Overview

Marriott, through its partnership with the National Academy Foundation (NAF), provides internships for at-risk urban youth. This school and business partnership introduces high school students to the hospitality industry and gives them an opportunity to develop job skills that are portable to any career pursuit.

Every year, Marriott provides 200 youths the opportunity to intern or gain work experience with the company. The corporate headquarters and the hotels across the country work together with NAF chapters to devise the most effective internship program. Each hotel has the flexibility to create student experiences that help develop marketable skills. Students are introduced to various career opportunities in finance, sales, event planning, banquets, rooms operations and culinary departments. They gain skills while being exposed to potential career paths in the hospitality industry.

Marriott’s support of positive youth development extends beyond high school. Marriott has established a scholarship program exclusively for NAF students who are interested in post-secondary education pursuits. These students are selected from across the nation and generally are enrolled in NAF’s Academy of Hospitality and Tourism. Through the use of a database, Marriott is able to communicate with students that have graduated from the Academy program. Students are kept abreast of internship opportunities, school visits by Marriott recruiters, and employment opportunities that could lead to successful careers at Marriott.

Why Get Involved

Marriott recognizes that as new industries emerge and attract young talent, Marriott will face a talent crunch in the next decade. As it looks to transition from the current workforce to the “echo boomers,” a younger generation of leaders, Marriott believes it is vital to invest in a pipeline that grooms new talent. The alliance with the National Academy Foundation and the internship program affords Marriott a concrete opportunity to support the pipeline. As a result, Marriott and the youths involved in the internships benefit from the program.

Youths who have the opportunity to intern with Marriott gain real work experience and have the opportunity to develop skills necessary to succeed in the hospitality industry. Marriott focuses on encouraging all students to pursue post-secondary education and develop a habit for life-long learning. They also are exposed to potential careers in the hospitality industry. NAF requires all students to complete a paid internship and complete one college-level course.

Marriott also benefits from the internship program because it is a valuable recruitment strategy that yields a sound return.

“National Academy Foundation allows us to focus on a majority-minority group that our industry lacks in senior positions.”

–Andy Chaves, National Youth Programs Manager
The program helps Marriott build and recruit a skilled workforce that is knowledgeable of the industry and is able to meet the demands of the company. The strong focus on urban youth allows Marriott to recruit minority youth into the industry, break down their perceptions of the industry, as well as foster diversity in its workforce at the local and national levels. The internship program also provides Marriott with an opportunity to develop and promote diversity in the leadership of the hospitality industry.

The program also helps the company and local properties foster closer ties to its communities. Currently, 80 percent of Marriott’s associates reside five to ten miles from their workplace. Leaders at Marriott believe a positive community relationship is an essential business strategy. As their connection to the community increases and students become more exposed to the company, the community becomes a strong customer base.

Through establishing a strategic partnership with organizations such as NAF, Marriott maintains a highly trained and skilled workforce, increases the diversity of the workforce, and reinforces its commitment to the community, thus generating organizational benefits.

### Why It Works

The internship program is the result of multiple partnerships between Marriott and the National Academy Foundation and the partnership within Marriott between the local and national levels.
In the partnership between Marriott and the National Academy Foundation, Marriott functions as a liaison from the hospitality industry to the National Academy Foundation. The organizational partnership has also spurred the coordination between the local and national levels within Marriott. As a result, more than 70 managers, including corporate executives, serve on advisory boards across the country. The relationships among the organizations and within the corporation spur the growth of the internship program. The multi-layered partnership allows Marriott to expand the advisory boards by including other local industry partners. As the local advisory boards expand, the number of internships available to youth also increases.

Marriott’s commitment to its interns also contributes to its success. Marriott created a database to track alumni of Marriott scholarship programs and high-potential students interested in hospitality careers. Marriott continuously communicates with these students. Marriott provides each scholarship winner with a backpack of items such as Frisbees and T-shirts. Marriott continues to track the students and communicate with them through their college relations process. In their senior year, students are invited to on-site interviews with Marriott and other industry leaders. Marriott has hired many alumni of the internship programs.

This partnership is also successful because it does not solely focus on young people but also targets educators. Marriott is an active participant at the National Academy Foundation national teacher conferences. Marriott provides teachers with professional development opportunities through workshops and panel discussions with corporate and industry leaders. Marriott also provides behind-the-scenes tours and teacher externship opportunities. These programs provide a behind-the-scenes view of the operations of Marriott and the hospitality industry. It also equips educators with current knowledge, which ultimately influences their teaching practices and the training of youth.

Nitty Gritty
Marriott’s partnership with the National Academy Foundation began in 1987 on a local level with the Chamber of Commerce in New York City and Florida. At its inception, the majority of the Marriott representatives were comprised from the sales department. The sales department viewed the partnership as an opportunity for the growth of sales. However, Marriott quickly recognized the internship program was a new avenue to connect youth to the hospitality industry. The internship program allowed Marriott to not only focus on general skill building but also attract new talent to the industry as well as the company.

Marriott supports many youth career development opportunities and offers enriching work experiences during the academic year and the summer. Interns must complete 300 hours of paid work experience as required by the NAF program. In addition to the paid work experience, the Academy of Hospitality and Tourism requires all students to complete a college-level course. By partnering with colleges and universities students are able to connect their classroom learning with real work experience. For example, each year students are invited for property tours and job shadowing experiences including a visit to the Marriott Marquis in New York City.
In addition, Marriott also provides three to six externships to educators. As with the interns, the National Academy Foundation selects the teachers through a rigorous application process. The externship is a two-week program which exposes high school and college-level educators’ to state-of-the-art hospitality industry practices. In the first week, educators experience the functioning of the local hotels. In the second week, educators are exposed to the work of the executives.