

The Rotational Development Programs of ŠKODA Auto and Harley-Davidson

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Introduction

These days, more and more companies are offering rotational programs that enable recent graduates the ability to gain practical working experience while growing within the company. Trainee programs are a bit like a long term internship aimed at recent graduates or current students at University. There are two companies chosen in order to compare their rotational programs. It is Czech ŠKODA Auto and American Harley Davidson. These two companies were chosen because of their highly developed rotational programs and because of the transparency of the company which enables to gain all the information needed.

1.1. Rotational programs

Rotational programs are highly advantageous for the both parties. The graduates/students are turned into highly valuable employees and in addition, they are getting to know the whole company in detail, improve their skills, and they are profiled into positions suited to them. [1] At the same time, the trainee is recognized as a full time employee and thus will gain the benefits of being a full time employee, including a competitive salary.

While they are comparable, rotational program differ from an ordinary internship. By definition, a trainee will not be working on one particular project in one particular place, but will experience a handful of positions throughout the companies various locations. So the trainee will have the ability to learn to excel within each individual role he is given, and then just when he is getting comfortable in a role he will be rotated to another job. Doing this not only gives the trainee experience performing various jobs, but it forces him into new challenging situations in order to develop the trainee into a highly effective employee. At the same time, the trainee will be going through all of this while growing within that specific organization. Learning the ins and outs of how that specific company works by experiencing it from many sides can give him an advantage over a person who has only seen it from one department. [2]

At Škoda, the trainee will sign a time-framed contract and the duration of the rotational program will be between 5 and 12 months. At Harley Davidson, the program lasts anywhere between 12 months and 4 years. At the end of either rotational program and successful fulfillment of tasks, an employee can be offered a workplace in the company. [2]

The main advantage for the companies is that the possible employee can be adjusted to the needs of the company. Shortly after the graduation, the graduates don't have any working habits so the company can develop him according to its needs. Another plus is that a young person brings a lot of new ideas. [2]

Table 1: Advantages and disadvantages of rotational program

Advantages	Disadvantages
Work experience	Constant supervision over the work

Contract of employment	Pressure on constant improving
Getting to know the company	Participating only in partial tasks
Good training system	Finishing of the rotational program does not automatically mean a workplace in a company
Networking	
Development of soft skills	
Experience in the product line	

Source: Own creation (2015)

The success of rotational programs is demonstrated by great number of companies with established rotational program. Each company offers a program that differs from the others but basically the main structure is the same as in ŠKODA Auto and Harley Davidson programs.

Table 2: Companies with rotational program

Undergraduates	Graduates	Undergraduates & Graduates
GE Leadership Development Program	ADIDAS Trainee Functions	AT&T Leadership Development Program
Genworth Financial Finance Development Program	AMAZON Development program	Boeing Career Leadership Development Program
Norfolk Southern Management Trainee Program	Financial Times Graduate Trainee Program	Ford College Graduate Program
The Hilton family Leader in Training program	FBI Management Fellows Program	Google Development Program
VISA New Graduate Development Program	ING Talent Programme	Intel Rotational Programs
Starwood hotel & resorts Management Training Program	Rolls Royce Leadership Development Program	L'Oreal Management Trainig Program

Source: Own creation (2015)

We can see that really big and significant companies have both- rotational program for

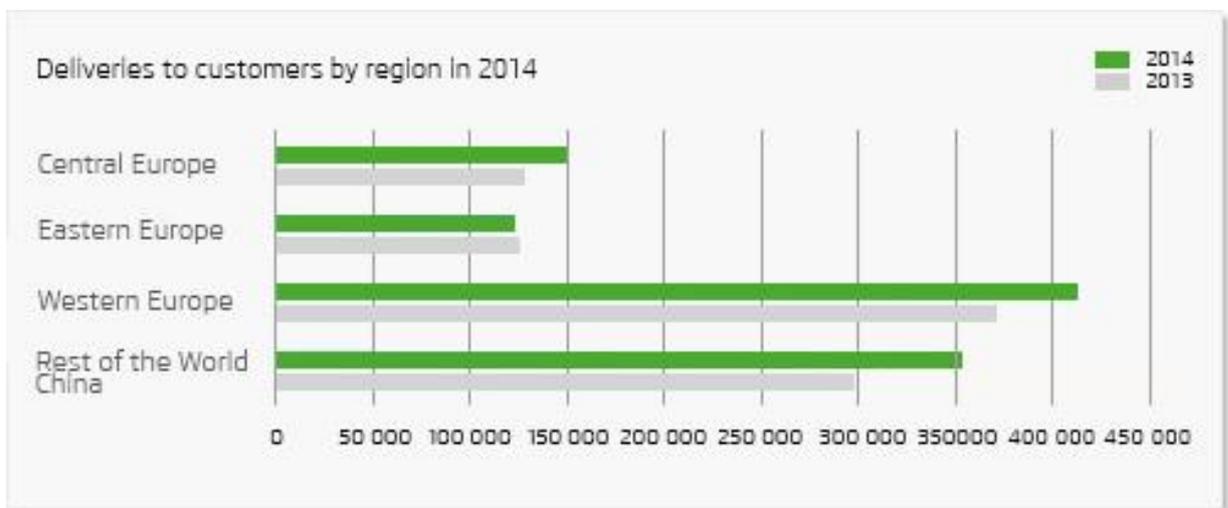
undergraduates and even for graduates. This can be the direction that can be choosed by ŠKODA Auto and Harley Davidson to get large in all the ways. [3]

2.1. ŠKODA AUTO - Czech Company Summary and Analysis

1.1.1 About company

Škoda Auto more commonly known as Škoda, is an automobile manufacturer based in the Czech Republic. The car manufacturer was originally founded in 1895 as Laurin & Klement, but was acquired by Škoda Works in 1925. It then became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Volkswagen Group in 2000, positioned as the entry brand to the group. Its total global sales reached 1 040 000 cars in 2014. It's global reach, income, and number of employees make it one of the most important companies in the Czech economy and also one of the most significant exporters. [4] [5]

Picture 1: About company



Source: ŠKODA AUTO (2015)

ŠKODA AUTO set a new sales record in 2014. The brand sold more than 1 million vehicles for the first time in the company's 120-year history. ŠKODA's worldwide deliveries increased 12.7% to 1,037,200 vehicles last year (2013: 920,800 deliveries). In the years ahead, ŠKODA plans to grow further. To achieve this continued growth, the manufacturer will be introducing a new or revised model on average every six months. [6]

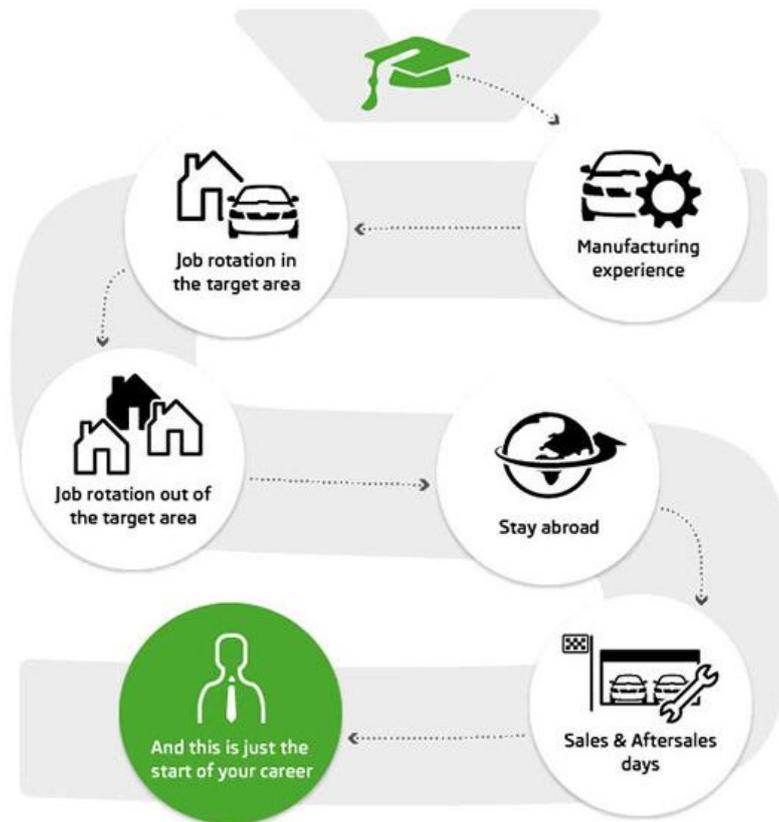
2.1.1 ŠKODA AUTO rotational program

ŠKODA's rotational program is pointing at the students of the first or the second year of their master studies or recent graduates. The most interesting students for the company come from mainly technical or economical fields of study. The rotational program has been running in the company since 1993 and it has been an important part of the company's Human Resources strategy .

ŠKODA's rotational program is an adaptive and developmental one-year program which is flexible and tailored to each trainee according to his needs and the areas of interest. Each

Trainee, regardless of the target department, gains experience in the production department in a form of working in the production line. He also undergoes an internship abroad within framework of Volkswagen Group. Last but not the least he is acquainted with the run of the ŠKODA distribution network by working in the company of one of the partners. The trainee is guided by a patron or mentor who provides him with continuous feedback and during the rotations which are aimed towards his target position, he works on projects as an full member of the team. [7]

Picture 2: Scheme of the rotational program



Source: ŠKODA AUTO (2015)

The reasons for choosing a rotational program in this company do not differ a lot. Katarina Midulová, a former Trainee in ŠKODA AUTO says: “I chose ŠKODA AUTO because of the good name of the company and because of the possibility of the further development and trust in product. The rotational program really grabbed my attention also because of the opportunity for an internship abroad, which is a part of it. I liked the fact that during the program a trainee gains the experience from more departments close to the field of his study, which is highly advantageous before he reaches his dream position in the company.” Other former Trainees appreciate these things as well, particularly an internship abroad. [8] [9]

Information about ŠKODA AUTO rotational program can always be found on their

websites and in addition there are many workshops of job opportunities across the whole country and ŠKODA AUTO is always in attendance. During these events a potential Trainee can talk to representative of the company about the way how the program works and about all the possibilities.

3.1.1 History of the rotational program in the company

ŠKODA rotational program in ŠKODA AUTO was established in 1993, only two years after its fusion with Volkswagen. Originally, this program began with 7 graduates and in past years it became one of the most desired programs in the field of automotive industry. In 2012, "Global rotational program" was established for the graduates from the universities abroad. According to the survey made by Universum agency, graduates of the economic or technical schools are highly attracted by this company and for them it is the number three company in the ranking list of best employers in the Czech Republic. More than 10 000 students from 60 Czech universities participated in this survey. [10]

4.1.1 The official requirements

Each company has its specific requirement for the applicants. In ŠKODA AUTO each applicant should ask himself following questions and decide if he is the right person for the rotational program and if he is skilled enough to pass it successfully:

- Are you a graduate of the master's program at the university with technical or economical focus?
- Are you able to deal in English or German?
- Have you ever been abroad on exchange program or internship?
- Do you want to find a job in your field of study and develop your professional competences?
- Do you want to gain experience abroad in the form of the internship in the company of our concern partner?
- Do you want a tailored development plan?
- Do you want to continue in study of languages?
- Are you flexible and a team player?

Languages (especially English and German) seem to be the most important requirements because ŠKODA AUTO is a part of Volkswagen concern and it is necessary to be able to communicate. But despite this fact English is the most used language in the company. [11]

5.1.1 Benefits offered by the company

During the whole year, it is possible to apply to the rotational program e.g. through the career websites. In this case a website unijobs.cz was used to promote ŠKODA AUTO rotational program and the list of benefits offered by the company is following: [12]

- Interesting job tasks in accordance with the plan of personal development
- At least two professional rotations in ŠKODA AUTO company
- An internship abroad in a company of one of the concern partners
- Possibilities of personal and professional development- individual feedback,

- trainings, workshops, regular collective meetings, other activities
- Background in the group of Trainees and Extratrainees in ŠKODA AUTO company
- Other benefits for employees of financial and non-financial character
- A workplace in the company after finishing the program

6.1.1 Selection procedure

Rotational programs are very popular so it is obvious that there is supposed to be a selection procedure. In fact the selection procedure has several rounds. An applicant has to do the first step- log in through official career website and he has to attach a CV and motivation letter made in two languages. The next step is an interview. It is recommended to not to underestimate it and prepare for it in advance (there are questions like: "Where do you see yourself in 5 years? What are your strengths and weaknesses?"). It is necessary to know the basic facts about the company, to have an idea which department the applicant would like to work for (e.g. research and development, production, marketing etc.).

If the candidate is successful in the first round, there comes the second round- the whole day selection procedure in a form of an Assessment Center. Former trainees advise to leave all the stress behind and focus on a solution of set tasks. It is also important to not forget that it is not about working on your own but that the fulfillment of a task requires teamwork. At the end of the Assessment Center testing, the applicants are told the results and they are provided with feedback. Successful candidates through this stage will then have to go through an interview with the head of the department they want to be a part of and be accepted there in order to be accepted into the rotational program.

7.1.1 Rotational program flow

ŠKODA AUTO targets current students of universities with the objective to discover and recruit talent with professional and managerial potential and develop and adapt them into the company culture. The program is divided into "on the job" and "off the job" activities.

In frame of "on the job" training, the trainee:

- gains an experience in production department
- must take at least two professional rotations
- an internship abroad in a frame of VW Group
- an experience in the company of a business partner of ŠKODA AUTO.

"Off the job" activity is focused mainly on the development of the soft skills and these are supported for example by training of communication and presentation skills, self-management etc.

Firstly, the trainee will go through the production department before switching from the production department into another one. For a Trainee with economic field of study it could be the sales department, the department of corporate communication, or the marketing and communication department. Finally he ends in the department chosen at the end or during the program. In the following months each Trainee has to experience an internship abroad.

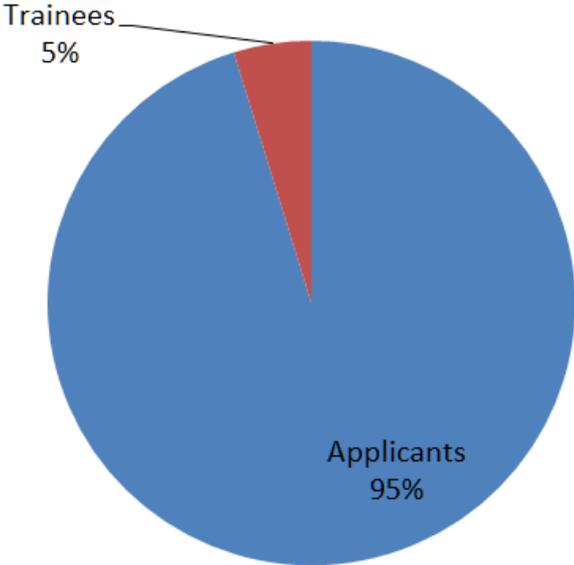
Working hours are usually from 7:30 till 15:30. Set tasks also contain shadow management in the meetings. To adapt to the processes of the department Trainee also observes what other colleagues are working on. In addition, every year there is a group meeting of all the Trainees from the Volkswagen concern. More than one hundred Trainees from Volkswagen, Audi, Bentley, MAN, and Scania a Volkswagen Financial Services are present. These meetings include workshops and interesting lectures about interesting topics as well as the information about up to date situation of the company. [10]

In the long run, a big difference can be seen between the graduates who go into a direct position versus the trainees who go through the rotational program. The trainees have the opportunity to get know many aspects of the company and view its processes from many different perspectives. With this experience as a basis, they can form a more complete understanding about how the company works as a whole. It is important to realize that Rotational program is not a quick way to the manager post as going through this one year program does not mean that the person will automatically get a higher position. The program definitely offers advantages to the trainee, but everything depends on what he does with the chances he is given.

8.1.1 Success rate

Each year there are usually around six hundred applicants for the program and this number is growing year by year. There are two starting terms offered by ŠKODA AUTO, at the beginning of the April or September. Overall around 30 graduates are selected for the program each year. [8] [9]

Picture 1: Success rate of applicants



Source: Own creation (2015)

3.1. Harley Davidson – American company Summary and Analysis

9.1.1 About the company

Harley-Davidson (HD) is a well-known American motorcycle designer and manufacturer headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The company was formed in the early 1900's by William Harley and Arthur Davidson when they designed and then built one of the first combustion engines specifically to fit on a bicycle. Over the course of the 20th century through the present, Harley-Davidson has grown into world renowned company famous for its muscle bikes and the image associated with them. The company now employs over 6,400 people worldwide at its many manufacturing facilities and outlet stores. Through the first 6 months of 2014, Harley-Davidson sold almost 150,000 motorcycles worldwide. About 60% of those sales were domestic in the US, with the remainder being in the international market. [13]

10.1.1 Harley Davidson rotational program

The rotational development program at Harley is called IGNITE. [14] The IGNITE program is targeted at both current students and recent graduates and consists of various internships, co-op programs, and also the rotational development program. IGNITE has the twin goals of individual growth and development for the employee as well as the creation of high value employees for the company.

The full time rotational program usually lasts between 3 and 4 years for each employee. Its purpose is to give participants exposure to at least 1 year of experience in manufacturing, product development, and management/supervision with a final year in the area that the employee wants to build depth.

Zach Savage is currently a Lead, Continuous Improvement, and Process Engineer at Harley-Davidson, but is also a recent alumni of the rotational development program. Specifically he was in the TEP branch of the IGNITE program, or Technical Excellence Program. This track is specifically for recent engineering graduates. He provided a good deal of information to us concerning the inner workings of the program. He chose to go through the rotational program because near the end of college he was looking for something to push himself out of his comfort zone. To force situations that required him to quickly learn new concepts. He recognized that working in these areas, transitioning to a new job every year, and working at different locations would provide the opportunity to gain valuable skills, expand his personal network, and create a unique perspective. A traditional path would have taken a decade to develop and establish similar experiences and connections.

11.1.1 History of the rotational program in the company

Until 2012/2013, Harley did not have all of these programs under the umbrella of IGNITE. They all existed but were more up to the individual departments to run successfully. While the umbrella program was initially received with mixed emotions, it has on the whole been successful because of its ability to allow employees to more easily move amongst the various Harley facilities and disciplines. [14]

12.1.1 Requirements

Each program has slightly different requirements based on the job in question. For the sake of simplicity we will talk about the program that our interviewee went through, the Technical Excellence Program (TEP). This program is aimed at recent engineering graduates. The major requirement to be accepted is the recent completion of a Mechanical or Manufacturing engineering degree with at least a 3.0 grade point average (GPA). A grade point average (GPA) is a calculated average of the letter grades you earn in school following a 0 to 4.0 or 5.0 scale. Every semester, a student receives a GPA based on the grades he earned in all the classes during that semester. Throughout high school, he also maintains a cumulative GPA, which is an ongoing average of all the semester one and two grades beginning with freshman year. Colleges use this number to measure student's overall performance in school and compare the student to other prospective students. [15]

On top of that, it is also required that the candidate have work experience from some sort of engineering internship or similar position either with Harley or some other manufacturing company. The candidate also needs to understand machining principles, various project management tools, have exceptional communication skills, and have strong computer skills.

13.1.1 Benefits offered by the company

It is important to note that a person who is going through the IGNITE program is considered a full time employee. As such, the benefits offered to an employee in the rotational program are no different than those offered to any other full time employee at Harley. These include a competitive salary, insurance, vacation time, stock options, as well as discounts on company products.

14.1.1 Selection procedure and Success Rate

The application process for the program is similar to applying for any other job, but the interview process is a bit more strenuous. After an online application, the company will call and schedule a phone interview. If successful in that, Harley will then ask a candidate back for face-to-face interviews. These are conducted over the course of a single day in 2 different sessions. There are typically about 24 candidates that make it to the round of interviews for only 3 positions. Each candidate will go through four, 50 min interviews with teams of 2-3 people who were either in the program, alumni, or managers for which program participants worked for. After that it is up to the specific hiring managers to make their decisions and the choice is no longer in the candidate's hands.

15.1.1 Rotational program flow and advantages

As with any job, the success of the individual is really dependent on each person to make their own path. The primary advantage of the rotational program over other full time employees is the structured ability to move across different positions, in different facilities, in a shorter amount of time. Typically employees must stay in their position 1 year before moving departments, and 18 months before moving organizations. It's possible for people to move earlier than this with executive leadership approval, though this can be presents its own set of challenges. The TEP program sidesteps this with its developed structure, giving the participant a unique advantage over the more typical employee.

The TEP program specifically is a 4 year manufacturing program that will allow the employee to experience 4 different positions. Each position lasts 12 months and may be at a different facility between Harley's plants in Wisconsin, Missouri, and Pennsylvania. The core disciplines of the program include Quality Engineering, Manufacturing Engineering, and Supervisory roles. It is also required for the employee to have at least one of these rotations out of Wisconsin in order to push the employee out of their comfort zone.

While the TEP program definitely sets up each participant for success, it is in no way assured. On the whole it boils down to an individual's work ethic and networking abilities, no matter what route they choose. In Zach's case, he took full ownership of his path through the program by requesting difficult assignments, taking on high profile projects, and finding leaders to be advocates for his work. There were plenty of other people who simply took the TEP at face value, rotated where they were told, and just did the job. They have not progressed at the same rate. The program gives each person as much of a chance to excel as possible, but the individual has to reach for it themselves if they truly want to grow within Harley.

4.1. Comparison and Analysis

16.1.1 About the companies

Both companies are consumer vehicle manufacturers, so they are technically in a similar industry. Harley Davidson is well known motorcycle designer and manufacturer founded in the early 1900's in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. ŠKODA Auto is an automobile manufacturer that was formed in 1895 in the Czech republic. Both are international companies, though the majority of ŠKODA Auto's cars (40%) are sold in Western Europe and about 60% of Harley's motorcycles are sold in the US.

17.1.1 Program goals, targets, and rotations

In ŠKODA Auto only students of the first or the second year of their master studies are demanded. Usually students in the second year of their studies are preferred because the rotational program will last about one year and their graduation and completion of their rotational program will coincide so they can directly move into a full time position with the company. The company is searching especially for students from technical or economical field of study as far as it is in a technical sector.

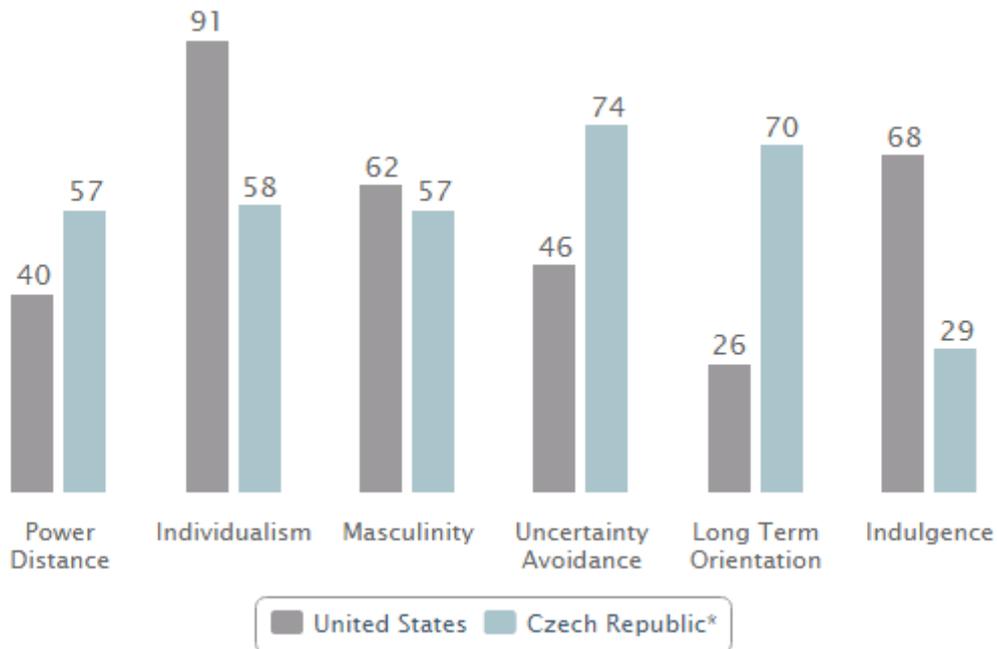
Conversely, Harley Davidson's IGNITE program targets only recent graduates of various fields of study. Harley does have different programs for current students, but these are more similar to traditional internships. The company is specifically looking for someone who wants to grow and develop within Harley, and is excited about the challenges presented by the rotational aspect of the program.

There is a large difference between these two programs in terms of the flow of rotations, specifically in their duration. Harley's IGNITE program lasts 3-4 years compared to ŠKODA Auto's 12 months. This difference though is likely due to the overall objectives of the program. While both programs are trying to develop future employees into top talent, the ŠKODA Auto program is not as completely committed to the people they select for the program. In the ŠKODA Auto program, a participant must prove that they are worth future investment by the company. The trainee is not guaranteed a future role within ŠKODA Auto unless they can demonstrate their worth. By the time a trainee is accepted into the Harley program, the company has already committed to making a significant investment in that employee.

The main reason for this difference could be almost anything really, but it is most likely that the flow is different because the programs have a different goal from the beginning. The ŠKODA Auto program is structured in a way that enables it discover new talent and attempt to develop it. If they later deem the development of the individual to be insufficient, then they have the ability to not select that person for a full time position and move onto the next person. Conversely, the Harley program seems to be structured in a way to suggest that they have already found the talented individual that they want to develop. The program is then their way of developing the trainee into the more completely rounded employee that they want to have.

One way to think about why the programs have been structured this way is to look at Hofstede's cultural dimensions of each country, specifically towards the uncertainty avoidance dimension. The figure below shows a comparison between the two countries. [14]

Picture 2: Hofstede Cultural Dimensions - United States vs. Czech Republic



Source: The Hofstede Centre (2015)

As you can see the Czech Republic is categorized as being significantly more averse to uncertainty and risk. This almost perfectly explains why a company based in the Czech republic would be more hesitant to completely commit to an employee who has just come out of university. While the US based company is indeed still taking a risk with the level of commitment that they are showing in this programs design, they have at least attempted to mitigate this risk through a rigorous acceptance process.

18.1.1 Program Flow

A trainee in ŠKODA Auto has to start in the production line. The second position is in a different department that is not of their choosing. The final rotation will be in the department specifically targeted by the trainee. Upon completion of these three rotations, the trainee will then have to experience an internship abroad at one of ŠKODA Auto's other facilities.

In Harley Davidson, a trainee will have less of a structured path to follow. All he will know is that over the course of the 4 year program he will have held 4 different positions. One in Manufacturing Engineering, one in Quality Engineering, and a 3rd in a supervisory role. The final role is left up to the trainee similar to how ŠKODA Auto's program is set up. Again, the largest difference between the two programs is the duration of the rotations.

19.1.1 Requirements

Requirements to get into either program differ as well. One main difference is in required language. ŠKODA Auto demands that the trainee be proficient in at least English or German, while Harley Davidson only requires the person to be able to work in English. This is caused

by the fact that in the European Union it is common for bigger companies to have employees experience the international environment, and knowing at least English is obligatory. In the Czech Republic, at least two languages are necessary to get a job and two foreign languages are always taught at the primary schools. In the conjunction with that, international companies based in the Czech Republic will expect that a trainee will have some kind of international experience. There are two reasons for that: it shows that the person is able to work effectively in that particular language and it also proves his independence. At Harley Davidson the requirements are a little bit higher, especially if we talk about work experience. A trainee should have a work experience from some sort of engineering internship or similar position. He should have recently completed a Mechanical or Manufacturing engineering degree with at least a 3.0 GPA. He should have the understanding of machining principles, various project management tools, having strong computer skills and exceptional communication skills.

The difference is probably in the fact that in the Czech Republic, rotational program is considered as something that starts a career of the person. In the US it is probably something that helps a person to develop and gain a better position.

20.1.1 Selection procedure

Selection procedure differs between these two companies. The first step in both companies is to make an online application. In ŠKODA Auto it is necessary to attach CV and motivation letter in two languages as well. Then there is an interview and in case of success the candidate goes through the assessment center and finally he/she is interviewed by the head of the department. In Harley Davidson, the first step is an phone interview and afterwards there is a face to face interview with both the specific hiring managers for each part of the rotational program as well as with people who previously went through the program.

Table 3: Comparison

	ŠKODA Auto	Harley Davidson - Technical Excellence Program
Participants	students/ graduates	students/ graduates
Duration	one year	3-4 years
Rotations	after 4 months	after 1 year
Requirements	languages, experience abroad, soft skills, student or graduate of the master's program with technical or economical focus	related work experience, Mechanical or Manufacturing engineering degree with at least a 3.0 GPA, understanding of machining principles, project management tools, computer skills, soft skills
Benefits	personal development,	competitive salary, insurance,

Selection procedure	working experience, financial and non- financial benefits, workplace in the company	vacation time, stock options, discounts on company products
	online application (CV+ motivation letter in 2 languages), interview, assessment center, interview with the head of the department	online application (resume, cover letter, and more), phone interview, face to interview
Rotational program flow	On the job activities (production department, two professional rotations, internship abroad), Off the job activities (soft skills, self-management, presentation skills)	4 different positions within Quality Engineering, Manufacturing Engineering, and Supervisory roles. 1 year for each position and at least one of the positions must be outside of the Milwaukee headquarters.

Source: Own creation (2015)

5.1. Recommendations

One observation we made about the Škoda Auto program was that there seems to be a lack of confidence in the ability of the trainee to succeed and be a good contributing employee of the company. The main recommendation that we suggest for Škoda Auto is to try to build more trust in the program by gaining top management advocates for the program. Doing so will only help the trainee's to succeed and will lead to a higher percentage of retained employees on the completion of their rotations. Once this is done we would want to urge the company to pursue a more in depth program for employees with a little bit more work experience. Perhaps even for recent graduates of the existing program. This program should be structured more similar to the existing program at Harley and include longer rotations with more flexibility in job choices for the participants. Finally, we think that Škoda Auto should try to develop some long term relationships with more universities within the Czech Republic. This could serve mainly to widen the talent pool that the company can draw from as well as increase exposure for the company as a whole and the benefits that this type of program could bring to its participants.

For Harley, the first thing we want to recommend is that they expand the program to require an international rotation in addition to just getting outside of Milwaukee. Harley Davidson is a global company with multiple manufacturing facilities worldwide, not to mention the hundreds of retail outlets. Requiring the programs participants to engage with the global market will help them grow and position the company to succeed internationally for years to come. Secondly, we thought that it would be good to create a smaller more introductory program as well. This program could be similar to Harley's existing internship and cooperative programs that target students still pursuing undergraduate degrees. The only difference would be that the students would be able to gain the added benefit of working throughout the company as well as gaining valuable work experience that will help them to succeed down the road.

Table 4: Recommendation

ŠKODA Auto	Harley Davidson - Technical Excellence Program
building more trust in the program by gaining top management advocates for the program	expanding the program in order to offer and international rotation
establishing program for employees with a work experience	establishing an introductory program
developing long term relationships with more universities within the Czech Republic	

Source: Own creation (2015)

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