Lisbeth Borbye, Michael Stocum, Alan Woodall, Cedric Pearce, Elaine Sale, William Barrett, Lucia Clontz, Amy Peterson, and John Shaeffer

Industry Immersion Learning

Real-Life Industry Case-Studies in Biotechnology and Business
Lisbeth Borbye, Michael Stocum, 
Alan Woodall, Cedric Pearce, 
Elaine Sale, William Barrett, 
Lucia Clontz, Amy Peterson, 
and John Shaeffer

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Industry Immersion Learning

Real-Life Industry Case-Studies in Biotechnology and Business
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Preface

Graduates who secure their first jobs in industry typically spend a significant amount of time adjusting to the new environment because it is so different from the traditional university setting. Together with multiple industry professionals in the Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, I have introduced a learning method called “industry immersion learning” with the goal of easing the transition from the university to the workplace (here, the biotechnology industry).

The industry immersion method is characterized by need-based, innovation-oriented, and proactive acquisition of knowledge. The education is coordinated and supervised by academic and industry professionals in concert and promotes a high level of interaction between students and industry professionals. As the name of the method implies, students are immersed in the industry environment and tasked to excel in matters of high relevance to the company in which the training takes place. Students must adapt quickly to the new environment, create a professional network on site, become knowledgeable about the topic of study, employ innovative thinking, and meet or exceed expectations in their deliverables in a timely manner in order to succeed.

The industry immersion method has been received with enthusiasm among students and both university and industry leaders. It provides a means for the students to graduate with an industry-relevant education, and the university to provide industry with a better prepared, industry-ready workforce while simultaneously creating important university–industry networks and empowering employers to participate in curriculum design.

In an attempt to disseminate the method to a larger audience, employer alliance building and the industry immersion method are described in detail in this book, and seven industry projects, the so-called “case studies”, have been compiled and transposed to a format useful in both industry and classroom settings. Each of these sample industry case studies focuses on a particular trend and together they provide a nonexhaustive view into selected, timely topics. The logistics of teaching by immersion are outlined and a variety of parameters can be customized to match the environment in which they are taught. By consolidating these examples of industry case studies in this book, I encourage their “re-use” while simultaneously hoping to inspire the creation of many new case studies and much new collaboration between universities and industry.