



KPMG SMART PRACTICE

Making the summer internship experience valuable

Over the summer, companies often bring on interns to give them valuable hands-on experience, obtain additional (albeit temporary) resources, and to identify potential future employees. While these can provide impactful professional experiences, without thoughtful consideration, they risk falling flat. If the export compliance function is welcoming interns this summer, group leaders should take time to identify the specific projects or activities they will support. It is particularly important that interns, who likely have limited technical knowledge, and will only be with the company for a few months, are engaged in value-driving tasks appropriate to their knowledge level.

1. Prepare training material

When employees onboard, there is usually a fair amount of on-the-job training through which they acquire both technical and business-specific knowledge. However, interns are typically on a compressed timeline so expediting knowledge acquisition is important. This may be best done through robust training materials, including background on the applicable regulations, controlled or

otherwise regulated hardware or technology, and the group's roles and responsibilities. Where possible, the materials should be provided prior to the

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start date so that the individual has some background on the company and its compliance activities before beginning. Providing this knowledge will make pivoting to performing work tasks smoother.

2. Identify a mentor

To enhance efficiency, a single person within the export compliance function should be responsible for onboarding the intern, assigning work and providing feedback. Doing so will ensure that the individual's workload is appropriate, both in terms of required technical knowledge and volume. Further, it will allow for more concentrated coaching opportunities as the export compliance group member will have visibility into

the intern's strengths and development areas. Of course, this approach largely depends on selecting the right person to be the mentor. The individual selected should have a good working knowledge of both the company (i.e., how things are done) and technical skills so that meaningful guidance can be provided.

3. Focus on skill-building projects

The most critical aspect of ensuring a productive internship is identifying appropriate projects before the intern begins. These projects should bring value to the business but not demand a significant level of technical expertise. This may include research projects, assistance with restricted party screening reviews, and participating in risk assessments or audits. This on-going work can be supplemented with additional one-off tasks that support the group's annual goals. The intention should be to enable the permanent team to tackle projects that have not been fully addressed because of resource constraints or competing priorities. Being thoughtful about assignments prevents the intern from being overwhelmed with tasks or, conversely, being under-utilized. Similarly, being intentional about work assignments will make the individual feel like they are part of a team and providing value to the business.

4. Make them part of the team

Although this recommendation may seem obvious, it may be the most critical aspect of providing a meaningful experience. Not only should the interns be included in team meetings and encouraged to actively participate, but they should be included in broader enterprise activities. Meetings with business groups around export-related issues provide an excellent learning opportunity about applying regulations to real-life scenarios. They should also be offered opportunities to learn about the different roles each group plays, the nexus to export controls and the interplay between designing processes that support compliance without hindering the business. As a result of these efforts, the intern will feel more of a connection to their work and, hopefully, want to continue building their export control knowledge. ■

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