Perfecting the Art of Drupal Talent Development

Palantir.net Drupal Career Online Fellowships
enrich corporate character

When George DeMet and Tiffany Farriss brought Palantir.net into being in 1996, they sought to create an organization that strives for excellence not only in client services, but also in a collaborative, creative environment in which its staff brings out the best in each other. They also believe that the more diverse that staff, the better their corporate culture can achieve excellence on all fronts.

When you chat with George, Tiffany, or really any Palantiri, you realize these guidelines are not just words in a value statement; collaboration and creativity truly are the undercurrent of everything they do, including making sure that present and future Palantiri succeed.

Interns are a key component of Palantir's team, which includes senior engineers, designers, and architects who started as interns nearly 10 years ago. In addition, they are committed to growing talent in a thoughtful, inclusive way. "Some of our longest-serving team members started with us as interns out of college, and we are always looking for opportunities to help people with passion and potential to build experience and expertise by working with our team on real-life projects," George beams.

A few years ago, Palantir pioneered a mentoring initiative to help the Drupal Community become more diverse. In addition to contributing to the community, it also clarified for Palantir that skills training with a paid internship could really help them to achieve the best results from their efforts. "Growing and developing talent has long been a priority for us," says George, so building out internships with a training component would enable recipients to have more confidence as they gain real-world experience and would make it easier for them to assimilate into the team.

"The other key takeaway was that we needed to have a dedicated partner to help assess whether candidates would be a good fit, provide the upfront training and continue to be available as a resource during the internship period and beyond," George says. "Given those requirements, DrupalEasy is an obvious choice for our Fellowship program. The Drupal Career Online curriculum provides a solid foundation for our interns, and the ongoing support provided by DrupalEasy helps them continue to grow and gain confidence as they progress on their career path."

Adwoa Kesse, Employee Experience Manager, is on Palantir's hiring and operations teams and coordinates the newly revived internship program, which, for the past year, has included fellowships through DrupalEasy's Drupal Career Online. Palantir's Fellowship program targets those who have experienced marginalization due to racism, misogyny, transphobia, or other forms of discrimination or are members of a marginalized community that has been underrepresented in the technology sector. Several other organizations provide scholarships for the DCO as well.

The Palantir Fellowship program provides participants with underwriting for the class tuition, a laptop once they accept the fellowship (if needed,) a stipend once class starts, and hourly pay once the intern graduates from the DCO and begins working. From Adwoa's perspective,

integrating the DCO Fellowship has really enriched the program. "We really don't have to worry about the technical side of candidates, as Mike takes care of that piece," she explains.

DrupalEasy's Mike Anello interviews all prospective class applicants, including scholarship seekers, and determines if they have the prerequisites and mindset to be successful in the class. Only applicants who are accepted to Drupal Career Online are presented to Adwoa for consideration. Often Mike provides a pre-work program that candidates can complete to get up to speed so they can continue the fellowship process and be successful in the 12-week DCO program.

This process allows Palantir to be confident that the team members they are considering have the technical aptitude to be successful in Drupal, so the hiring team can focus on whether the potential intern will be a good fit in the Palantir culture: Do they have a growth mindset? Are they curious and will they be comfortable working remotely? All key aspects of Palantir's hiring decisions as they continue to build and enhance the collaborative, creative environment in which everyone encourages and celebrates the best in each other.

"Everybody has their different journeys, but we are very satisfied with what they are doing," Adwoa explains about the Fellowship interns. "Every person is different, so each has a different ramp up, but they are all willing to learn and grow." Positions that interns are working toward include Engineer and Front-End Developer, and each are assigned a mentor once they are awarded a Palantir Fellowship.

The most challenging part of the program is the transition to employment and determining what each intern needs, including Drupalize.me follow-on training resources, training projects and transitioning them to roles within the team and building confidence on actual projects.

According to George, "Fellowship program recipients have been full of curiosity, humor, and a desire to learn. We made full-time offers to all of the interns out of the first two Drupal Career Online cohorts, and we are looking forward to working with the graduates of the latest cohort."

He explains that they think the "key to the success of the program is the vetting process that is conducted by DrupalEasy before being accepted to Drupal Career Online, as well as the interviews our team members conduct with scholarship applicants. When combined with the ongoing progress reports we receive during the course, we have a very good picture of what a recipient's skills and growth opportunities are before they begin their internship."

Another ingredient of the success of the Fellowship program is that ongoing mentorship is essential not just during the Drupal Career Online course, but also during the internship period and beyond. In addition to internal mentors, Palantir engages with DrupalEasy to provide focused mentors and encourages the Fellowship participants to engage in the DrupalEasy Learning Community by attending weekly office hours, which provide a safe space for them to ask questions they may not feel as comfortable asking co-workers.

An unexpected benefit of the program, according to George, is that they are able to reuse many of the resources that were created to help on-board Fellowship recipients for other new hires who did not come through the program. It also helps them improve support for junior-level developers. "Serving as mentors to our scholarship recipients has been a great experience for our existing team members, helping them to develop and exercise skills that are important to their own career paths at Palantir," he adds.

George sums it all up:, "Our partnership with DrupalEasy has enabled us to bring on new team members who not only add value to our project teams, but also contribute to the growth of Palantir's culture."