

How to Hire & Train Assistants

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How to Hire & Train Assistants

- ◉ How NFBI is organized
- ◉ Hiring Problems from the Past
- ◉ The Assistant Solution
- ◉ Why The Assistant Works
- ◉ The Future of the Assistant

How NFBI is Organized

- ◉ NFBI has:
 - > 1 office location in Lincoln, NE
 - > We travel to central locations to see producers
 - Extension offices
 - Hotels
 - Banks



How NFBI is Organized

- ◉ NFBI has:
 - › 5 Full-Time Consultants
 - Including the Director
 - › 2 Part-Time (Winter) Consultants
 - › 1 Full-Time Assistant
 - › Other Support Staff



How NFBI Is Organized

- ◎ NFBI is:
 - > For Profit
 - > Not tied to the University of Nebraska
 - Have great working relationship with UNL.
 - > Mostly employee owned.

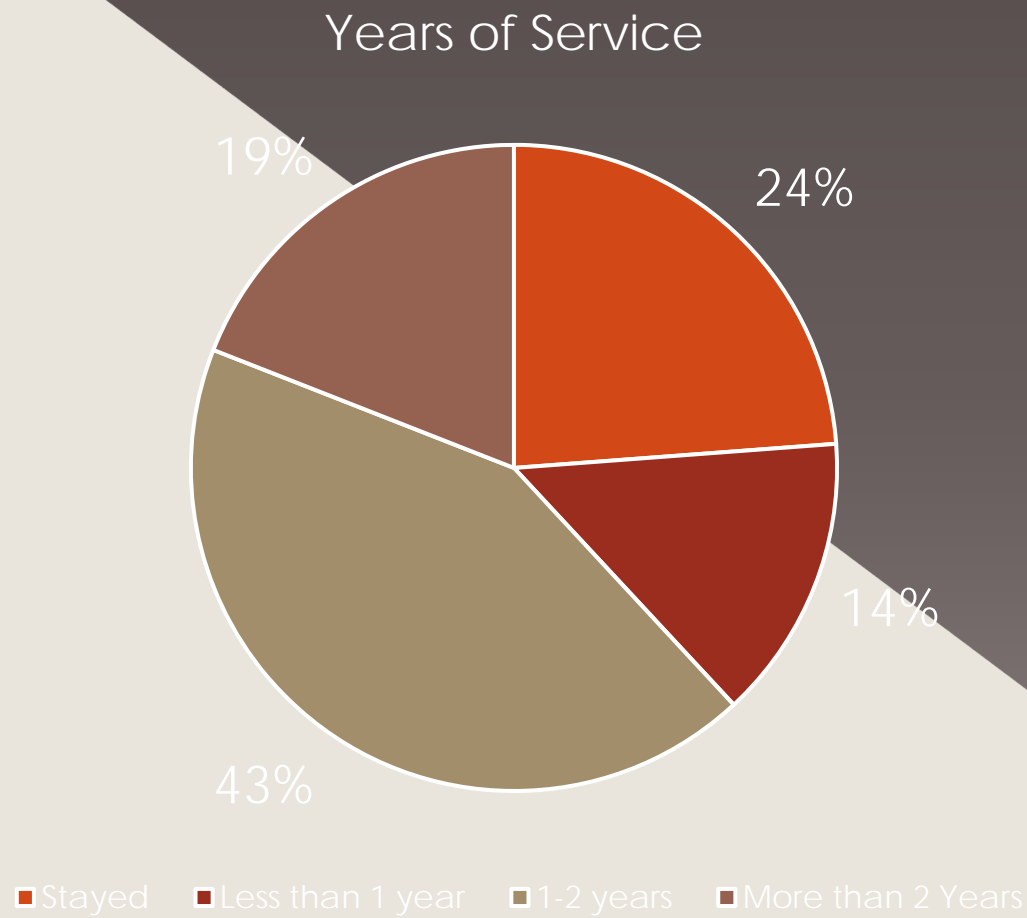


Hiring Problems from the Past



- In the past 20 Years, we've hired 21 new consultants.
 - > 5 Remain in employment
 - > 2-3 year max terms

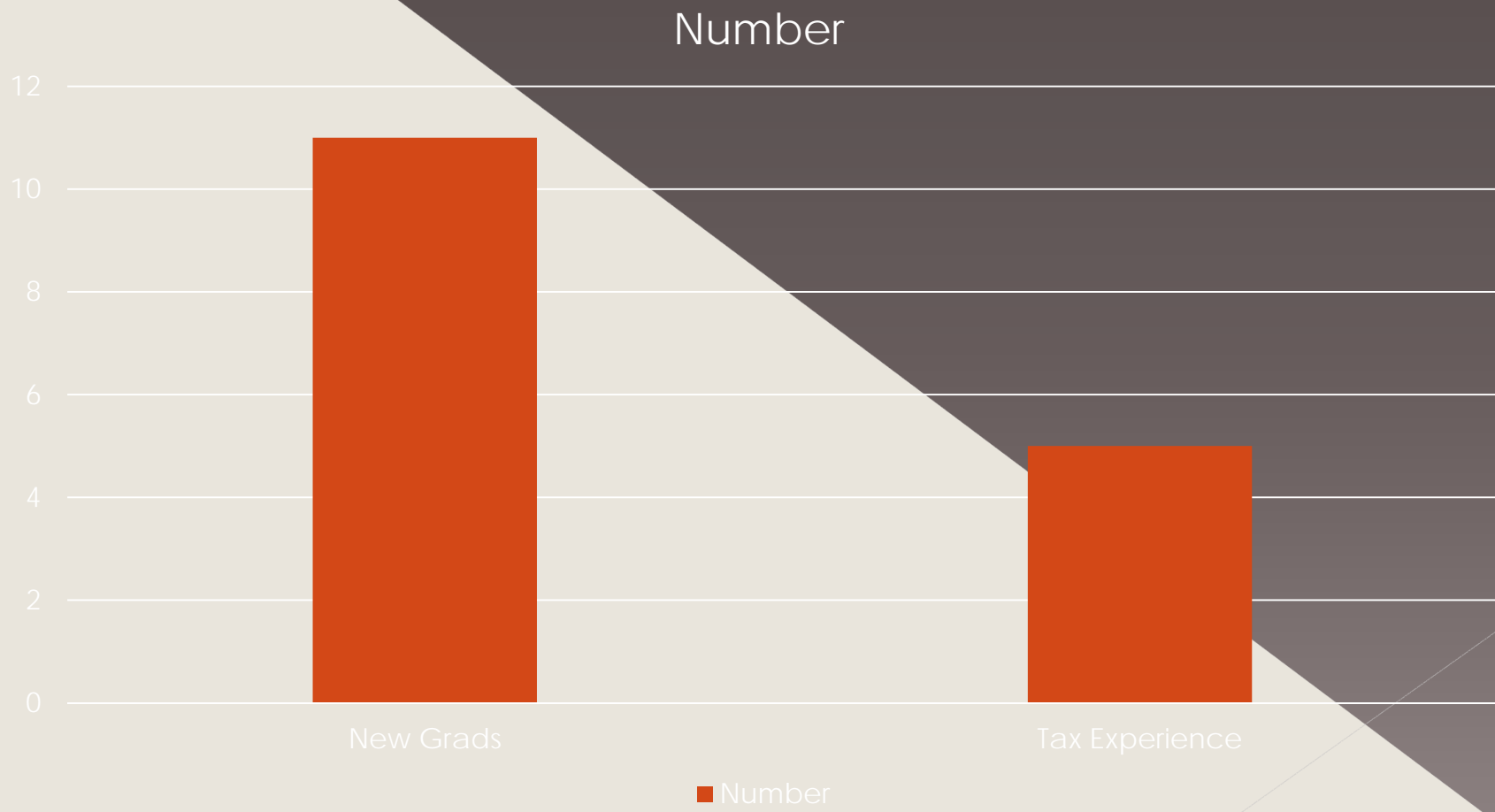
Hiring Problems from the Past



Cost of Consultant Leaving

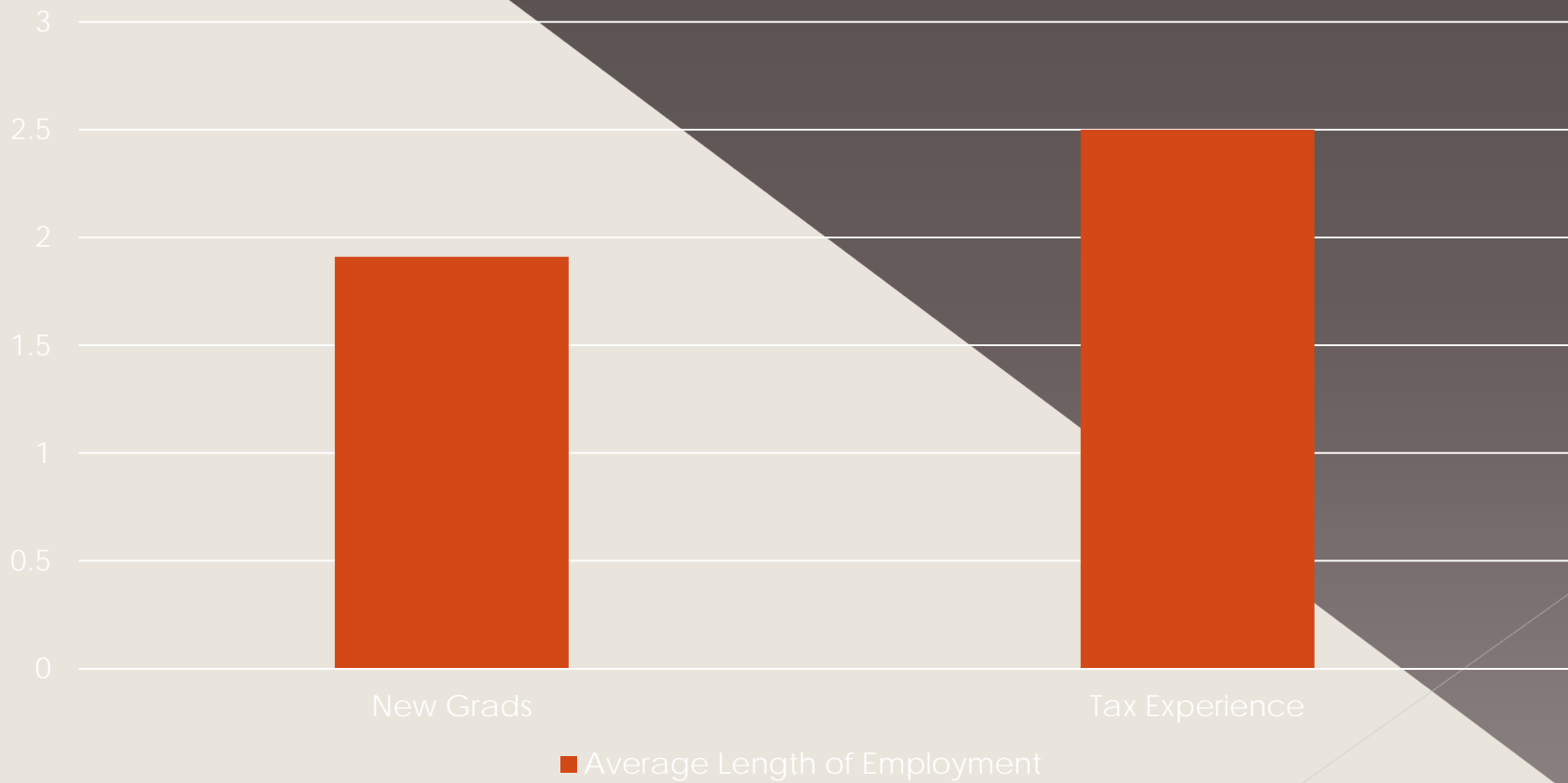
- ◉ We figure a new consultant costs us \$15,000 in 1st year and \$10,000 in the 2nd year.
 - › Total expense over gross
 - › Takes third year to breakeven
 - › Takes 5th year to recoup training cost of \$25,000
- ◉ Past 20 years, staff turnover has cost:
 - › Approx.: \$315,000
- ◉ Also cost us Client's Trust and creates Client Turnover.

Hiring Experience vs New



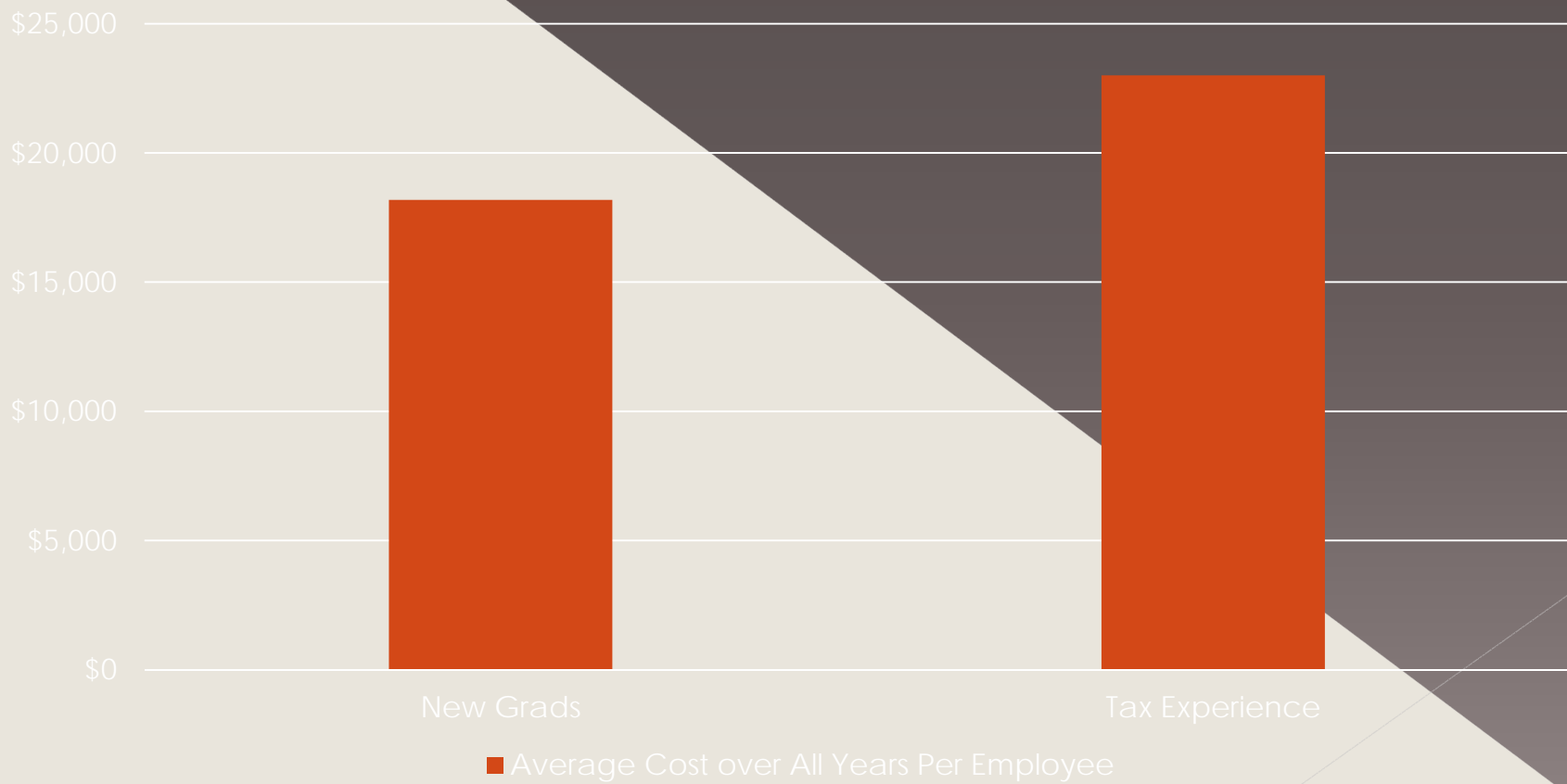
Hiring Experience vs New

Average Length of Employment



Hiring Experience vs New

Average Cost over All Years Per Employee



Hiring Experience

- ◉ Hard to find both tax and analysis experience.
- ◉ Tax experience seems to come with “bad habits”
 - Only working from organizers
 - No experience in helping educate producers on how to get better records
 - Different definitions of “gray” areas

Hiring Problems from the Past



- Reasons for Departure:
 - Pay/Benefits too low
 - Stress too high
 - Lack of training
 - Perceived better opportunities after training
 - Personnel Conflicts
 - No Corporate Ladder or Promotion Opportunities

Hiring Problems from the Past



- Reasons for Departure:

- > **Pay/Benefits too low**
- > **Stress too high**
- > **Lack of training**
- > Perceived better opportunities after training
- > Personnel Conflicts
- > **No Corporate Ladder or Promotion Opportunities**

Hiring Problems from the Past

- ◉ Pay/Benefits too low

- This is was problem of hiring individuals with lack of experience and fee rates.
 - Hard to charge enough when the consultant didn't know enough.
 - Also hard to balance giving the employee enough work and making sure the clients needs are met.

Hiring Problems from the Past

- ◉ Stress too high
 - › Seasonal nature of the job
 - › High knowledge level expected by clients
 - › Steep learning curve – especially on taxes
 - › No one whose job it is to oversee or train

Hiring Problems from the Past

- ◉ Lack of training

- › No formal education process
- › Vastness of the tax law
- › Learning two major things (tax & analysis) at the same time
- › The responsibility of preparing tax return & tax planning without experience
- › Complications of no two clients being exactly the same.

Hiring Problems from the Past

- ◉ No Corporate Ladder or Promotion Opportunities
 - Many individuals are “trained” to want to climb a corporate ladder. We had one position with no where to be “promoted” other than Director.

The Assistant Solution

- ◉ The Assistant position is:

- Two-Three year training program
- And-
- Two-Three year interview process



The Assistant Solution

- ◉ First year of the Assistant Program:
 - Following a consultant through meetings with producers.
 - Complete analysis entry
 - Help, as possible, with tax work (Entering depreciation, etc)
 - Correcting accounting entries, verifying tax documents, etc.



The Assistant Solution

- ◉ Second year of the Assistant Program:
 - › All duties from previous year with more responsibility
 - › Prepare simple tax returns.
 - › Potentially start to work one-on-one with producers.



The Assistant Solution

◉ Daily Life

- Prepare for appointments
 - Pack boxes & necessary forms, etc.
 - Prepare lists of missing information
- At appointments
 - Gather and organize information
 - Crop records & inventory
 - 1099's & W-2's – Reconciled to books
 - Learn from process
 - How-To on appointments
 - Answering questions that come up, etc.

The Assistant Solution

◉ Daily Life

> At appointments

- Learn from process
 - Get to know clients
 - Listen to discussions (Entity planning, tax planning, investments, estate planning, etc)

> After appointments

- Follow-up on items from meeting
- Prepare analysis and/or tax return
- Make phone calls for missing information

Why The Assistant Works



- Benefits for NFBI:
 - Trained by us
 - If turnover occurs, it's behind the scenes
 - Trial time by both employee & NFBI to see if it will work

Why The Assistant Works



- Benefits for Assistant:
 - No immediate responsibility for client's financial decisions
 - Training at a slower pace.

Why The Assistant Works



- Benefits for Assistant:
 - > Training broader from following multiple consultants
 - > Easier transition to full responsibilities with clients

Why The Assistant Works

- Benefits for Clients:
 - > Client doesn't have as big a change from assistant departure.
 - > Clients build relationships with multiple consultants



Why The Assistant Works

- Benefits for Clients:

- Faster service by having multiple consultants available to complete tasks.
- Prior relationship makes it an easier transition to new consultant



What doesn't work...

◎ Consultant to Assistant Ratio

- Our first three assistants were “assigned” a specific consultant to shadow.
 - Worked well, but we thought more cross-training could be beneficial.
- Last two assistants were not assigned to a specific consultant.
 - No one responsible to see training happened so many things fell through the cracks.
 - Left with many “filler” jobs which didn't train and left them feeling “underappreciated”.

What doesn't work...

- ◉ Hard to give up work

- Often seems to take longer to keep someone else busy than to just do it yourself.
- Everything has to be reviewed (more time for the consultant)
- First year is lots of training, second year is lots of help, third year is an awakening to how much help they really were!

The Future of the Assistant

- ◉ Promotion:
 - We expect the promote assistants to consultants within 2-3 years.
 - May depend on workload available
 - Potential to stay in position if desired.



Paying for the Assistant

- ◉ A new assistant's total compensation package (salary plus benefits) is roughly \$40,000.
 - > The lead consultant has been able to increase fees about \$15,000 by taking on more work
 - > The remaining \$25,000 is paid by the "whole"



Work Flow In Office

Accounting
(Staff or Assistant)



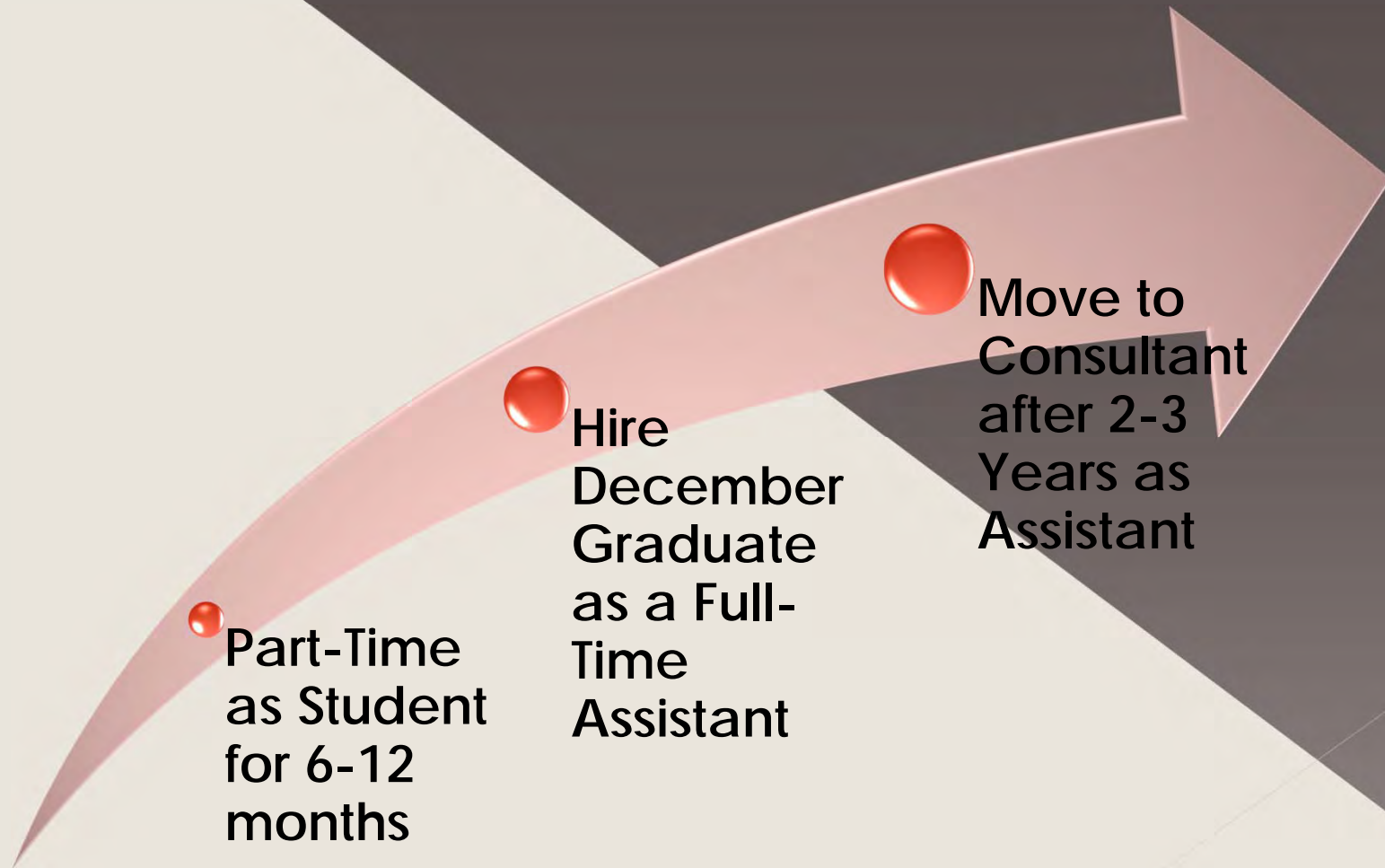
Analysis Input
(Assistant)



Tax Input
(Assistant)



Ideal Hiring Timeline



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