



# GETTING BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY INVOLVED

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

An actively engaged business team provides crucial leadership in developing graduates who are prepared to secure employment in the industry. These steps will help you create an active Business and Industry Leadership Team (BILT).

## **1. Determine which businesses, industries, agencies, non-profits, and universities should be represented in the BILT.**

- Distribution of size and type.
- Do not limit to only large companies (unless you have a national focus). Medium and small companies provide perspective and are likely to hire as well.

## **2. Determine what you want to get from the BILT and develop your “sales pitch.”**

- Establish expected time commitment per quarter.
- Establish expectations of involvement and activities, including what is required and what are optional contributions the BILT member can consider.
  - Minimal expectation includes 4 BILT meetings annually
    - Job skills validation (annually, face to face)
    - 3 other 1.5 hour BILT meetings (virtual)
  - Optional opportunities
    - Course and curriculum validation and modification
    - Job forecasting – anecdotally and through surveys
    - Internships, both traditional and virtual
    - Job shadowing
    - Providing expertise in the 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. Recruit appropriate business and university partners by starting with your target organization’s 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.
- 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 a first-line manager, involved in the BILT (typically the HR representative can also be involved, but you need to have an SME as well). Focus on the individual to whom you are talking. They will know if they fit the needs and can refer you to someone else as appropriate.
- Mention that you have grants from NSF, DOL, etc. if you have them. This carries a lot of weight.
- Establish time expectation 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 in the morning.
- Time – early morning typically works better before BILT members go to the office.
- Explain how important BILT leadership is to the program and what their companies will get from their involvement.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities between the BILT and educators. (Educators are there to listen, not to present or run the show.) Consider choosing one of your strong business leaders chair the meeting. Do not ask for volunteers.
- Explain the need for quarterly meetings and establish dates for the year.
- Review opportunities for helping (from your “sales pitch”).
- 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 the discussion rolling, limiting those who might want to dominate (both BILT members and faculty.)
- 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 later via email.
- Take minutes. Publish them. Have the BILT approve at the next meeting, or at minimum, email them out to BILT members and ask for comments.

#### 5. BILT recognition

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

#### 6. Reporting

- Quarterly minutes
- Yearly accomplish report – activities, not just head count
- Have students present
- Strive to get at real student impact rather than just numbers

#### 7. Keeping the BILT fresh

- Add 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 recognizes and understands business requirements first-hand.

To view a special one-hour webinar on “BILT basics,” visit [bit.ly/BILTbasic](http://bit.ly/BILTbasic).



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