

# Experiential Social Media Apprenticeship

## Summary

Experiential social media is the practice of interacting with people in digital public with unusual sensitivity and helpfulness, increasing intimacy and trust between a firm and its stakeholders. Experiential practitioners build empathy with people online and support them in distinctive ways. The process is complex and nuanced, so experiential must be learned through mentoring. [Experiential social media differs markedly from conventional social media](#), which focuses on delivering content, not interacting.

As the pioneer of experiential social media, CSRA has developed the Experiential Social Media Apprenticeship to grow its practice through people, and maybe you!

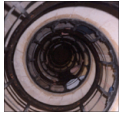
### Why Apprenticeship?

Since human behavior is so subtle and complex, interacting with people to develop trust can't be learned from a book or other "explicit learning" methods. Mentoring pairs apprentices with experiential practitioners, so they can learn experiential interaction while doing it. This provides the context needed to learn human behavior at a rare level and to build skills. Trust is a person's most precious gift, and experiential practitioners co-create it through interaction. Apprentices learn how to do it consistently. The apprenticeship debuted in 2016 with four apprentice roles and levels of development, which form the path to mastery. I expect the program to evolve.

## The Apprentice Journey

Here's a summary of CSRA's Experiential Social Media Apprenticeship. Since CSRA is a virtual firm with no employees, our Interns, Core Team, and Leaders contract with CSRA on engagements. Experiential teams use "Templates" to focus on specific types of people ("[stakeholders](#)") in specific activities ("[workstreams](#)"); for example, retirees building model railroad layouts, or bachelor's degree students applying to grad school. CSRA experiential teams include CSRA people and client staff.

	Debutant	Intern	Core team	Leader
Role	Support experiential team in "shadow" role	Support Core Team on one experiential engagement	Key member of experiential engagement team; option to learn ethnographic research	Lead experiential engagement team(s); may have core role in ethnographic research
Goals	Learn experiential fundamentals and see them in action	Expand experiential skills	Expand experiential skills and mentoring experience	Master experiential skills and mentoring experience



	Debutant	Intern	Core team	Leader
Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ad-hoc support by working on a team template</li> <li>• Contribute to private teamspace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work a team template on an engagement</li> <li>• Attend all physical &amp; virtual meetings</li> <li>• Contribute to private teamspace</li> <li>• Observe status calls and metrics reporting</li> <li>• Practice experiential using CSRA accounts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for team template</li> <li>• May work multiple teams and/or templates</li> <li>• Help mentor Interns</li> <li>• Help mentor client team members</li> <li>• Participate in status calls and metrics reporting</li> <li>• Help evaluate Intern and Debutant progress</li> <li>• Option to share in engagement revenue by selling work</li> <li>• Practice experiential using CSRA accounts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guide and mentor core team members while working a team template</li> <li>• Work multiple engagement teams in various roles</li> <li>• Mentor Debutants, Interns, Core team and client team</li> <li>• Lead status calls and metrics reporting</li> <li>• Help evaluate Intern and Debutant progress</li> <li>• Help plan and structure engagements</li> <li>• Option to share in engagement revenue by selling work</li> </ul>
Deliverable	Teach the team: lead discussion of what you learned	Internal report on the team template.	Section(s) of public case studies on the team's work.	Coordinate and lead creation of public case study.

### Debutant

The Debutant role enables people to try the program without committing to it. Since experiential is all about learning by doing, we use the same idea right in the apprenticeship, so people can avoid committing until they know experiential is something they're really interested in!

Debutants are chiefly observers, and they ask questions of team members. Depending on their experience and interest, they may play a support role in working a template with a Core team member. At the end of their involvement, Debutants prepare and lead a discussion with other team members on what they learned.

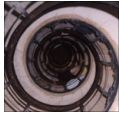
The Debutant role usually lasts a few weeks at a few hours per week and is unpaid.

### Intern

The Intern role is the formal entry into the apprenticeship, and Interns are vetted by CSRA. Core team members and Leaders mentor Interns, so they learn as quickly as they can. They observe during status calls with clients where the team reports its progress in building trust with the client's stakeholders in digital public.

Interns write reports on the team's work with their template.

Interns have defined roles on experiential engagement teams, and they contract with CSRA for one engagement at a time. Interns are paid.



## **Core team**

As the name suggests, apprentices spend most of their time in the Core team role, where they get extensive experience with various types of clients and industries. For example, templates for a health system client will differ significantly from a consumer electronics firm or a university. Each type of client has different kinds of stakeholders and workstreams, and these set the social context around how experiential teams interact to build trust.

Core team members have completed at least one intern assignment, and usually more than one. They are responsible for one or two team templates and may work with Interns. They help mentor Interns and client team members. They participate in status calls and reporting, focusing on their template(s). They discuss with Leaders Interns' and Debutants' progress and recommend assignments for them.

Core team members can participate in CSRA's business development. When they help engage new clients, they share in the revenue of the engagement in addition to their hourly rate on the engagement. In addition, they have the option to learn how to conduct ethnographic research on social media, which is the core of experiential's research process.

Core team members write sections of CSRA's public case studies on the work our teams do. Case studies are crucial in educating business, nonprofit and government leaders on experiential's transformational potential for business and society.

## **Leader**

Leaders have been Core team members on several experiential engagements, and the Leader role is the last in the path to mastery. Leaders work team templates on engagements while mentoring Core team, Intern and Debutant team members. They often work on several engagements simultaneously. They lead status calls with clients and educate clients on measuring trust quantitatively and experiential metrics.

Leaders are actively involved with planning engagements and often participate in attracting new work. CSRA attracts new work with the same ethos that underlies experiential engagements: we educate and interact to increase trust, so we don't "sell" work or try to convince clients to engage us. We learn as much as we can about the client's situation and try to empower that client, whether or not it results in work for us. This ethos and approach does result in close client relationships and satisfying engagements most of the time.

Leaders can manage engagements with minimal oversight, and they write public case studies.