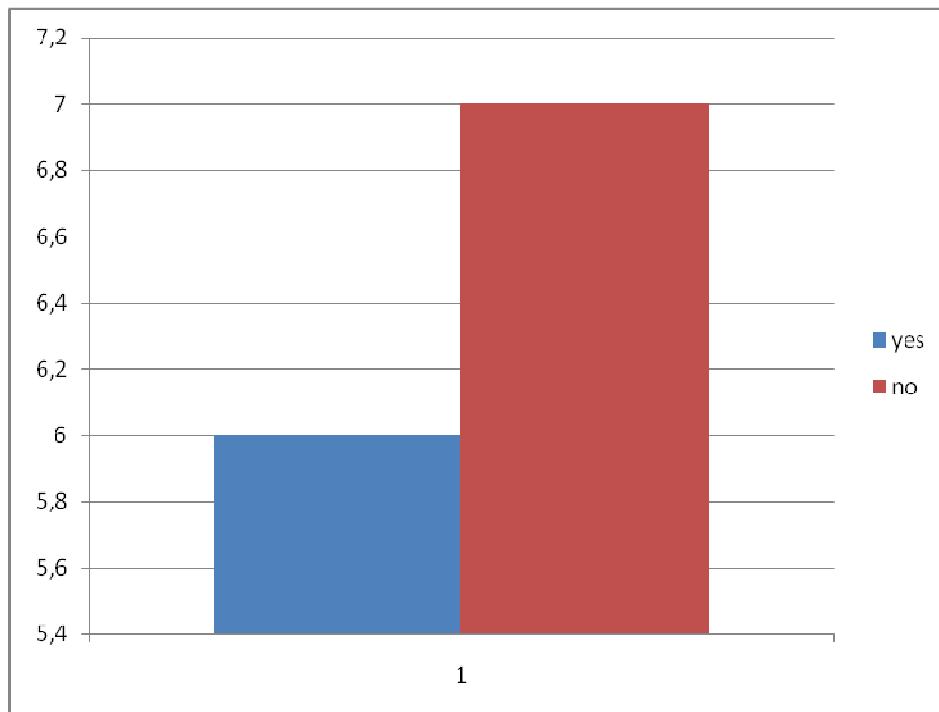
As well in the same category, the question: If you found your internship place by yourself, how exactly? And here are the answers received:

- “By personal contact”
- “By getting part-time job”
- “I am survivor by nature”
- “Asked for place in companies”
- “Introduced by friend”
- “I was working there already”
- “jobstep.net”
- “Trough my job”
- “Just met the person one on one”

5.3 Searching process

Was it easy to find the internship place?

- a).yes
- b).no



Why the internship place was difficult to find?

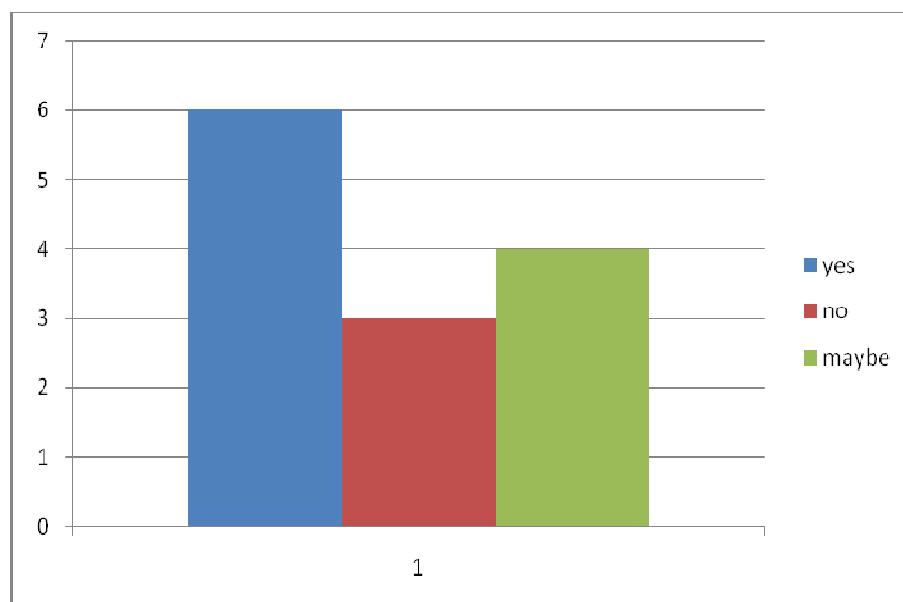
- “Because of the Finnish language”
- “Companies don´t like foreigners”
- “Language barrier”
- “Not speak Finnish”
- “I do not speak Finnish”
- “Money issues/”pleasantness””
- “Language difficulty”

As we can see from the most answers, the most difficult issue was that students did not know Finnish language, but Laurea intra is having settings for English language as well and there is some internship available on English, but I suppose they all are abroad. so could it be that there is more need for English speaking students to have internships in English in Finland ,after all it might be more difficult to go abroad again, as already living and studying in foreign country.

There are plenty of international companies in Finland as well, so I think school should be more active and try to arrange deals and agreements between those companies and Laurea.

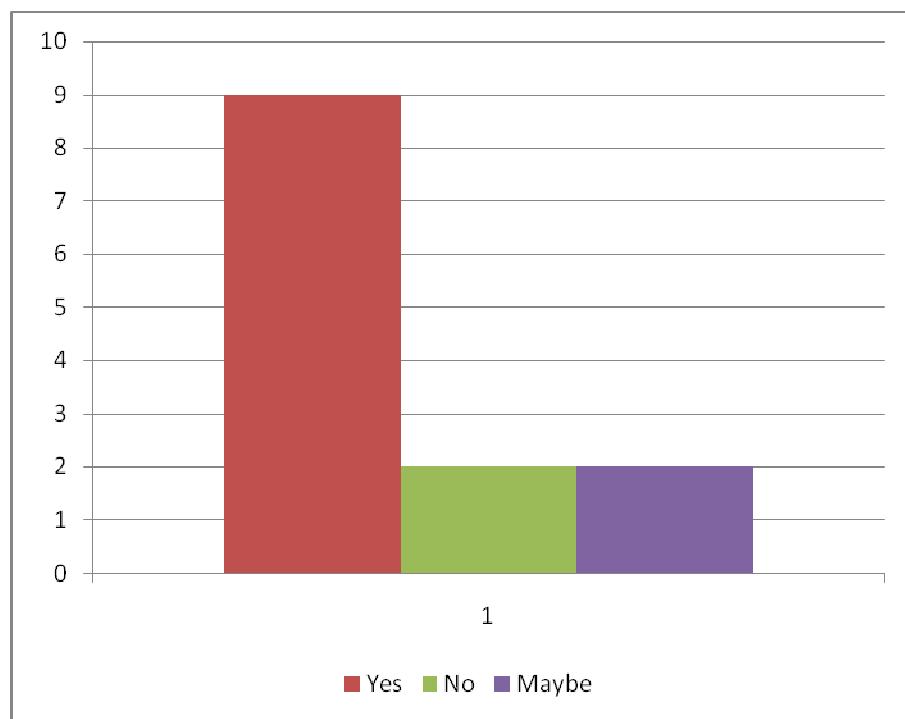
Do you feel need for an internship database?

- a).yes
- b).no
- c).maybe



Would you use it?

- a).yes
- b).no
- c).maybe

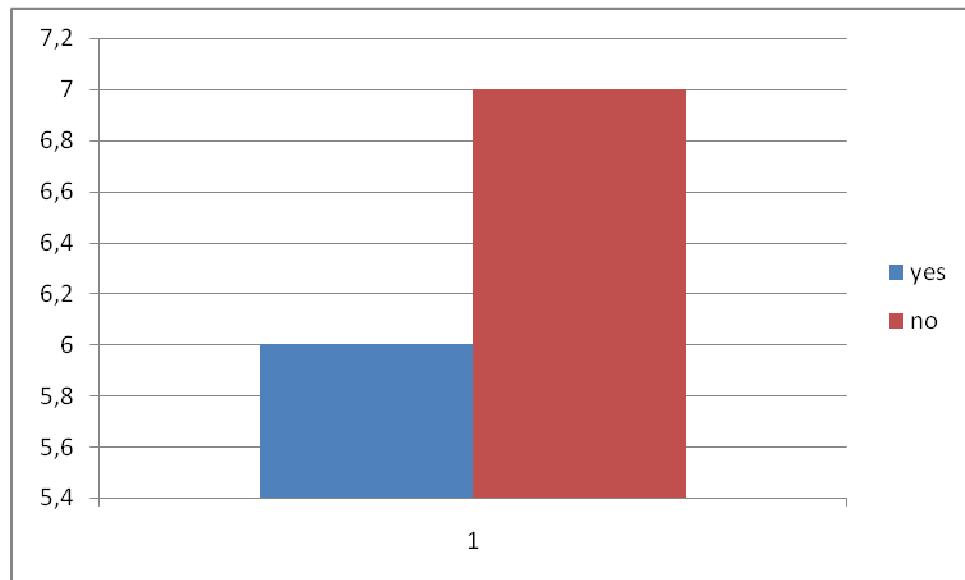


Anyway the majority of the students would use the database for the help of finding internship places.

5.4 Evaluation of the situation

Are you satisfied with the current situation of information available about internships?

- a).yes
- b).no
- c).why not



There might be as well, that foreign students seem that they can't find enough information and on the other side Finnish students seems to cope fine.

Why not current information is enough?

- “Less cooperation”
- “It is enough”
- “Job requirements (language)”
- “Detailed requirement”
- “It is all in Finnish”
- “I don't know where to find it”
- “There is not much information”
- “Screening for int.language.EN”

Any ideas/suggestions for an internship database?

- “It is a good idea”
- “Internationalize it”
- “Update more fast”
- “Should be more easily accessible”
- “Collect from www.mol.fi etc.”
- “Firms should be posted”

6 Conclusions and suggestions

6.1 Reliability of the project

Reliability is: “The extent to which a scale produces consistent results if repeated measurements are made on the characteristic.” (Naresh K. Malhotra, David F. Birks, Marketing research, updated second European edition, 734).

Reliability is about consistency; it is the expectation that there won’t be different findings each time the measures are used, assuming that nothing has changed in what is being measured. (Peter M. Nardi, doing survey research, second edition, 60).

6.2 Validity of the project

Validity is :”The extent to which a measurement represents characteristics that exist in the phenomenon under investigation.” (Naresh K. Malhotra, David F. Birks, Marketing research, updated second European edition, 737).

Validity is about accuracy and whether the operationalization is correctly indicating what it’s supposed to. (Peter M. Nardi, doing survey research, second edition, 58).

6.3 Conclusion

The main problem was the lack of students' activity of course in the e-questionnaire process. But from the results gained there can be seen a lack of information among students, especially concerning Laurea intranet. Especially international students found it difficult to use it or find any relevant information from there. Most of the internship in Finland is offered only in Finnish, which makes it harder to find position for foreigner. Laurea should think about agreements between international firms in Finland and create students opportunity to apply for those ones. This would finally benefit everyone. Student to find proper internship places, organizations to have good internship students coming, and having less trouble to find new advertising portals etc. and of course to Laurea itself to increase co-operation and gaining positive and visible publicity.

In the area of knowledge management; the knowledge should be available for everybody and be easily reached. The right marketing of knowledge is also relevant and sharing the right knowledge with the students. After all it will benefit all and “the strategic purpose of knowledge management is to increase intellectual capital and enhance organizational performance (Ashok Jashapara, 11).

7 Questionnaire

Questionnaire for the student internship database

I am writing my thesis on the subject: Survey for student internship database for Laurea University of applied sciences.

The questionnaire is not long, so please take few minutes and answer for the questions. If you have answered before to this questionnaire, please fill it again, last time I received only few answers. With everyone who will answer, I will have a lottery for 5 Laurea memory sticks with 2 gigabits (if you want to). Please leave your mail address on last question. PLEASE answer before 2.2.2009

if you have any questions, please send a mail:natalia.tuomola@laurea.fi

Degree programme?

- a).degree programme in business management
- b).degree programme in business information technology
- c).degree programme in nursing
- d).degree programme in social services

How did you find your internship place? By help of:

- a). International coordinator
- b).internet
- c).Laurea intra
- d).by self

If you found your internship place by yourself, how exactly?

Was it easy to find the internship place?

- a).yes
- b).no

Why the internship place was difficult to find?

Do you feel need for an internship database?

- a).yes
- b).no
- c).maybe

Would you use it?

- a).yes
- b).no
- c).maybe

Are you satisfied with the current situation of information available about internships?

- a).yes
- b).no
- c).why not

Why not current information is enough?

Any ideas/suggestions for an internship database?

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