

The Apprentice: How to Succeed in an Internship





This presentation is meant to be thought provoking. The following slides will outline the advantages associated with participating in internships, discuss employer's expectations of interns, and strategies for success while completing your internship.

Why Intern?



According to a survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE):

- Employers offered positions to 2/3 of their interns
- 31% of all new college hires come from internship programs

(<http://www.naceweb.org/press/display.asp?year=&prid=261>)

Advantages of Internships?



Internships

- Allow you to practice what you have learned in the classroom.
- Familiarize you with a working environment
- Help you to build and expand your professional network.
- Make you more marketable to employers.
- Help you determine if this is the right career path for you.

Five Internship Tracks



- Observer
- Odd Jobs
- Prime Function
- Project Track
- Apprentice Track

Five Internship Tracks



- Observer – Emphasizes watching and assessing rather than hands-on participation
- Odd Jobs – Being shifted from one task to another without a coherent plan or explanation
- Prime Function – Extensive exposure to only one primary task or set of functions

Five Internship Tracks



- Project Track – The intern is given an opportunity to see a project through from the beginning to end. It requires creativity, research skills, organizational abilities, and self-direction
- Apprentice Track – The intern is treated like a full-fledged, although junior, employee

It's All Up to You!



You, the intern, play an important role in your success and largely determine if you will have a worthwhile experience.

Tips to Succeed



Supervision



As an intern, it's important to know who your supervisor is and who you will report to

Some examples of these people are:

- Team Leader
- Senior Staff
- Project Coordinator
- Other company associates as instructed

Be Professional



Whether you are receiving pay or credit, treat an internship like it is a job.

Take this experience seriously. The people you work with now could very well be your colleagues in the future.

Be Professional



While completing your internship be sure to:

- Report to work regularly and on time
- Do not leave early
- Be punctual for meetings
- Watch your language and topics of conversation
- Abide by work regulations
- Know the proper chain of command
- Avoid office gossip

Follow the Employer's Dress Code



- Many companies will establish a dress code in the interview; however, for those who do not, it's a good rule of thumb to always wear professional attire until otherwise instructed
- Some companies have a designated day for casual dress...find out what the policy is and follow it
- For some positions that may not involve customer interaction, there may not be a dress code. In this instance, observe the dress of your colleagues and adjust your clothing accordingly

Attire



What Not to Wear

- Jeans or Shorts
- Sandals / Open toe shoes
- Flashy jewelry
- Sneakers
- Loud make-up colors
- Low-cut tops or pants

What to Wear

- Slacks or Trousers
- Neatly ironed shirts
- Blouses
- Suits
- Sports Coats
- Ties
- Closed-toe shoes

Communicate with Your Supervisor



If possible, try to schedule regular, weekly meetings with your supervisor.

During this time you can:

- Confirm the details and specifics of any projects
- Determine your work hours
- Learn about and volunteer for upcoming projects
- Update him/her on the status of your projects and seek feedback
- Establish a good working relationship, which makes asking for a recommendation much easier
- Discuss any procedures or expectations you are unsure of
- Talk over any incongruent information or differences
- Clarify responsibilities and performance expectations

Dealing with an Unapproachable Supervisor



If your supervisor is not approachable, try these methods:

- Remain pleasant and enthusiastic
- Suggest alternate times and places to meet
- Try different ways to contact him/her (e.g. email, voice-mail)

Have a Good Attitude



Your attitude plays an important role in determining whether you have a great experience or a horrible one.

Always be open to advice from co-workers

Be a team player

While completing your internship remain:

- Flexible
- Upbeat
- Enthusiastic
- Courteous
- Willing to learn

Immerse Yourself



Take advantage of all that is provided to you. Get to really know the company and its industry

Be available to help other staff with their projects

Complete all assignments

Be sure to take time to read:

- Training manuals
- Company policies
- Memos
- Press releases
- Trade publications, etc.

Follow Proper Telephone, Computer & Email Etiquette



- Limit personal phone calls
- Always identify yourself when answering or making calls
- Always check voice-mail and be prompt to return calls
- If you don't know the answers to questions, refer to a staff member who can assist you or get the answers and call back
- Always have a pleasant and friendly voice

Follow Proper Telephone, Computer & Email Etiquette



- Limit internet use to job-related research
- Don't download software unless you have permission
- Don't play online games or spend time on social network sites
- Don't use computers for your homework
- Office computers and everything on them remain the property of the employer...therefore nothing is private

Follow Proper Telephone, Computer & Email Etiquette



- Don't send personal emails via your office email account
- Don't send excessive forwards to co-workers
- Refrain from downloading enormous files
- Proofread all emails before sending

Always Do Your Best Work



Sure, some things are going to be boring and repetitive in nature, but everyone needs to be a team player. Take assignments graciously and don't complain.

You are more than likely going to get bigger assignments once you demonstrate that you are capable of completing tasks in a professional manner.

Take Initiative



Don't sit around bored in your cubicle or office. Seek out opportunities to become involved.

If possible:

- Volunteer for projects.
- Attend meetings.
- Ask questions.
- Conduct informational interviews.

Deal with Workplace Problems Head-On



- Discuss your concerns with your supervisor or HR when appropriate
- If you feel you are underutilized, ask for more assignments
- Volunteer to assist with challenging and demanding assignments

Working with Older Workers



- Reach out to people with more experience for they will be valuable allies
- Be respectful but don't be afraid to offer ideas or a new perspective
- Don't be satisfied with "We have always done it this way."
- Determine where you fit in, in formal and informal hierarchies

Working with Older Workers



If you happen to manage older workers, be sure to:

- Be considerate and reasonable
- Be confident, firm and assertive
- Be personable, consistent and knowledgeable
- Seek input
- Always communicate openly

Understand Performance Evaluations



- Make sure you understand how the evaluation process works:
 - What are the criteria and key factors?
 - What time period will be covered?
 - Who will evaluate your performance?
- Make sure your employer provides you with feedback throughout your time there
- Get your evaluation in writing

Understand Performance Evaluations



- Evaluations are not equal to grades. No one is perfect- not even you. Expect some comments to build upon, especially early on in your internship.
- Learn from criticism:
 - Identify areas for improvement
 - Seek specific examples
 - Turn weaknesses into strengths
 - Admit mistakes and strive not to repeat them

Network! Network! Network!



An internship is a great time for you to develop and expand upon your professional network. While working you will begin to establish contacts. Be sure to introduce yourself and get to know your colleagues.

Remember, the hidden job market (the jobs that aren't advertised) is the most effective way to find a job.

Build Your Portfolio



A portfolio is an excellent way to demonstrate to potential employers your accomplishments.

While completing your internship, be sure to make copies of your work to include in your portfolio.

Build Your Portfolio



Materials to save include:

- Press releases you wrote
- Projects you worked on
- Presentations you made
- Letters of recommendation and thank you notes that you received

Remember to ask permission first. Some organizations have policies regarding what information can leave the office.



If you follow these guidelines, you'll reduce your odds of hearing those infamous words...

Your Fired !



Evaluating Your Internship



At the completion of your internship experience, ask yourself:

Did I meet my learning objectives?

What new skills did I develop?

What are some highlights of my experience?

What was my most important contribution?

In what ways did this experience disappoint me?

Need More Assistance?



- Contact the Career Development Center
 - 301-860-3825
 - careerdevelopment@bowiestate.edu

Adapted from the article, “Making the Most of Your Internship,” by Juliette McDonald of Florida State University.